

**Resilience and Ambition: VASW Regional Meeting 2014  
27 November 2014, RAMM, Exeter**

**Connectivity: 1<sup>st</sup> Discussion group**

**Led by:**

Grace Davies & Julie McCalden

**Notetaker:**

Jo Leahy

**Attendees:**

Jane Lowry, Co-Director, Back Lane West  
Gemma Ward, Take A Part, Plymouth  
Vickie Fear, Artist and PAC Home Coordinator, Plymouth  
Gillian Taylor, PR specialist, Devon  
Rosie Thomson-Glover, Curator, Field Notes, Cornwall  
Cat Bagg, Curator, Field Notes, Cornwall  
Rebecca Newnham, artist, Hampshire/Bournemouth  
Jon Wyatt, Photographer, Devon  
Stella Levy – White Moose Gallery, Barnstable  
Volkhard Mueller, artist, Exeter  
Tony Plant, artist, Cornwall  
Andrew Proctor, Arts Council England (SW)  
Jess Davies, artist, Devon  
Jen Dixon, artist, North Cornwall

**Introductions & Current engagement with VASW website**

1. Just started
2. Just new to it
3. Aware but not used it yet
4. Used it alot for opportunities, open call and events
5. To upload information about artists I work with
7. Use it a lot – listings, news and research
8. My artists group is represented, confusing with other websites like AN etc.
9. Use website – listed as an organisation
10. Use it a lot – slow to engage with but intend to do more. My event was pick of the week.

11. Read bulletin more than website
12. Signed up to newsletter but not looked at website
13. Use lots of websites as well as VASW. The issue is how to make VASW easy to use and stand out.

### **General discussion**

- Prefer to use VASW Facebook page - it's easier and can interact with others.
- VASW twitter is really good and more time efficient way to access what's going on.

### **Julie McCalden – website intro**

The website relies on the network to share your news etc..

- 800 events listed over last year
- double than the year before
- publish events every week. Sometimes too many to do each week. May need to wait a while
- Tweet every week
- Opportunities/Job every week
- Exhibition tweets for beginning and end dates
- Choose 6 events every week – regional/variety depending on image.
- Uploading content guidelines are on website

### **Grace**

Questions to group for discussion

Responses

#### Navigation

- Difficulty with navigation – going directly to what you need to find. Anything to ease searches through greater classification would help a lot.

#### Uploading and editing content

- Can't work out how to update stuff. At the moment Julie has to edit/change content. She sends a reminder out to update profiles.
- Could people do that themselves? Big can of worms in terms of security/content for website development.

Who is the website for?

- Do VASW see the website as catering for the public as well as the network?
- Initially set up for the network – but given the visitor numbers it has gone beyond the network and the region. Good but raises questions about what kind of language we are using.

Individual artists representation

- VASW cannot publish individual artist profiles and images but will publish images for artists who are having exhibitions and events in South West

Geographical

- map of where galleries, artists, organisations would be good.
- VASW do already have that but not individual artists. AXIS web has that.

VASW is free which is great.

Twitter

- VASW - does alot of retweeting.
- Sharing of tweets valued.
- Twitter is really good to check link and latest info on exhibitions/events and booking links.

**Online/ offline audiences**

- Connection between actual visitors and virtual visitors.
- Critical mass of people visiting exhibitions and events can only be developed if engagement with the VASW website is increased for audience.
- Tourist info sites – links?

**Promoting VASW to the rest of the UK**

**Gaps on the map**

- How do arts organisations know about getting onto the artmap?
- Approx. 2 enquiries every week. Everytime an exhibition is listed then Julie asks them if they'd like to be on the map.

## Curators

- Lots of curators use website who might not go and see the show but they will hear about it through VASW web

## Press

- Very difficult to get curators and journalists out of London to see what's going on in South West. Same for other significant rural based arts organisations in other regions like Grizedale.
- Radio Four is an example of this London centric focus. BBC committed to covering more widely from the spring 2015.
- There are specialists arts reviewers in the region but no culture of peer review.
- VASW does not have a budget to pay for writers for reviews - not VASW role?
- VASW is in a good position to spot when there is a critical mass of exhibitions and events that can be profiled together to the press in a small geographical area – press tours.
- Our responsibility as artists, organisations is to make the presses job easier.
- Sponsorship from hotels, great western trains
- Set menu of events for press
- VASW forum to discuss cross promotion of events nearby to each other.

