

ISACS

Irish Street Arts Circus
and Spectacle Network

Strategic Plan 2022 -2025





Contents:

Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Our Vision	4
Our Mission	5
Our Values	6
Strategic Goals	7
How we Will Achieve these Goals	8
How we Will Measure Success	13
Appx 1: Artform Definitions	14



Foreword

This plan sets out the goals for the future development of the ISACS network as a whole; whose vision and mission remain focused clearly on the advancement and recognition of the street, circus and spectacle art forms. It is the result of a deeply collaborative process which listened, observed and took note of the many diverse opinions and lived experience of the wide range of artists, art forms and bodies that ISACS represents.

Since ISACS genesis in 2010, the sector has flourished and expanded. It has come together, encouraged, supported and grown a community of like-minded artists and professionals to expand, to dream big and to ask for more. We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed across the years to the evolution of ISACS in a myriad of ways. Without your input this organisation would look very different. It is precisely because of this sense of community and desire for change that ISACS exists at all.

To all of our partners, funders and advocates who enable ISACS to support and develop street arts, circus and spectacle in and of Ireland, we acknowledge a huge debt of gratitude. Thanks too to the small, but brilliant and focused team, who do the hard work behind the scenes and to our board of directors who work on behalf of the members of the ISACS Network. To the members themselves - the artists, the practitioners, the organisations, the dreamers, and believers - your imagination, passion, dedication and hard work are what drives ISACS on towards making this plan a reality.

It is time for Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle artforms to step forward and be recognised for the crucial role we play in making great art, challenging expectations, thrilling and exciting audiences - large and small, and developing, nurturing and sustaining a thriving artistic community.



Miriam Dunne
Chair, ISACS Network



Lucy Medlycott
Executive Director ISACS Network



Introduction

This plan came about as the result of a Strategic Planning Process which commenced in January 2021. After an open tender process, ISACS Network engaged the services of Noeleen Hartigan to work with the organisation to develop a new four-year organisational Strategic Plan for the period 2022 – 2025. The process included a consultation element with national and international, external, and internal stakeholders of the ISACS Network which enabled a range of views to be heard and considered in the process of the development of this plan. A range of consultation approaches were employed including, individual interviews, focus meetings and survey analysis.

This included meetings with key stakeholders including with the ISACS Board of Directors, the management, and staff of ISACS, funders and of course most importantly the ISACS membership. Two focus groups were held with the ISACS Membership in June to share, discuss and present key findings and to receive feedback and suggestions. Over 40 members attended from a large geographic spread both nationally and internationally, representing both street arts, circus (contemporary & traditional) and spectacle arts.

The resulting document takes into account these rich, experienced, emerging and diverse views towards how the ISACS Network can contribute to a growing, vibrant, and strong future for the development of Street, Circus and Spectacle arts in Ireland today.



