



project

# Project 2020.

Presenting the Future.

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#### *Image credits*

*Page 3:* Fearghus Ó Ciohnúir's *The Casement Project: Butterflies and Bones*. Photo by Stephen Wright. *Page 8:* Project Arts Centre at night. Photo by Ros Kavanagh. *Page 10:* Audiences at Project. Photo by Senija Topcic. *Page 12:* Emmet Kirwan's *Dublin Oldschool*. Photo by Tristram Kenton. *Page 13:* THEATREclub's *The Theatre Machine Turns You On*. Photo by Louis Hough. *Page 15:* Collapsing Horse's *The Water Orchard*. Photo by Ste Murray. *Page 17:* Project at 50. Photo by Senija Topcic. *Page 21:* Mikala Dwyer's *Panto Collapsar*. Photo by Ros Kavanagh. *Page 23:* *Exchange* arts centre collective. Photo by Ros Kavanagh. *A Macguffin and Some Other Things*. Photo by Senija Topcic.



## A. Introduction

# **Our Vision and Mission**

## **Inspire, provoke and challenge through great art.**

Project is Ireland's first arts centre: an independent and ambitious multidisciplinary organisation in the heart of Dublin with a local, national and international remit. Project is a home for contemporary arts, a producing house, a resource for artists and a critical hub. Project works with artists across all art forms to make and present extraordinary work that inspires and provokes audiences.

### **Our Beliefs**

Project is an organisation that is creative, ambitious, loyal, edgy, energetic, supportive, passionate, empowering, courageous and open.

Our work is informed by these beliefs:

- Art can be transformative and artists can shape social and political consciousness
- Artists should be valued and paid
- Artists and audiences are central to our work
- Trust is paramount in all creative relationships and takes time and resources to build
- The arts community can be a powerful force for change
- We can learn from everyone

### **What is unique about Project?**

- We are located at the centre of contemporary arts practice, and this position distinguishes us from other centres who also aim to support artists in making work – it gives us an identity and a capacity that is unique
- We are influenced, inspired and shaped by our location in the heart of the city and the diversity of people who live here
- Project is a key organisation through which the public access contemporary art and public space, whether through visiting to our venue or engaging with our work on tour across the globe
- We are always thinking about the next steps with and for artists
- We have a reputation at international level



## History and Context

Project Arts Centre was founded in 1966 as Project 67. When the founders of Project Arts Centre came together they did so with the philosophy that a creative person is capable of managing their own affairs; Project was an organisation set up, managed and governed by artists – its founding spirit was centred on artists at a time when art was created in established institutions. It became a home for the independents; for artists whose work challenged the establishment and the academy. Project was created at a time of change in our country and in the wider world. Looking to the future is embedded in our DNA. Over the years, Project's personality has always reflected these values, whether embracing the punk movement, presenting edgy contemporary performance or confounding audiences' ideas of what constitutes an exhibition. We are proud of this legacy but it is not a history that lies heavy on our shoulders; it is a history of reinvention, of evolution, of looking to the future, while reflecting on the present – and of change.



Our 50th anniversary in 2016 provided a catalyst to re-examine our purpose as a space for artists and audiences. As Ireland's first arts centre, we used this occasion to reflect, to re-imagine our future, and to develop new ways to ensure that everything we do remains innovative and is delivered to the highest possible standards under the best possible conditions. Project's independence and history has always been defined by three things:

- **Artists**
- **Location**
- **Ambition**

These will continue to play an important role in the Project of the future.

### **The Board and Membership**

The Board and Membership represent the sector in Project, involving those whose cultural contributions, work and careers align with Project's ethos, as well as leaders in industry and business who share Project's vision.

### **The Staff**

Project Arts Centre's has built up a skilled and experienced team. Together they manage the spaces, and provide the resources and support for artists to make extraordinary art, and to bring that art to audiences.

