

# **Irish Society of Performance Designers (ISPD) Strategic Plan 2023-2027**

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# 1. History and Background

## *.....the story so far*

The Irish Society of Stage and Screen Designers (ISSSD) was instigated by Irish Theatre Institute (ITI) following their leadership on presenting Ireland at the Prague Quadrennial (PQ), one of the most prestigious exhibitions of design for performance in the world. Ireland PQ 2007, produced by ITI, presented Irish design within this platform for the first time. In 2016, after the Irish Year of Design 2015, ITI initiated a meeting of designers who might set up an organisation to represent the interests of designers in Ireland and who could regularly organise an Irish presence at PQ. The Irish Society of Stage and Screen designers (ISSSD) was born.

The Society aimed to become the principal representative body of designers in Ireland, to become a professional development resource and to organise exhibitions nationally and internationally. ISSSD presented its first conference for designers in 2017, Projections, Exploring the Future of Design, at the Peacock Theatre. The Society presented its second conference at Cork Midsummer Festival 2018, Projections IN FOCUS at The Everyman. Ireland's Exhibition of Design for Performance at the Prague Quadrennial 2019, Design and Destroy, was presented by ISSSD and its second exhibition at PQ 2023 is being planned. ISSSD rolled out professional development initiatives for designers including STAGE LEFT (2020) podcasts, and SkĒNOGRAPHIA masterclasses 2021-2023. The Society has become the representative organisation for performance designers living and working in Ireland. In 2022 the Society changed its name to the Irish Society of Performance Designers (ISPD).

ISPD is a professional organisation run by designers for designers. The Society acts as a hub for information sharing and communication between professionals in both national and international contexts and is the principal representative body of performance designers in Ireland. In 2022 ISPD became a certifying organisation for the Basic Income for the Arts Pilot Scheme.

The Society is run on a voluntary basis by an elected representative committee. Funds are achieved through membership fees and through grants from government agencies. National and international exhibitions achieve significant funding from the Arts Council, Culture Ireland and from local authorities, usually every four years. Professional development activities are funded on an annual basis by the Arts Council and by the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland. Now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year, the Society has captured the views of Membership and created its first Strategic Plan.

## 2. Member Motivation

### *.....why we exist*

ISPD is a member organisation and is constituted to represent and advocate for the views and interests of designers in Ireland. The aims of the Society as stated in its constitution (2.1-2.5) are:

2.1 The Society is a professional organisation run by designers for the benefit of designers. It is created to advantage stage and screen designers through the celebration, dissemination and advocacy of their work.

2.2 The Society aims to expand and deepen the understanding of the role and potential of the designer within their profession, the larger national and international creative network and in the wider social and educational context.

2.3 The Society acts as a hub for the sharing of information and communication between professional designer members and into the national and international network of creative arts, design media and performance practices.

2.4 The Society aims to be the first point of communication in Ireland for the International Scenographic community and shall be affiliated to the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland.

2.5 The Society may periodically affiliate with other organisations as appropriate.

These aims were interrogated through the strategic planning process. The motivation of members was captured through a facilitated session and are summarised below.

#### **Advocacy**

Members wish that their voice is heard at the seat of power within industries and at government level. Members wish that ISPD addresses designer specific issues and advocates for better rates and conditions for designers in Ireland. Members look to the Society to raise their profiles as individuals. The website provides a platform for individual designers to show their work alongside that of other designers. Participation in ISPD organised masterclasses and podcasts offers opportunities for individuals to profile their careers. Members confirmed their motivation for the Society to assist in advocating for them as individual designers and in general for the profession. Member motivation is aligned with aims as set out in the Society's constitution (2.1), to celebrate and advocate for the role and work of designers.

#### **Deepening Understanding**

The deepening of understanding of the role of the designer and the broadening of perspectives were stated as important by ISPD members. International perspective and positioning, including at the Prague Quadrennial, was articulated by members as valuable to their growth as designers. Participating in International Exhibitions, travelling to International Exhibitions and forming contacts in the international sphere is seen as vital.

The National perspective is also important and members have articulated the desire for ISPD to operate in all regions on the island of Ireland. Members also wish to be connected to Design Institutions of Education and to connect to other design disciplines, for example fashion and crafts. Member motivation is aligned with aims as set out in the Society's constitution (2.2), to deepen understanding and to connect with other networks, national, international and across related disciplines. This motivation also connects with aims to be the point of contact for the international scenographic community (2.4) and to occasionally affiliate with other organisations (2.5).

