

64th Meeting of the Artists' Film and Video Sub-Committee, held at
10.30 am on January 16, in the Goodman Room, 105 Piccadilly, London W1.

MINUTES

Present:	Al Rees	Chairman
	Jo Comino	
	Mick Hartney	
	Vera Neubauer	
	Tina Keane	
	David Parsons	
	Rodney Wilson	Film Officer
	David Curtis	Assistant Film Officer
	Trisha Anderson	Secretary

Apologies for absence were received from Joanna Drew and Malcolm Allen.

The Chairman expressed his sadness at the death of Anne Rees-Mogg and thanked the film officers for writing to Sir William Rees-Mogg on behalf of the constituency; the letter had been published in the Times. He mentioned that Cordelia Swann, programmer at the London Film-Makers' Co-op was organising a retrospective programme of ARM's work.

1 Minutes of October 1 and October 8 were approved.

2 Matters Arising

2.1/.2 Internal Review

The Chairman explained that because of the Internal Review currently taking place within the Arts Council, matters relating to the role of panels and committees were unclear; current members would therefore be asked to continue serving until June '85.

The Film Officer briefly explained the nature of the review and said to-date there was no clear indication of its consequences; on January 22 there would be a meeting for all Arts Council staff members where Basil Denning would be reporting his findings. He added that the Film Section had recommended that the use of panels and committees should continue.

The AFO said his fear was that Basil Denning was likely to favour a pro-rata system in dealing with allocation of funds in relation to time and administration costs: the more important an organisation or event was and the more money it required, the more time and administration it would merit, and vice-versa; a significant argument in relation to the AFVSC's awards and bursaries scheme.

The FO said that the film committees were unique in retaining near-executive powers after the last review, but recently a more general awareness of the need for committee involvement

was growing. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Arts Films, Marghanita Lasky, had supported the case for continuing this system.

The Chairman reminded committee of the constituents desire, expressed at the recent forum, for even more input via committees.

3 Division of Allocation

- 3.1 The Film Officer said that the AC's grant-in-aid had been announced before Xmas and was 3% below the current inflation rate; however Film Section's allocation had not yet been announced. The assumption was that cuts would be made across the board; in view of which he saw no likelihood of an increase and thought Committee would be fortunate to maintain a standstill budget.

The Chairman said in view of this it would be wise to discuss the AFO's paper in principle only, without reference to specific sums of money. This was AGREED.

3.2 Policy Paper on the Breakdown of Allocation in 1985/6.

The Chairman regarded the paper as well balanced and carefully prepared, but emphasised that all of the items were open to discussion. He asked the AFO to introduce the paper.

The AFO said that he had based the paper on an assumed increase of £40000, which was not necessarily realistic. It was not however an arbitrary figure but that which Sir Brian Young had mentioned in his paper to Council as representing the minimum increase to enable the AFVSC to function adequately. If priorities were agreed today, a division of allocation would be made by him, reflecting Committee's views, when the actual figures were known. He would present it to the next meeting for ratification.

This was AGREED.

The Film Officer added that regarding 1.4.4 - Film Magazine support - although it had not been finalised, he was confident there would be concomittant funding of £6000.

Committee generally approved of the paper and thought it clearly and positively addresssed the problems they currently faced. More detailed discussion of the individual items followed.

3.2.1 Production

Mick Hartney supported the production initiatives but thought that the assumption that 2.1.1/2.1.2 and 2.1.3 - Placement Bursaries, Upper Tier Awards and Prizes, would diminish 2.1.4 - general production applications, was erroneous. He anticipated an overall increase. The FO agreed and pointed out that Committee's work would increase as applicants would let applications ride from one meeting to another in search of funds, rather than responding to particular schemes. He suggested a mandatory restriction be implemented to prevent this.

The AFO thought the situation was less problematic - Committee's familiarity with the work would increase and assessment would be easier. He thought disqualifying clauses would be difficult to implement fairly. His intention was that artists should be given a realistic amount on a one-off basis and should have no need to return for some time.

Discussion followed on how best to schedule the year's meetings to encourage artists to focuss on the schemes rather than merely applying for an amount of money, and to prevent Film Office and Committee becoming involved in an unwieldy administrative operation. This would be particularly significant regarding Upper Tier Awards.

3.2.2 Placement Bursaries

The Chairman pointed out that this scheme was dependent on two elements, the amount the host would provide and that which the Sub-Committee could afford, which in turn was dependent on an increase. He asked for Committee's views.

Discussion followed on the 'college' model; the FO pointed out that whilst this was a highly effective scheme in terms of production of work and intellectual benefit to the artists, it should be assessed in terms of what assistance was provided; teaching and accommodation were seen as acceptable forms of support from hosts, in addition to equipment, space and hard cash.

David Parsons asked the FO if it would be possible to set up a placement bursary based on the Arts Council's facilities in the cinema/projection room.

The FO said this would be impossible as there would be enormous problems in any continued access for non-staff. He was keen that the scheme should develop around the workshops throughout the country, using their considerable facilities and space, otherwise denied to artists because of cost; the AC would complement equipment and space with funds. The Chairman pointed out that this would fulfill another aim of the bursary - to involve the artist in a profession working environment using professional facilities.