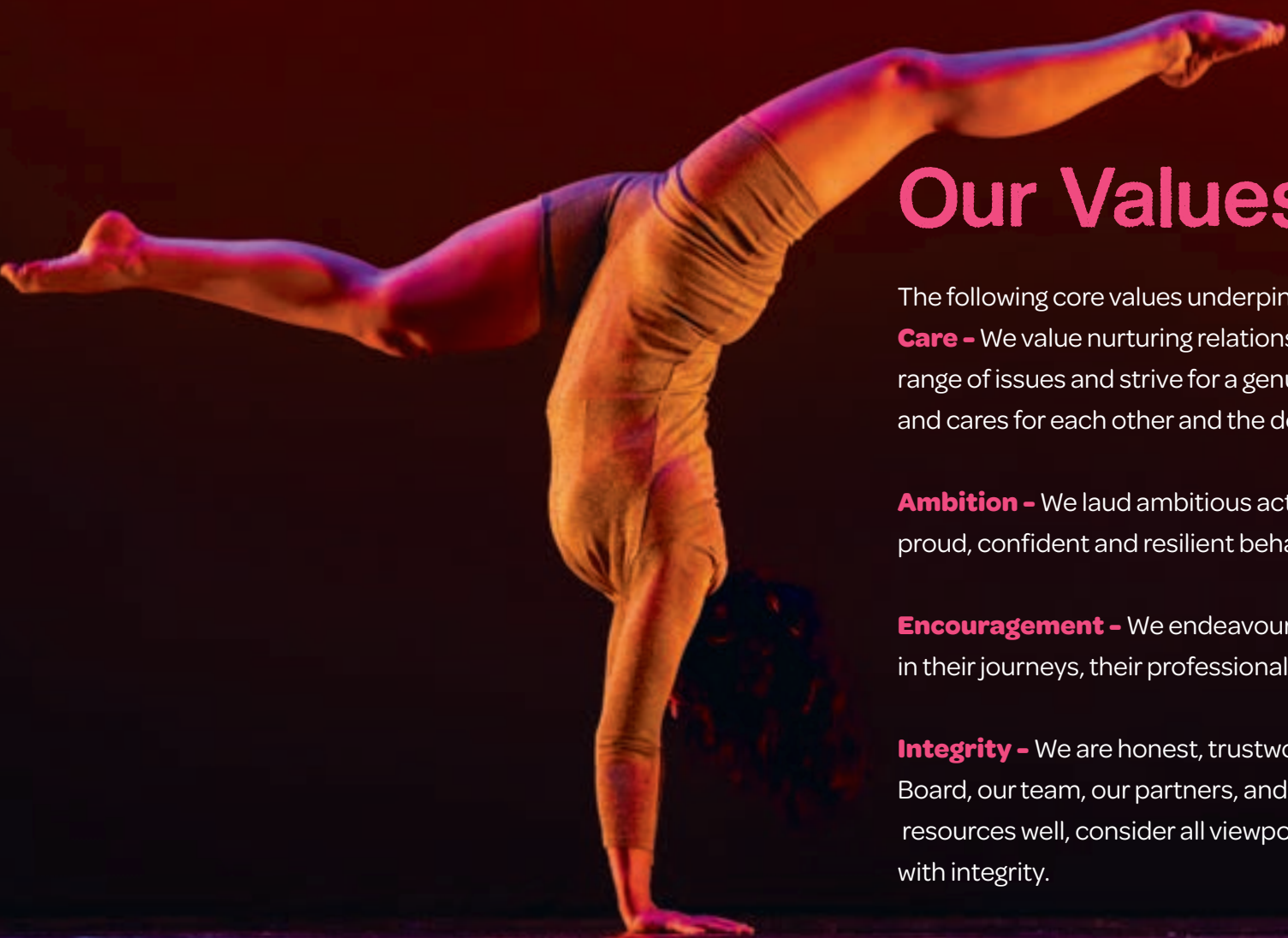
Our Vision

To be a leading example of an artist first members network which supports and grows the street, circus and spectacle artforms of Ireland.

Our Mission

Our mission is to celebrate our artforms, advocate for the policy and practical changes that will allow our artforms to flourish, grow our membership and sustain our organisation.





Our Values

The following core values underpin and inform our work:

Care - We value nurturing relationships, supporting our membership across a range of issues and strive for a genuinely inclusive community which connects and cares for each other and the development of the art forms.

Ambition - We laud ambitious actions and thinking, growing determined, proud, confident and resilient behaviour across and between our membership.

Encouragement - We endeavour to encourage and empower our members in their journeys, their professional development, and their creativity.

Integrity - We are honest, trustworthy, and open with our members, our Board, our team, our partners, and our funders/stakeholders. We use our resources well, consider all viewpoints, offer solutions where we can and act with integrity.

Strategic Goals

Value and Visibility

Celebrate our Artforms sharing the history, value, and potential of our work

Practical & Policy Development

Advocate for the policy and practical changes that will enable a flourishing Street Art, Spectacle and Circus sector to thrive in Ireland

Membership Growth

Grow our support to ISACS members to enhance their capacity to deliver high quality work and to sustain their livelihoods

Organisational Management and Development

Sustain our organisation through increased and diversified funding and enhanced human capacity.



A woman in a yellow and green leotard is performing a hula hoop routine. She is standing on a dark stage, and several large, glowing hula hoops are suspended in the air around her, creating a circular pattern. The background is a solid blue color.