### **Why develop a new strategy now?**

Since 1966, Project Arts Centre has been Ireland's leading arts centre; presenting the work of Ireland's most exciting art, theatre, dance and performance makers. Now 51 years old, Project is evolving into Ireland's national centre for the contemporary arts, offering a year-round programme of exhibitions and performance events in our purpose-built centre in the heart of Dublin. Project is a resource for adventurous artists, the broader cultural professional scene, and a home for enquiring audiences from across the city, country and further afield.

Having survived a punishing recession, identified changing needs among artists and audiences, and taken cognisance of a changed arts and cultural policy environment, we see this moment as an ideal time for a vibrant new strategy for the development of the venue.

This strategy is centred on:

- artists and the development of their practice;
- audiences, and improved access to the best of contemporary arts from Ireland and across the globe;
- thinkers and strategists interested in critical debate and advocacy.

### **Key strands to the strategy**

Project is much more than a venue. Built around a community of artists, audiences, members, staff, Board, and other stakeholders; it is:

- **a home for contemporary arts**
- **a producing house**
- **an artist resource**
- **a critical hub**

For this complex eco-system to function effectively, each of these four elements must remain semi-autonomous with a clearly defined purpose, while at the same time, working together as an integrated whole in order to support the artistic and financial development of the organisation. Each of these strands has the capacity to both consume and contribute income: each has its own economic system, which must be examined and understood as Project continues to develop its ambitions and financial plans into the future.



## **B. Our Aims 2017–2020**



## **B1. A Home for Contemporary Arts**

Project provides a purpose built home in the centre of Dublin for artists, arts workers, and audiences of all ages. It houses a year-round programme of exhibitions, dance, theatre, opera and other performance events, and is a home for independent production companies, individual artists, and all of Dublin's major performing arts festivals.

The public spaces in Project include two black box spaces, a gallery, a bar, informal meeting spaces, as well as hot-desks for Project Artists. As well as providing a resource for individuals and groups using these spaces, the building provides an important source of income, mainly through rentals.

Project's spaces are welcoming to individuals and groups of all ages, who wish to make or engage with the contemporary arts. From our work with transition year students, to community groups such as *#wakingthefeminists*, *The Artists Campaign to Repeal the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment*, and *Our Table*, to something as simple as free Wi-Fi, the building is a hub for creative activity. Project is also recognised internationally as a hub for the creative sector in Dublin – our role as a festival club and hub for international networking events such as *Information Toolbox* and *International Theatre eXchange* are testament to that.

In 2016, Project presented 372 ticketed events and 6 exhibitions alongside a major programme of events to mark our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We have a committed engaged audience who attend events on a regular basis. In 2016, over 61,000 people attended an event in Project Arts Centre.

## **What we aim to achieve.**

### **Better spaces.**

A major focus over the next four years will be on the development of a sustainable future for our greatest asset, risk, limit and opportunity – The Building. The maintenance and further development of spaces for artists to develop and present their work, and for audiences to interact with that work, is essential to Project's future success. We aim to upgrade the spaces in the short to medium term. In parallel, we will progress an ambitious and imaginative long term plan to develop a fit-for-purpose home for the development and presentation of extraordinary contemporary art and for the benefit of artists, audiences, communities and schools.

*More flexible spaces:* We aim to break down the barriers between spaces and open up our programming to create more opportunities for cross-fertilisation between the visual arts and performance. This will result in a year-round programme of events and exhibitions in the gallery (and beyond), interwoven with the performance programme and led by the Curator of Visual Arts. This also includes the rethinking of the foyer spaces and former bookshop area – areas that may become a more active (or even integral) part of exhibition programming and connected practices.

### **Greater range and diversity of artists and audiences using the building.**

We aim to make Project home to a greater number and diversity of artists, deepening existing relationships and attracting a new cohort of Irish and international artists to work with us. In this way, we aim to develop a programme that is representative, diverse and cognisant of the barriers that inhibit equality in the arts. We intend to grow our existing audience while reconnecting with lapsed attenders and developing relationships with new and more diverse audiences.