MH thought it might be difficult to interest the facilities houses in the scheme but felt the attempt should be made. IT WAS AGREED to explore these ideas further and MH volunteered to assist regarding the facilities houses.

3.2.3 Upper Tier Awards and Bursaries

Committee was supportive of this proposal and discussed the details of the scheme; careful scheduling of the meeting was thought crucial and it was agreed that advertisements seeking applicants for this particular scheme would specify that experienced artists were being sought.

The AFO thought the work would be assessed more thoroughly with work of similar complexity, rather than in competition with projects of varying ambition.

David Parsons thought the scheme would raise the public profile and draw attention to Committee's lack of funds. Committee agreed. It was agreed that work produced would be previewed at a suitable venue. The AFO asked Committee to consider which scheme - Placement Bursaries or Upper Tier Awards - they would prioritise, if a cut was necessary. After discussion it was agreed that Upper Tier Awards, as a new initiative with a potentially higher public profile was favoured, although the placement bursary scheme was recognised as valuable. The situation could be reviewed after a year.

TK agreed in general but pointed out that LVA's placement bursary was crucial and hoped it could be retained. This was generally agreed, but Committee acknowledged that there might be a problem if only a London-based placement was retained, in view of their commitment to regional development.

3.2.4 Young Film-Makers/Video Artists' Prizes Scheme

The AFO pointed out an error in his paper. It should read as follows:

"This 'prizes' scheme would give the equivalent of 8 small awards of £500 each to recently graduated film/video artists. A selector would be commissioned to choose work during the annual round of degree shows, Co-op Shows, New Contemporaries etc."

Discussion followed on the arguments for giving funds to young and therefore untried film-makers. Vera Neubauer preferred the funds to go to more experienced artists. It was generally acknowledged that it was important to support the area, but it was also an area where Committee took the greatest risk in terms of small bursaries. The AFO said the 'Prizes' scheme was designed to lessen that risk and raise the profile of that area; the work would be assessed more thoroughly by a selector, and an exhibition programme might result. A separate small bursary category would still exist. Also the 'prizes' scheme (tour) might attract sponsorship. The scheme was agreed in principle. Several members suggested that the scheme might be named after Anne Rees-Mogg.

IT WAS AGREED to give this further thought.

3.2.5 General Production Applications

It was agreed that a general production category was essential and was only dependent on the availability of funds.

3.2.6 Distribution/Completion

Discussion of distribution/completion was postponed until 2.3.3 - general exhibition applications.

3.3

Film-Makers/Video Artists on Tour

The Chairman said an increase in the rates to artists, charges to venues and modification of administrative procedures was suggested, rather than a change of policy. He drew attention to the separate paper attached, which represented a simplification of the payment procedures.

After discussion the paper was agreed with the following modifications: public admittance was to be encouraged rather than demanded (2.1.1 a); it was thought colleges often had strict rules regarding public admittance and might not be able to comply with this clause. It was agreed that a clause be added to the claim forms, asking for reasons, in the event of no public admittance.

Regarding Selection of Artists (2.2), it was agreed that the system needed reviewing. It was thought the continued support of young artists was important, but it was recognised that some venues were disappointed when artists proved inexperienced. It was agreed that a balance of abilities should be sought, but that selection should continue to be by the AFO, who would report back to Committee for approval.

TK regarded the annual booklets as very useful but thought the artists' own statements were occasionally misleading. Committee thought this was unavoidable. The AFO stressed that an annual formal review would present an opportunity to remove any artist whose work had proven to be of an insufficiently high standard. The Chairman added that it would also allow Committee to make modifications to the scheme, perhaps resulting from examination of other such schemes eg RAA and BFI.

IT WAS AGREED that Committee's passive role regarding selection would continue ie artists would be added at their own request rather than by invitation; there would be no review of work at the annual meeting, but if there was disagreement a committee member would be delegated to review the application; artists could appeal.

IT WAS AGREED that if artists failed to supply copy for the booklets by the published deadline, they would be omitted from the scheme for a year: the 'Others' list in the current booklets would be discontinued.

3.4

Exhibition

The Chairman said the major change suggested in exhibition funding was that small exhibition awards should be considered at monthly meetings with distribution and completion applications.

3.4.1 General Exhibition Applications

The AFO said that the revised system aimed to avoid unnecessary delays in dealing with small exhibition requests which currently could be held waiting for up to a year (in the event of the whole allocation being spent in the first half of the year). This was not as

crucial for larger projects which may be in preparation for up to 18 months. The proposed system would allow a delegated group - 2 committee members and the AFO - to deal with the smaller projects as they came in, whether they were distribution, completion or small exhibition awards. Money for this category could be earmarked for the year. The larger projects would continue to be dealt with once each year. He also proposed that provision be made within the allocation each year for a major show of national/international significance. Additionally, when a programme was regionally based rather than nationally, applicants should be urged to apply for regional funding; a statement to this effect could be added to the guidelines. This was AGREED.