How we Will Achieve these Goals

Goal 1

Celebrate our Artforms **sharing the history, value, and potential of our work**

The work of our artists is skilled, diverse, engaging and deliberately boundary breaking. But it has in the past been misunderstood, with the artistic merit and artists themselves undervalued. As part of this strategy, we will proactively engage policy makers, producers, and the public in dialogue about the value, diversity and opportunities presented by these artforms.

Actions

- Develop and deliver a communications strategy that advocates for the value, quality, diversity, history, achievements, and accessibility of our artforms
- Research and gather factual data on the evolution, growth and impact of these art forms in Ireland
- Design and lead a symposium on the artforms in Ireland to build understanding and new collaborations
- Position ISACS as a knowledge hub for those wishing to deepen their understanding of the artforms in Ireland
- Identify and recognise the breadth and diversity of audiences who engage with street and circus arts and its impact on them.

Goal 2

Advocate for the policy and practical changes that will enable a flourishing Street Art, Circus and Spectacle sector to thrive in Ireland.

The policy environment including the Arts Council's commitment to artists pay, the right to participate in culture and diversity & inclusion, and the increasing importance of the 'public space' create the potential for a flourishing sector. However, the sector cannot thrive without the appropriate infrastructure, and the removal of obvious roadblocks. ISACS will create evidence-based advocacy for the policy and practical changes to enable an emerging sector to blossom and thrive.

Actions

- Advocate for effective resourcing for the development of street arts, circus and spectacle sector in Ireland
- Ensure these art forms are identified, included, and embedded into future arts/ arts education/ arts tourism/ arts heritage policy documents
- Highlight the need for infrastructural investment, physical space, and educational programmes as career paths, towards the development of the sector
- Continue to campaign for an accessible insurance market for artists and arts companies alongside the Alliance for Insurance Reform
- Initiate conversations towards developing a national archive of circus and street arts to maintain, protect and preserve the heritage and journey of these artforms
- Lead and contribute to the ongoing discourse on 'public domain' & 'wellbeing' and the role of these art forms within same.

Goal 3

Grow our support to ISACS members to enhance their capacity to deliver high quality work and to sustain their livelihoods.

ISACS membership has grown from 10 in 2012 to over 200 in 2021.

Our members value the network, collegiality, and creative development opportunities that ISACS creates. As our network continues to grow, we will continue to respond to our members needs through mentoring, training programmes and development opportunities.

Actions

- Build the leadership capacity of the ISACS membership from the ground up by strengthening best practice and supporting ongoing art form development
- Deliver a comprehensive programme of artistic and professional supports to our members in the form of residencies, international activities, and resources
- Continue to offer one on one mentorship to members
- Proactively develop and encourage the growth of artists who are currently underrepresented in our artforms
- Grow the interconnectivity between the membership and other artforms, linking and establishing a strong connected network between members and beyond members
- Proactively support the development of the future generation through and together with ISACS members who engage with young people

Goal 4

Sustain our organisation through increased and diversified funding and enhanced human capacity.

In order to deliver on any of these goals and aspirations it is vital that ISACS secures and delivers a strong and sustainable business model which can realistically reach what we set out to achieve.

Actions

- Increase and diversify income streams over the period of the strategy
- Grow staffing levels to at least 4 staff in the roles of Director, Operations Manager, Communications Officer and Co. Admin/Membership officer
- Increase the capacity, expertise, and diversity of the ISACS Board
- Invest in staff wellbeing, more competitive salaries, and staff capacity building in key areas
- Measure our impact and share our learning with funders and other stakeholders
- Resource and implement a robust CRM in 2022 in order to build connectivity with members, our knowledge base and our case making to donors and policy makers.

How we Will Measure Success

ISACS Networks strategy will be delivered via an annual implementation plan.

We will measure the success of our programmes, services and strategic goals through our ongoing evaluation framework.

Appendix 1:

Circus

Circus is an ancient art form which has evolved over the centuries from court jesters, jugglers, acrobats etc to the more well-established identity of 'Traditional Circus' which was founded by Sir Philip Astley in 1768. Astley, a military man, was engaged in training and presenting horses – dressage, show jumping etc. Astley quickly evolved his equine presentations to include equine stunt riding alongside a variety of unusual acts of human and animal skill, attracting wider and more diverse audiences. He is widely regarded as the grandfather of the modern day circus, although his version, based in the heart of London was actually called 'Astley's Amphitheatre'.

