



SNAPSHOT – 04

VANE GALLERY



VANE.ORG.UK

Vane Gallery represents a group of critically engaged artists from the North East of England, across the UK, Europe and the USA, through projects at the gallery and elsewhere.

Jock Mooney 'Who Are You and What Do You Want?' 2016, solo exhibition installation view. Photo: Colin Davison

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE MGETR SCHEME?

We have been contacted and notified about this a number of times over the past couple of years, but none of the people drawing it to our attention seem to realise that we are not eligible as we are not a charity.

We are unlike many other galleries that receive Arts Council England funding in that we do represent artists in addition to hosting exhibitions. At the same time, the gallery programme is not commercially led, and in recent years, our work has moved further into the socially engaged sphere.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

We are looking at our constitution, and the work that we do, in the light of the conversation we have had with the project staff at the YVAN project on MGETR. We recognise the opportunities that being able to claim MGETR could bring, given that we have been advised most of our staff costs would be eligible, as we are always preparing for the next exhibition. However, we know that our current arrangements work for us, as a not-for-profit company, and we wouldn't want to change this for a short-term funding scheme.

Vane began life as an artist-led initiative in 1997, partly in response to the lack of opportunities for local artists during the Year of the Visual Arts, which took place across the Northern Arts region in 1996. We started out staging exhibitions in temporary venues — empty shops and the like — with an 'open access' policy to inviting artists. Over time we developed an increasingly curated approach to projects, eventually opening a more permanent gallery space in 2005, but artists are still very involved in that, particularly in determining the shape of solo or group shows.

We are responsive to artists as they reach different points in their careers, and we think it's important to have this kind of approach as part of the local arts ecology — still artist-led, independent, not institutional, providing a space for artists to approach us with projects.

Even if it was guaranteed that the MGETR scheme would continue for another five years, we are not sure that we would want to change our whole constitution and the way the company works, to become a charity. We're not even sure that our artist-led approach would be considered charitable by the Charities Commission, and we don't want to move away from our core mission chasing any particular funding stream.

WHAT WOULD MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU?

If the scheme were expanded to include companies that are not charities, and that sell work, that would make it worthwhile for us to put the time into calculating the benefit precisely. We would probably need to invest in some additional administration time and pay our accountants for the additional work to make the claim for us.

HOW MUCH WOULD THE BENEFIT OF A CLAIM BE TO YOU?

Without going into all the details and exclusions, which is not worthwhile for us given that we are not currently eligible, it has been advised that we might be able to claim back about £9,600 in an average year.

We would use any funds claimed to commission more new work from artists and pay more artists more exhibition fees. The same as many of our colleagues working in independent galleries, we are very aware of the A-N rates of pay, and at the same time, struggle to meet them.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE IF THE RATE OF TAX RELIEF WERE DOUBLED TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID 19?

If we were eligible to claim, and the rate of relief was doubled, we would look very closely at the work involved in making a successful claim, and at the professional support available to make it work.

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