### **Sharing of Information and Communication**

Members communicated that they are motivated to join the society to be part of a community and to feel connected to other designers, both socially and professionally. Individuals join to share information, for networking and contacts within their discipline, and to broaden perspectives and experience. Members wish to share resources (eg. workspace, software) and to access professional training and mentoring. Member motivation is aligned with the aim set out in the Society's constitution (2.3), to act as a hub for the sharing of information and communication.

### 3. Vision Mission Purpose

***.....where we want to go and how we're going to get there***

ISPD's **vision** is that Ireland becomes a centre of excellence of performance design and that designers living and working in Ireland enjoy fair remuneration and sustainable careers.

ISPD's **mission** is to support, promote and advocate for designers living and working in Ireland and to contribute towards conditions of excellence.

ISPD's **purpose** is to ensure that the pivotal role of the designer in performance is respected and acknowledged through appropriate recognition and fair terms and conditions.

# 4. Strategic Objectives 2023-2027

## *.....what we want to do*

ISPD has identified the following **strategic objectives** to realise its **vision** of Ireland becoming a centre of **excellence** for design and that designers living and working in Ireland enjoy fair remuneration and **sustainable careers**.

1. We will systematically work through the conditions required to create an **environment which cultivates excellence** in design in Ireland, including the cultivation of an international perspective.
2. We will work towards having a physical **centre of excellence** through the creation of hubs and spaces for designers, nationwide.
3. We will create professional development opportunities which cultivate the **career paths** of designers at all stages from emerging artists to mature practitioners.
4. We will create opportunities for the sharing of resources and information in relation to design nurturing professional **excellence**.

ISPD has identified the following strategic objectives to fulfil its **mission** of **supporting, promoting and advocating** for designers living and working in Ireland and contributing towards conditions of excellence.

5. We will **support** designers through the provision of professional development and networking opportunities.
6. We will **promote** professional design for performance in Ireland within the performance industries and to the general public.
7. We will approach government agencies and **advocate** for the increased profile and recognition of design for performance in Ireland.

ISPD's has identified the following strategic objectives to fulfil its **purpose** of ensuring that the **pivotal role of the designer** in performance is **respected and acknowledged** through appropriate recognition and **fair terms and conditions**.

8. We will increase **respect and recognition** for the role of the designer within the performance industries by identifying and targeting key industry players, producers, directors, funders, curators and discussing with them the pivotal role of the designer.
9. We will devise a rate card which provides a framework for **fair pay and remuneration** for designers, which can be a reference point for budget managers and funders from concept and project inception through to production.
10. We will articulate and describe our definition of **fair working conditions** to ourselves and to our stakeholders.

# 5. Strategic Plan 2023-2027

## *.....how we're going to do it*

Over the next 5 years (2023-2027) ISPD will work through each of its objectives. How we will tackle each objective is set out below. The Society will continue to fundraise to produce its activities and will develop suitable governance and administrative structures to support its activities and goals. ISPD will continue to consult comprehensively with its membership to ensure that its activities are aligned with the wishes and priorities of membership.

### Objective # 1

*We will systematically work through the conditions required to create an environment which cultivates excellence in design in Ireland, including the cultivation of international links.*

ISPD's membership has identified that it would like Ireland to become an international leader in performance design and that the cultivation of international links and activities are vital. The Society believes that it is paramount for Irish designers to see themselves in international contexts and to travel to experience international practice at exhibitions and events worldwide. See sample list of high profile international exhibitions in Appendix 2 below.

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. The production of an Irish presence at the Prague Quadrennial festival\*
2. The engagement of Irish designers and ISPD membership in the preparation for and planning of Ireland PQ23 and beyond\*
3. Provision and leveraging of supports which nurture international exchange
4. Support for international artists' visas both outward and inward
5. Provision of information in relation to high profile international festivals, exhibitions and events and the encouragement of member participation
6. Provision of information to members in relation to funding for international opportunities, including professional development, training and participation at events
7. Periodically host a renowned international practitioner in Ireland and devise a programme to create links between this practitioner and Irish designers
8. Create exhibitions in Ireland which welcome international practitioners

\*Actions 1-2 above are key in fulfilling Objective # 1. The fundraising, planning and production of an exhibition for International presentation at PQ and a National tour, are core activities of ISPD. A detailed Implementation Plan for the rollout of PQ every four years has been produced concurrent to this Strategic Plan and sits under its umbrella.



## Objective # 2

*We will work towards having a physical centre of excellence through the creation of hubs and spaces for designers, nationwide.*

ISPD's membership has identified that it would like Ireland to become an International leader in performance design and to work towards the long term objective of creating a National Design Centre of Excellence. Over the next 5 years, ISPD will work towards this long-term ambition and will explore how resources can be shared in physical spaces nationwide through the cultivation of regional centres of excellence.