The art form took off and was beloved by Victorians, becoming a highly fashionable form of entertainment, which pushed the boundaries of human endeavour and opened doors between continents.

Circus continued to evolve throughout the 20th century often running alongside fairgrounds and other attractions.

During the latter half of the twentieth century - traditional circus has transferred across to inspire contemporary performance artists creating a new form of circus, sometimes called 'Contemporary Circus'.

This circus is inspired by the skill, technique and mastery of the traditional circus acts and weaves them together to create conceptual art sometimes with a social/political message or a reflection on the human condition or other goals/messages. It works to weave a diversity of circus skills into a fresh style of presentation and narrative which reflects the present day.

Youth and Social Circus

Youth Circus and Social Circus are participant-centered practices that employ circus arts as a method of engaging participants in developing their personal, social, physical and creative skills.

Youth Circus

Youth Circus refers to organised circus arts participation programmes for children and young people. These programmes and activities generally take place in a non-formal education setting and participants come from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Social Circus

Social Circus refers to the use of circus arts in a caring, supportive, or therapeutic setting with people who are marginalised or at social or personal risk. The primary goal of Social Circus is not merely to learn circus arts but to create social change through fostering the personal and social development of its participants. Some Youth and Social Circus students continue on towards preparatory or professional circus education or careers. *

** Definitions as determined by the Circus++ project, with thanks to Irish partner Galway Community Circus*

Artform Definitions

Street Arts

Street Arts is a movement which evolved and grew over the 60's, 70's with the growth of democracy, the transformation of the social hierarchy and the evolution of community arts practice.

It believes in taking art out of the institution and placing it in public space. It seeks to connect with all people irrespective of social, economic, or educational backgrounds. It seeks to bring people together in shared experience and bring down barriers to art, culture, and elitism.

Street arts is not defined by a single genre – it has many and takes many forms. The only thing that defines it is that it takes place outside of a formal arts building/ institution. It can happen on a street, a car park, a forest, a mountain top, the side of a building, a brown field site, a warehouse, a car showroom – the list goes on. It is sometimes called Outdoor Arts or Site-specific Arts or Arts in Public Space.

Spectacle

Spectacle could be defined as a large-scale spectacular event which involves a mass audience.

It may involve large scale props, floats, puppets, constructions. It may involve fireworks, music, percussion. It may involve audience participation.


It may be a carnival, a parade, a procession, or it may be a static show on a height. It is often presented outdoors, in public space, during a festive celebratory context.

The future of ArtForm

ISACS artists often operate at the crossroads of genre, identifying themselves as multidisciplinary artists.

This is significant as we see more and more artists borrowing, exchanging, and being inspired to create between and across form. Many of the artists in these fields operate outside the traditional, the formal, the establishment, so it should come as no surprise that they seek to be uncategorised and rather retain their independence and freedom of expression. Indeed, this may be precisely why they are drawn to the autonomous nature of the street/the big top.... there one can go beyond.

We applaud their innovation and welcome the barrier breaking! Watch out World!

A photograph of two acrobats performing a high-wire act. One acrobat is in a crouched position on the wire, while the other is in a more dynamic, arched pose above them. The background is a clear blue sky. The image is partially overlaid with a dark blue gradient on the right side and an orange patterned shape in the top left corner.

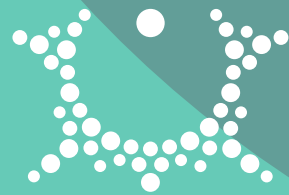
**“In the decade since their initial formation,
ISACS have successfully established a
track-record as a leading voice in the
Circus Street Arts & Spectacle sector.”**

Maureen Kennelly, Director of the Arts Council.



Artists featured: Snatch Circus, Fidget Feet Aerial Dance, Waterford Spraoi, Duffys Circus, Jude O'Neill, Lumen Street Theatre, Seve Feathers, Bill & Fred Productions, Jessica Doolin, Maleta, Circus Gerbola, Tumble Circus.

Photographer credits: Abigail Denniston, Ste Murray, Patrick Browne, Niall Carson, Deirdre Power, Michael Schoch, Pflasterspektakel Festival.



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