3.4.2 Best of British Film/Video Programme

There was general agreement about this scheme with the provision that the selector's brief should be to make adventurous, courageous selections even if the 'smoothness' of the package suffered as a consequence.

TK said she had seen too much bland packaging where important work was omitted because it failed to slot neatly into the overall scheme.

Committee agreed and thought the scheme would help solve the problem identified at the forum - vagueness of definition of the work Committee funds.

3.4.3 London Video Arts

The AFO said he was proposing a change in the way Committee currently funded LVA: in order to establish a more satisfactory exhibition programme they should be funded on a project basis; money would be earmarked for the year and would be released in instalments linked to specific exhibition proposals. An account of their exhibition activities, the use of guest programmers and the provision of touring packages within the UK would be required.

Committee agreed and thought their views should be diplomatically expressed to LVA.

3.4.4 Video Access Libraries

It was acknowledged that the problems associated with video access libraries were complex and the AFO's proposal to change artists remuneration from purchase of work to 'shared royalties' might be seen as conflicting with the interests of distributors. However Committee recognised that video access libraries were an important vehicle by which to promote artists' work and their development was important. The proposed changes offered the only hope for growth in the libraries in hard times. IT WAS AGREED that the AFO should meet with the libraries and, subject to their response, hold a public meeting with the artists and other interested groups to discuss the proposed changes.

3.4.5 Touring Programmes

Committee approved of the work of the Umbrella organiser and accepted his report. It was agreed that the work was more visible as a result of touring initiatives and that the present categories of touring provision should remain - both Umbrella and Modular. The possibility of BFI co-funding and the proposed involvement of Cordelia Swann were welcomed.

3.5

Index

The AFO explained that since writing his paper, it had become apparent that the Index might fall victim to the current round of internal economies. Nevertheless he was anxious to hear Committee's views in the event of the scheme continuing. He said that if the Index continued, the inclusion of artists' film/video would require an investment of £4000. This would provide a bigger and more representative reference collection of British work which would be carefully administered. He thought the Co-op as an alternative site was unlikely to be able to provide an easy access facility on any firm basis. Performance work would be included in the Index - paid for out of its own funds. The investment of £4000 by the AFVSC would pay for copies of existing materials and cover the present backlog; costs would subsequently diminish: the selection procedure could be routed via the Distribution Meetings. After some discussion the scheme was agreed in principle, to be discussed more thoroughly with the constituency at the public meeting agreed in 3.4.4.

3.6

Magazines

Committee agreed that the magazine responsibility should be within their remit dependent on concomittant funding. It was acknowledged that official 'readers' would be needed.

3.7

Unallocated

Whilst Committee were anxious that the maximum funds were given to artists, they acknowledged the need to reserve a small amount for the items listed - publicity, transport, special events etc.

3.8

Financial Summary

Committee examined the financial summary. The Chairman said that after the announcement of the allocation, the AFO would make divisions reflecting Committee's views and report back.

MH asked if reductions in the figures as presented would be on an overall percentage basis or if it would entail the cutting of entire categories. The AFO said it might be a combination of both, as one or two of the schemes might be discontinued eg Index, but the newer schemes would be given priority. Committee returned to the Agenda.

4

Placement Bursaries

Committee discussed the draft advertisement and its contents were approved.

5

Film/Video Umbrella

Committee was generally supportive of the work of the Umbrella organiser. It was noted that the organiser's job was in effect full-time although Committee provided only part-time wages; an attempt to seek other sources of funding was thought necessary. Discussion followed on the funding of

'show' prints for the scheme.

TK expressed concern regarding the Super 8 package, where only selective show prints were made and resulted in much of the expanded work being by-passed. The AFO explained that not all venues booked the whole programme and prints were made only of the work most frequently booked. TK thought a commitment was required from the venues to take all of the work and show prints made from all categories. IT WAS AGREED that these points be discussed with the organisers and reported back.

6 Additions to the Guidelines

The Chairman drew attention to the draft wording to be added to the guidelines which was in response to issues raised at the December Forum at the LPMC. He added that the AFO had received a letter from the IFVA indicating their hope that positive discrimination for ethnic minorities would be adopted by the Sub-Committee. The letter was read out.

IT WAS AGREED that Committee should address itself to these problems and the guidelines additions were accepted.

Considerable discussion followed on the policy of positive discrimination as implemented by other funding bodies such as the GLC, BFI, in which separate committees or a fixed proportion of allocation were devoted to black artists. It was acknowledged that Committee could not operate similar policies due to a lack of spending power and restricted terms of reference, but they could offer support in the guidelines. More positively Committee's sympathy could be demonstrated by the appointment of a black artist to its membership. It was hoped this recommendation would be forwarded.

Discussion followed on the problems faced when considering tape/slide work. The FO briefly described past problems and solutions revolving around the tiny amounts of money requested and the high cost of processing applications.

IT WAS AGREED not to invent a special category for tape/slide but that a signal to the constituency of Committee's willingness to consider this work was necessary. The draft clause was approved.

7 Dates of Next Meetings were discussed, a draft schedule to be sent to members for their approval.

8 Any Other Business

There was no AOB and the meeting ended at 2.30 pm.