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. Discussing what a National Design Centre might look like and who might fund it
2. Discussing what format regional centres of excellence could take and where they can be housed
3. Working with arts centres, venues and cafés to create useful and welcoming spaces for designers
4. Create spaces / Play Centres, equipped for experimentation where design related ideas can be tested
5. Create spaces with shared facilities for printing, software and other resources
6. Work with theatre friendly cafés to agree times when designers can come and work for free (eg. outside peak lunch/dinner times)
7. Create dedicated accommodation for visiting designers in regional centres
8. Exploring residencies for designers in arts centres, what venues can offer designers, what designers can offer venues and how residencies can be funded
9. Provision of information to designers about resources/opportunities in venues

## Objective # 3

*We will create professional development opportunities which cultivate the career paths of designers at all stages from emerging artists to mature practitioners.*

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. Create an awareness of design at second level through school visits and transition year links
2. Cultivate links with third level Education Institutions
3. Create a system of internships for graduates
4. Create an academy structure which supports the designer from school to 3<sup>rd</sup> level, through to post-graduate apprenticeships
5. Provision of information in relation to bursaries, residencies and funding opportunities for professional development

6. Creation of an event which encourages mentorship across the profession and between mature and emerging practitioners
7. Create an award ceremony to celebrate design and reward ambition and excellence
8. Look after the legacy of Irish designers through documenting their stories and their work

## Objective # 4

*We will create opportunities for the sharing of resources and information in relation to design, nurturing professional excellence.*

ISPD will work towards providing opportunities for the sharing of ideas, information and resources. This objective is independent of but congruent with the ambition of creating physical resource centres around the country.

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. Creation of opportunities for networking and for designers to meet and talk to other designers
2. Creation of opportunities for the virtual and digital sharing of ideas
3. Creation of opportunities for the sharing of design process
4. The purchase and sharing of software to be accessed by ISPD membership
5. Investigation and provision of Public Liability for membership
6. Purchase of books and creation of a library accessible to membership
7. Provision of comprehensive information about design, “to be the Wikipedia” and information point between members and the public
8. Create a database of support contractors (eg. costume makers, technicians) and make it available to members
9. Investigate and provide information relating to the VAT issue
10. Provide specialised professional advice eg. portfolios, finance
11. Investigate feasibility of a shared storage facility
12. Create social events where designers can meet and connect in a relaxed environment
13. Occasionally throw a party

## Objective # 5

*We will support designers through the provision of professional development and networking opportunities.*

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. The creation of networking opportunities eg. COFFEE SPILLS where designers can meet and share ideas
2. The creation of opportunities for designers to showcase their work eg. STAGE LEFT, SKENOGRAPHIA series 1-3 (2021-2023)
3. Provide opportunities for young designers to meet directors, producers, curators
4. Provide information about residencies, National & international
5. Provide information about existing bursaries and fundraise to provide bursaries directly
6. Advocate for paid internships
7. Advocate to the Arts Council for a bursary specifically for designers, similar to those that exist for writers, visual artists and composers
8. Identify and advocate for funding for designers to take time out for research
9. Build relationships with production companies towards achieving bursaries and internships

## Objective # 6

*We will promote professional design for performance in Ireland within the performance industries and to the general public.*

The creation of conferences, exhibitions and presentations provide opportunities for the showcasing of design and for the promotion of design in Ireland to the public. Each and every event and activity should be supported by awareness, communications and PR campaigns which lift the profile of design in the minds of industry peers and the general public. The ISPD Communications Strategy is produced in parallel with this Strategic Plan and is key to the rollout of this objective.

1. Produce an annual conference/convention of design
2. Continue to produce an exhibition for Prague Quadrennial which tours Ireland every four years
3. Produce a National Exhibition separate and in addition to the PQ project which regularly showcases innovation in Irish performance design and the achievement of Irish performance designers
4. Run Public Relations campaigns to garner traditional media attention for each activity
5. Run Social Media campaigns to leverage online attention and raise awareness
6. Communicate comprehensively about activities directly to membership

## Objective # 7

*We will approach government agencies and **advocate** for the increased profile and recognition of design for performance in Ireland.*

ISPD members identified advocacy for the role of the designer at government and public level as an important objective.