### **Equality and diversity policy.**

We aim to develop a new policy in the area of equality and diversity. Project will become a true feminist institution; we will be industry leaders and actively pursue and explore solutions to inequality. This will assist us in further improving access throughout the building, and will underpin our strategies for building relationships with groups and communities locally, nationally and internationally.

## **Greater audience engagement.**

We aim to enhance the current high level of audience engagement. We want to find out more about what our audiences think about the work we are creating, and to make meaningful connections between them, us, and the artists we champion. We aim to focus particularly on developing engagement programmes specifically with two specific communities: transition year students and new communities in Dublin. We see these engagement programmes as an investment in access, audience development, practice-sharing and artist development.

## **Adequate resources to create the necessary changes.**

We aim to develop a robust financial and organisational structure, with sustainable income sources and a well-developed financial plan for the future. While we have secured capital funding from both the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Temple Bar Cultural Trust to undertake basic repairs, maintenance and upgrades in the building over the next two years, we are aware that we need to raise a significant amount of money to enable us to deliver this plan in its entirety. We aim to raise our current level of public funding and to supplement it with a programme of corporate sponsorship and fundraising. In addition, we aim to restructure and resource our staff team adequately to enable us to deliver the plan successfully.



## **By 2020, Project will have:**

- Completed the current programme of maintenance works including upgrades to fire, lighting, heat and air-conditioning alongside improvements to arts and public areas.
- Developed a long term imaginative and realisable plan, built with environmental sustainability in mind, in order to reshape the spaces for artists, audiences and communities in the future, along with costings and a plan for funding the work
- Developed and delivered a new policy on equality and diversity
- Developed and delivered on a new engagement programme focusing on transition year students and new communities living in Dublin
- Examined the income-generation potential of the building – through the bar, café, event hires and other activities
- Rolled out a seasonal approach to space rentals by major festivals and by independent companies for events and productions, and maximised the potential for commercial activities in the summer months through the cultivation of new corporate relationships

## **Timeline**

### **2017.**

- Begin short to medium term capital project with DAHG/TBCT, including the schedule of works, tendering process, and completion of initial works
- Appoint architect/planner to the Board of Directors with a view to long term capital development
- Begin research into equality policies in arts organisations nationally and internationally
- Develop a new engagement programme with Marino College Secondary School in the north inner city while establishing relationships with new community groups

### **2018.**

- Complete short to medium term capital project with DAHG/TBCT and begin long term development plan including income generation and fundraising strategy
- Deliver new engagement programme with new communities in the city
- Complete and deliver draft of equality and diversity policy
- Appoint a fundraising consultant

### **2019.**

- On-going capital review and planning (including income-generation and fundraising)
- Review new engagement programmes and launch Project's new 'Engagement Department'
- Strategy evaluation

### **2020.**

- Capital plans announced

## **B2. A Production House**

Project has a history of commissioning and co-producing work, and supporting creative risks taken by artists. We support undermined or undervalued artistic messages and platform moments that risk being unheard, unimagined or unseen. Our productions challenge audiences to think beyond the status quo.

In 2016, Project commissioned or co-commissioned new works by: Núria Güell; Mark O'Kelly; Brian Duggan; Tom Watt, Tanad Williams & Andreas Kindler von Kobloch; and Caroline Doolin for our gallery programme. In the performance programme work was commissioned or co-produced with: Brokentalkers; THEATREclub; Phillip Connaughton; Fearghus Ó Conchúir (*The Casement Project*); Massive Owl (UK); Una McKeivitt; Pan Pan; and Fishamble: The New Play Company. We also continued our production work on Emmet Kirwan's *Dublin Oldschool*. At an international level, new and deeper relationships were developed with: Soho Theatre (London); 1418NOW (UK); The Place (London); The Royal National Theatre (London); PuSh Festival (Vancouver); High Performance Rodeo (Calgary); and we partnered on an EU project which would support the production and touring of new works by emerging performance makers (funding decision 2017).