## **Connectivity**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Discussion group**

#### **Led by:**

Grace Davies & Julie McCalden

#### **Notetaker:**

Jo Leahy

#### **Attendees:**

Fiona Haines, artist, Bath

Gillian Widden, Artist

Rowan Lear, Artist & Writer, Bristol

Gemma Brace, Exhibitions Curator, RWA, Bristol

Carol Laidler, artist alldaybreakfast, Bristol

Julian Claxton, artist & Test Space Coordinator, Bristol

Oli Raymond-Barker, artist, Cornwall

Sue Kinley, artist, Cornwall

Judy Adam, Curator, Wiltshire

Stuart Crewes, artist, Exeter

Tess Fitzjohn, Curator, Bristol

Simon Hitchens, artist, Somerset

Deanne Tremlett, Artist & Curator, SHA, Dorset

Phil Rushworth, Producer, River Tamar Project, Plymouth

Diana Pilcher, artist, Somerset

Cleo Evans, Arts Officer, Dorset County Council

Martha Crean, Development Manager, Spacex, Exeter

### **Introductions & What you do**

How you use VASW website?

1. Artist - Use for news opportunities, work, commissions.
2. Artist/ curator/writer – using website to keep in touch with what is going on in region when I'm very busy.
3. Don't use it very much. Very rewarding when I do. Newsletters very useful. I am a mentee.
4. Freelance curator/ producer. Newsletter brilliant. Look at website sometimes and use it to advertise and for work.
5. Artist, curator/Radio programme. Use it a lot. I tell other artist to use it a lot and promote their work. Events every good. Too busy to be mentee!
6. Independent curator/ consultant – interested in how to build connectivity. Underuse website – info overload, VASW is very good.

7. Artist – always connected to networks. Use it to find out what's going on and to disseminate info.
8. Artist – don't use it much. Email bulletin very useful. But will have a good look at it.
9. Artist – use it advertise exhibitions.
10. Artist – use it to advertise exhibitions.  
Very easily overwhelmed. Very important for meet ups to help with connection
11. Arts curator/ admin- To see what's going on. Won the VASW Critical writing bursary.
12. Artist - Use it to advertise and look for opportunities and to look at where I fit in when I first arrived in region.
13. Artist - Really like track on the website that runs along the top to see things quickly
14. Arts producer – newsletter more than website
15. Arts producer – Promoting projects, research more through social media
16. Arts officer - Signposting artists to what's going on in region

## **Online/ Offline presence**

### **What would you like to see more of?**

#### Sub-regional meetings?

- Ideas generation, more connective approach.
- What do get out of it – costs time and money? How will they benefit producers and artists- will they enhance their practice or just VASW agenda.
- 1<sup>st</sup> forum being supported by VASW - Salon event – show work as well as formal meeting –Stuart Crewes
- Critical mass of people for the regional annual event means you get a broader mass of ideas and people than you would do at sub regional meeting.
- Really good to get out of your area and meet other people from other regional areas
- You need both – local and regional

#### Monthly/weekly bulletin

- Weekly bulletin could be good – VASW to take control of promotion and creating opportunities in reference to ACE lack of capacity.
- Arts admin and Arts Quest – good model of websites to see what's going on
- Not more than once a month – too much.

### **Visibility of activity in the region out to the UK?**

- You have to pay them – Hauser and Wirth pay all the journalists. Huge budget.
- Need huge budget for press
- Pay £4500 - £6000 to press agent for project to promote and specific project.
- There has to be a hook.
- National publications should be encouraged to pay writers who are based in the region
- Need a strong storyline
- Challenge of getting serious curators to visit a number of exhibitions spread across a large area
- Touring exhibitions – often miss South West
- Arts Press does not exist in the South West
- No funding for press work for an excellent show in Exchange
- Social media is the cheapest way
- Improving Artists' skills on writing press releases.
- Simon Morrissey. Works Projects – paid people to come to the shows
- Plan 9 – on the back of the British Art Show.
- Hauser and Wirth have changed the balance. Get them on board with VASW.