

Beroepsvereniging van Beeldende Kunstenaars

BBK – Visual Artists Union of the Netherlands

Report for the IAA Europe General Assembly, 5 November 2016, Berlin

The BBK is a visual artists' association, created in 1945 and funded exclusively by the yearly contribution fees of its members. It acts as a union for visual artists and does so by offering professionally related services to its members, by laying contacts with the politics, and by reacting and intervening at situations occurring by political decisions in the sector of visual arts.

Activities in this period

- The introduction of the IAA museum card in the Netherlands is a fact: the BBK has issued the card for its members for the first time in 2016. Several artists from the Netherlands have travelled abroad and have used the card. Now we are working on the next step, which is to achieve the acceptance of the card in the museums of the Netherlands. Firstly we are in discussion with the ministry of Culture, as we consider their support as being crucial. Once we have a result from these talks, hopefully positive, we will contact the museum directors one by one. Our goal is to be able to announce soon a list of Dutch museums accepting the card. This is an on-going project.
- Participation in several meetings with other national organisations, with most important the BKNL¹ meetings where representatives from national visual art organisations discuss issues like the artists' payments, the artists' studios management, and the need for sufficient available information about the sector of visual arts.
- Renewal of the website: a characteristic, among others, of the new form is that it allows its members to participate in its content, by uploading in the special 'announcements' space information about their activities, exhibitions and other presentations (for ex. seminars, workshops). Our aim is to have part of the website also in English, in order to facilitate all artists living in the Netherlands, as well as our contacts from abroad.

¹ The BKNL was created in 2013, as reaction to the cut-downs on the visual arts sector and the sector of national patrimony. In 2016, BKNL launched its website <http://bknl.nl/>.

- Strong presence on Facebook, where our audience significantly outnumbers our members. The feed is almost daily and exclusively directed to visual arts issues, nationally and internationally (<https://www.facebook.com/BBKnetwork/>).
- Publication and distribution of four issues of the BBK Magazine (quarterly magazine), with themes: 'The economic value of art' (4th quarter 2015), 'Art and landscapes' (1st quarter 2016), 'Woman and Art' (2nd quarter 2016), 'Street art' (3rd quarter 2016). The BBK Magazine is distributed to the BBK members, or else through a yearly subscription.
- Organisation of a network meeting/ workshop on the theme 'Artist and enterprise'; a number of such meetings have been listed and will be realized in time.
- The regular services of BBK to its members have been performed also this year: legal advice offered case by case (for ex. copyright issues, contracts, social security issues, etc.), tax declaration by specialised personnel, other arrangements that facilitate the professional life of visual artists.

Office and governing of BBK

The BBK office employs three part-time employees, an administrative officer, a legal officer, and an office manager, plus two part-time employees working exclusively on the financial matters of its members.

The BBK is governed by a governing board which is elected every two years by the general assembly. During the last GA of 30 September 2016, three of the four members stepped down due to frictions caused by the limited and yearly shrinking finances of the association. The BBK has at this moment an interim board which will lead the association to new elections during 2017. Theodor Schokker, Lea Pagner and Loek Schönbeck are the current board members. Sofia Kapnissi has been assigned to continue as BBK contact person and representative at IAA.

The BBK office, currently situated in Amsterdam's wider centre, is planning to move to South-East Amsterdam. This is an area at the same time under-developed and a popular area for cultural organisations and artists' working spaces. The new office is going to be in a building assigned by the Amsterdam Municipality as 'breeding space' (broedplaats). This means, firstly that it is a cheaper space, but also that the BBK can profit in the creative climate generated by the presence of several cultural

organisations in the building. The move is planned for the end of 2016 but the entire plan still needs to be finalized.

Final note: The BBK is seeing a decrease of its members' number due to the impoverishing of visual artists, caused by the cut of subsidies, and the change of the artists' status towards that of a mere business person. This, next to the loss of negotiating strength with the governments, means a shrink in the services that its members can receive, and the peril to be totally unable to offer any services in the future. For the moment, we keep on working for supporting our colleagues, in noticeably difficult times.

Sincerely Yours,

Sofia Kapnissi

On behalf of the BBK - Visual Artists Union of the Netherlands