### **What we aim to achieve.**

#### **A new way of programming work.**

We aim to create a *Project Season*, a ring-fenced period of time when artists and audiences know to expect a series of work that is ambitious, new or in some way under the radar. The work will be across a mix of art-forms, from Irish and international artists, with formal and informal opportunities for dialogue and critical conversation as well as longer-term research.

#### **Stronger, more strategic relationships.**

We aim to build on existing relationships with skilled and talented artists while developing new relationships at local, national and international level, leading to new commissions and co-productions.



### **A higher profile at international level.**

We aim to establish Project as an international cultural enterprise, creating vital opportunities for our artists and audiences to be exposed to the best of international contemporary performance, which will complement the work of our commissioned programme.

### **A better resourced and skilled staff to support the new model.**

We aim to upskill our staff to provide artists with greater opportunities for curatorial dialogue, production expertise and cross-departmental support for their work.

### **Financial support.**

We aim to develop a model whereby Project Arts Centre not only supports the artistic process but also shares in the financial risk involved in making and presenting new or under-exposed work.

## **By 2020, Project will have:**

- Developed and delivered new partnership funding models for the commissioning, presentation and touring of work nationally and internationally
- Piloted and mainstreamed *Project Season*, a 5-month season of innovative presentations and co-productions involving local, national and international artists
- Built supportive relationships with a broad range of talented artists for new commissions, co-productions (national and international), in which the Project team embrace and share the burden of artistic risk
- Increased investment in marketing and communications in order to increase the visibility of the organisation and ensure the largest possible audience for the programme
- Firmly established Project as a national centre for contemporary arts, renowned for our inventive and exciting programming in visual and performance arts, as well as our strategic partnerships, commissions, co-productions, artist supports, research, and thought-leadership

## **Timeline.**

### **2017.**

- Deliver four performance co-productions in 2017 and build relationships with national and international partners for 2018 and beyond?
- Launch Project's new visual art programme and *Project Season* pilot (2017/18)
- Launch Project's new communications strategy including a new website and revamped print materials

### **2018.**

- Deliver co-productions of four new works across art-forms with national and international partners some of which will use the spaces in different and imaginative ways
- Evaluate pilot season and deliver the first full *Project Season*

### **2019.**

- Increase co-productions to five new works
- Deliver the second *Project Season*
- Evaluate *Project 2020*

### **2020.**

- Co-produce five new performance works
- Deliver the third *Project Season*

## **B3. A Resource for Artists**

The artist is, and always will be, at the centre of all of Project's activities. Artists require different levels of supports at different moments in their careers.

For over 10 years, Project has been a pioneer in the support and resourcing of artists' work. We support the development, production and touring of work by artists whose work is at the cutting-edge of contemporary arts. In practical terms, this involves artistic, financial, administrative, and marketing support. In particular, we make this support available to a group of *Project Artists*, who have signed 3-year agreements.

In 2016 Project managed €1.3million in projects across 27 productions, employing 364 people, touring to 22 venues in Ireland and abroad, performing to an audience of 22,727. Specific investments were made into work by Fearghus Ó Conchúir, Brokentalkers, THEATREclub, Jean Butler and Rosaleen McDonagh.



### **What we aim to achieve.**

#### **Consolidate existing resources.**

We aim to review existing services with *Project Artists* in order to clarify relationships and services available, identify gaps, and examine/ improve our capacity to deliver.

#### **New and improved supports for artists.**

We aim to develop more comprehensive and nuanced supports and programmes including mentoring and capacity building for artists at different stages of their careers, whether they are young and starting out, or senior makers at the height of their profession.

#### **A focus on producers.**

In response to identified needs in the sector, we will pilot specific supports for producers in Ireland and at international level, as a means to support the making, presenting and touring of work nationally and internationally.

