

Outgoing F&I Chair talks to the new Chair



Veronica Davies: Kate, I'd first like to congratulate you on being elected to take over the Chair of the Freelance and Independents' Group committee.

As exciting as this progress is, it is still ongoing. It is essential that we continue to aspire to the widest possible representation – from those working part-time to those committed to an autonomous professional brand as well as those who engage in interdisciplinary projects, including artists. And we must continue to fight to protect the grants, opportunities and forums that allow those within this diverse group to thrive.



Kate Aspinall: Hi Veronica. On behalf of all our members, thank you. You have achieved much over the past years and been a tireless advocate, yet done so with

patience and grace. You will be missed. I will endeavour to live up to your legacy and am excited by the challenge.

Veronica: Looking back over my own time as Chair, we have certainly faced some challenges, as budgetary constraints affected some of our plans for workshops and other group events.

One thing I discussed with Basia Sliwinska, when I took over the chair from her, was ensuring that the committee was as representative as possible of all those art historians who identify themselves as freelance or independent. I feel we have managed to achieve that, with an enthusiastic and energetic group who I know will support you wholeheartedly in your new role. The membership survey we carried out last year was also very revealing, and has provided valuable data that we can use in planning how best to serve what is clearly a large and diverse membership in the future.

Kate: I heartily agree. The member survey certainly attests to a thriving freelance and independent community, who are well represented by the diversity of our sub-committee members. I am pleased that we have effectively reached out to a diverse community, including art writers as well as primary, secondary and tertiary educators in addition to curators, independent researchers and consultants, among others.

Looking to the future

Veronica: I know from your presentation at our last meeting that you have many ideas of how to take forward work we do to support this important constituency in the AAH. Perhaps you can outline these here for our wider membership?

Kate: With pleasure. The recent member survey provided a clear mandate for the changing demographic of our members in the face of the current economic climate. The F&I Group committee is at a pivotal moment. Under your leadership it has effectively expanded our constituency and enlarged perceptions of what a freelance and independent worker is, while catering to the evolving professional needs of those outside institutional support.

These are continuing needs that will remain priorities – we must continue to advocate for all those who identify as a freelance and independent. Across the many sectors of the arts, however, the institutionalised professional is increasingly giving way to both the entrepreneur and the free agent.

This is not only a necessity as a result of budgetary squeezes but also an opportunity. As our membership survey attested, a rising proportion of our members are taking advantage of the possibilities offered by new technology and the advantages of a multiplicity of professional identities: 65% of our members declared that they were working towards a freelance or independent career, with only 17% declaring the goal of full-time employment.

My greatest aim is that we meet the needs of this growing and evolving constituency. In order to do so we must continue to attract those engaged in multiple fields and find ideas for events that will effectively meet the evolving needs of the freelance economy.

Freelance & Independents Group Committee

Everyone can be contacted on independents@aaah.org.uk Please state the topic in the subject line.

Kate Aspinall – **Group Chair**

Maria Photiou – **Treasurer**

Lara Eggleton – **Secretary**

Mary Jane Boland

Veronica Davies

Frances Follin

Catherine Hunt

Judith Jammers

Arlene Leis

Janet Tyson

Beth Williamson

We are currently considering a range of ways to serve our diverse members and identifying the most effective platforms for consolidating credibility.

Veronica: This might be a good moment to remind our readers of the AAH Online Directory, which started as an F&I initiative, and is open to all members to create and update their professional profile. Keeping in touch is so important.

Kate: I welcome members being in touch, generally or particularly with ideas for collaborations and new platforms. I can be contacted via the email address shown on the back page of the *Bulletin*.

Veronica: Thanks, Kate. Best of luck with chairing the Group!