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. Identify public representatives to meet and to discuss the role of the designer at crucial moments, for instance the run-up to elections
2. Nurture links with other design industries – eg. Fabric / Fashion and support them in their advocacy activities
3. Nurture links with other professional bodies – eg. SIPTU, Theatre Forum and the National Campaign for the Arts and leverage increased awareness about the role of the designer

## Objective # 8

*We will increase **respect and recognition** for the role of the designer within the performance industries by identifying and targeting key industry players eg. producers, directors, funders, curators and discussing with them the pivotal role of the designer.*

Advocating for the role of the designer within the performing arts industries was identified by ISPD membership as important in realising the objective of increased respect and recognition for designers.

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. To work with existing resource organisations including Irish Theatre Institute and Theatre Forum to raise awareness about the role of the designer and to promote the agenda of designers in Ireland
2. To have a presence at existing industry events eg. Theatre Forum's Annual Conference, training events and AGM, to raise visibility of designers within the wider performing arts community
3. To organise fora to discuss the role of the designer with directors, curators, funders and producers
4. To work with funders like the Arts Council to promote the creation of design specific bursaries and research and development opportunities

## Objective # 9

*We will devise a rate card which provides a framework for **fair pay and remuneration** for designers and which can be a reference point for budget managers and funders from concept and project inception through to production.*

ISPD members identified that it was desirable to address ambiguity in relation to fees for designers and to devise a fee structuring system.

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. Facilitated internal discussion among members as to the parameters of fees and how a rate card might work
2. Focus groups with a number of producers who work across a broad range of budgets and projects, from project funded productions, production companies in receipt of regular funding and commercial producers
3. The amalgamation of findings into a draft rate card
4. The testing and piloting of the draft rate card with industry professionals and among membership
5. Rollout of a rate card as the standard across all productions in Ireland
6. Lobbying for the inclusion of clauses in government agency (funder) contracts which require the adoption of the ISPD rate card

## Objective # 10

*We will articulate and describe our definition of **fair working conditions** to ourselves and to our stakeholders.*

ISPD has identified variety in working conditions for designers in Ireland and wishes to increase standards of working conditions across the industry.

**Actions** which support this objective are:

1. Focus groups with designers where they articulate and agree what constitutes fair working conditions
2. The documenting of agreed fair working conditions clearly in writing and into a Statement (Charter) of Fair Working Conditions
3. The advocacy of the Charter of Fair Working Conditions across the industry
4. The direct lobbying of industry leaders, resource organisations, production companies and commercial producers towards the adoption of the Charter
5. The provision of information to designers about their entitlement to government supports eg. welfare, maternity and related supports from the Dept. of Social Protection

# Appendix 1

## The Strategic Planning Process

This plan was generated through a strategic planning process facilitated by Triona Ní Dhuibhir, funded through the Arts Council's Capacity Building Support Scheme over the period September 2021 – June 2022. The process included meetings with the overall Committee of the Society and detailed discussions with a Strategic Planning Subcommittee formed specifically for this purpose. The views and thoughts of members were invited through a facilitated session after the AGM on Feb 19, 2022. Written input and feedback from members who could not attend in person was incorporated. This plan is created from the input and views, both verbal and written, of ISPD members and from detailed meetings and discussions with committee representatives.

### Strategic Planning Process

Triona Ní Dhuibhir Attendance/Facilitation Meetings & Minutes:

1. 23.09.21 Overall Committee, zoom
2. 22.10.21 Strategic Planning Subcommittee, zoom
3. 25.11.21 Overall Committee, zoom
4. 16.12.21 Strategic Planning Subcommittee, zoom
5. 14.01.22 Strategic Planning Subcommittee, zoom
6. 27.01.22 Strategic Planning Subcommittee, zoom
7. 19.02.22 AGM and Facilitated Session, Feb 19, The Lir, in person
8. 07.04.22 Overall Committee (Agenda and Minutes set by Committee), in person

### PQ Implementation Plan Process

This process was separate to but concurrent with the production of a PQ Implementation Plan also funded by the Arts Council through a Capacity Building Support Scheme and undertaken by Triona Ní Dhuibhir. The process included a series of meetings with a PQ Subcommittee, formed specifically for the purpose of organising PQ23. It also included the creation of a transparent Open Call process to select Ireland PQ23 Curators, rolled out by field:arts. The PQ Implementation Plan is a project management tool and sits under the umbrella of this overall ISPD Strategic Plan.

Triona Ní Dhuibhir Attendance/Guidance PQ Subcommittee:

1. 14.12.21 PQ Subcommittee
2. 13.01.22 PQ Subcommittee
3. 20.01.22 Funder (Arts Council & Culture Ireland) pre-meeting delegation
4. 21.01.22 Arts Council meeting
5. 24.01.22 Culture Ireland meeting
6. 03.02.22 PQ Subcommittee
7. 01.03.22 PQ Subcommittee
8. 31.03.22 PQ Subcommittee