## **By 2020, Project will have:**

- Clarified and streamlined existing supports to Project Artists
- Developed and delivered a new suite of supports to artists and producers at different stages of their careers
- Restructured and resourced Project staff in order to enhance our ability to offer curatorial dialogue, production expertise and full-team support
- Developed a strong touring policy, so that work is regularly emanating from our centre in Dublin, reaching audiences around Ireland and across the globe

## **Timeline.**

### **2017.**

- Conduct a review into Project Artists supports and structures

### **2018.**

- Develop and implement a new Project Artist Strategy
- Pilot a cross-art-from Producer Development Programme
- Implement new staffing structure and internal training plan to support these programmes (see section C1)

### **2019.**

- Develop a new touring and dissemination strategy for Project-produced works
- Evaluate the Producer Development Pilot and launch the new programme

## **B4. A Critical Hub**

Project has always provided a home for critical thinking and debate. It has hosted national and international events such as *IETM Dublin*, *Visual Arts Workers Forum* and *We Are Here 2.0.*, all of which have advanced the Centre's role as a thought-leader and shaper of discourse. This will continue on different levels and partly within the framework of an extensive project archive research that – through the reinvestigation of the artistic, political and social histories of Project – addresses both present urgencies and acts as a catalyst for re-imagining sustainable forms of collaborative work.

### **What we aim to achieve.**

#### **Thought leadership.**

We aim to position Project as a thought leader in the area of Contemporary Arts practice, with critical programmes examining models of practice, the place of the artist and art in society, and the relationship between arts practice and social change.

#### **Critical partnerships.**

We aim to develop a series of strategic partnerships with a wide variety of social, civic, academic, community and arts partners to place artists at the very heart of civic research and discourse.

#### **Publishing.**

We aim to invest in our Project Press imprint; to build a strong distribution network; to become the destination publisher, in collaboration with magazines and international partners, for high quality critical texts examining artistic practice, research, discourse and critical thought.

#### **Advocacy.**

We aim to advocate robustly for industry best practice for artists and the arts at home and abroad, and for significantly increased investment in the arts in Ireland.



## **By 2020, Project will have:**

- Built closer partnerships with the Arts Council and Dublin City Council to maximise our ability to consider and address key priorities identified in The Arts Council's *Making Great Art Work*, Dublin City Council's Arts Plan 2014 to 2018, and the *Creative Ireland Programme*.
- Delivered a programme of talks, workshops, and events, in partnership with a broad range of groups, communities, schools, colleges and universities, that have engaged artists, audiences and created discourse around artistic practice, social change and research
- Built and implemented a clear strategy for Project Press
- Positioned Project as a champion for industry-best practice, pushing for better pay and working conditions, and greater opportunities for the production and presentation of artists' work

## **Timeline.**

### **2017.**

- Engage key staff and departments in a conversation about Project 2020 with regard to its relationship to local and national priorities

### **2018.**

- Re-join the IETM network
- Develop a three year EU Funding application in partnership with key partners, including those involved in the engagement programme
- Develop a new dissemination strategy for Project Press

### **2019.**

- Begin to implement the EU Project



## C. Our Plan for Delivery.

**Significant change requires significant capacity so people and resources will be key to the successful delivery of the new strategy. Therefore the delivery of the plan hinges on:**

- **A better structured and better resourced staff**
- **A more robust financial base**
- **A more engaged membership**
- **A diverse and active Board**

## **C1. A better structured, better resourced staff**

### **By 2020, Project will have:**

- Developed and delivered a new, dynamic and flexible staff structure and a succession plan for key management roles
- Delivered a programme of training and support to enhance existing capacity and ambition, enabling Project staff to evolve into leaders in their field
- Introduced realistic wage increases, with a move to the “living wage” for casual staff
- Developed and delivered an equality and diversity policy that will be reflected not only in our programming and audience development strategies but also in our recruitment processes

### **Timeline.**

#### **2017.**

- Review staff structure and development

#### **2018.**

- Begin implementation of new staff structure including succession plan for key management roles
- Roll out first strand of training and supports that build staff capacity

#### **2019.**

- Introduce first round of wage increases for casual staff
- Re-evaluate new structures and strategies

## **C2. A more robust financial base**

### **By 2020, Project will have:**

- Created a deficit management plan, which will be built on income-generation and cost effectiveness, and will allow us to deliver our strategy with the maximum amount of resources allocated to the artistic programme and the supports required to deliver it
- Negotiated a multi-annual funding relationship with the Arts Council, based on our role as a centre of strategic importance for the production and development of new work
- Grown our relationships within Dublin City Council, including the Arts Office and other Departments, in respect of both core-funding and project partnerships, including a re-examination of our relationship with Temple Bar Cultural Trust
- Quantified the financial investment required to maximise the potential of the building, in order to allow the future development of Project and to develop new, internally-generated income streams
- Negotiated closer partnerships with the Arts Council, Local Authority, Culture Ireland and Creative Ireland, and maximised our collaboration particularly in relation to project-management and delivery of large-scale cultural projects
- Continued to grow income in the areas of fundraising, sponsorship and philanthropy in order to create a more balanced financial structure for the organisation, with a separate and cohesive fundraising plan for each of the four key strands outlined in the strategy, developing a clear risk register



## **Timeline.**

### **2017.**

- Complete 3-year budgeting to 2020
- Board sign off of Deficit Management Plan

### **2018.**

- Apply for Multiannual Funding from the Arts Council
- Establish strategic working group to examine Project's role in Dublin's cultural infrastructure and develop costed proposals for closer working relationship with Dublin City Council
- Complete Risk Register
- Complete and roll out new income generation strategy
- Review project management of *Ireland at Venice*

### **2019.**

- Review Capital investment in Building (2017-2019) and develop new long-term capital plans
- Complete mid-term strategy evaluation (January 2019)

## C3. A more engaged membership



### By 2020, Project will have:

- Harnessed the power of the Membership and developed a series of ways in which they can become actively involved in supporting Project in its work, utilising each member's perspective on the artistic, economic and operating challenges faced by the organisation
- Encouraged and assisted the Membership to act as vital advocates for Project, expanding our reach, promoting our vision, strengthening our profile and position and increase our fundraising potential
- Invited Members, on occasion, to represent the work of the organisation to State and political officers, including the Minister and members of the Arts Council

### Timeline.

#### 2017.

- Produce and disseminate Project Membership cards
- Engage the membership with the aims and objectives of *Project 2020*

#### 2018.

- Undertake a review of the structure and role of the Membership, led by a Members Working Group

#### 2019.

- Roll out the recommendations of the review, ensuring members are included in all Project's advocacy and fundraising initiatives

## **C3. A diverse and active Board**

### **By 2020, Project will have:**

- Renewed our Board, filling identified gaps in strategic knowledge and expertise, diversifying the profile of Board members, and recruiting up to two members from outside Ireland, in keeping with the international scope of our Artistic Vision
- Maximised Board opportunities to advise and lead according to each Director's expertise, embracing new ways to approach obstacles, always with an eye on the vitality and integrity of the Artistic Programme.
- Established a committee of high-profile Ambassadors to advise and promote Project's national and international ambitions.
- Facilitated the Board to work with the Executive to drive the organisation's overall fundraising strategy, to innovate and develop new and existing funding streams, and set and monitor realistic annual targets.
- Enabled every Board member to contribute to the organisation's fundraising efforts in different ways, with some working actively on a Fundraising Committee (identifying and developing new funding streams, approaching potential funders, making peer-to-peer 'pitches', and supporting relationships with sponsors and philanthropists), and others taking less direct, more strategic roles in this area

### **Timeline.**

#### **2017.**

- Review and diversify board make up and appoint four new board members by end of year
- Establish terms of reference for committee of Ambassadors

#### **2018.**

- Identify and establish a committee of Ambassadors
- Review Board's fundraising role as part of new income generation strategy

#### **2019.**

- Ongoing Board development and recruitment

