

Improving Links in Creative Production Chains

Notes from Session

18 February 2003

The session was opened by Chair, Michael Frye, who welcomed the Commission members to the Royal Society of the Arts, an institution that has played a major role in the history and development of London's creative economy and cultural life over the last two centuries. Michael described how the coming together of the Commission at the RSA was important and timely – with economic uncertainty and international tensions, the 'mood' of London has perceptibly fallen in recent years, and fresh and innovative public policies are needed to help stimulate and re-awaken London's economic and cultural life.

The Commission members were given a series of presentations by the following: Dr Andy Pratt, London School of Economics; John Ferguy, Sohonet; Doreen Adusei, Fashionworks and Dieneke Ferguson, Mazorca, with written comments from Alice O'Rourke, New York New Media Association. In addition, Commission members were joined by representatives from the LDA and Business Link for London, all of who contributed to the discussions. As a result, the following were identified as points for possible LDA action:

- Linkages in London's creative production chains should be identified, highlighted and showcased – the "100 top linkages" should be published and publicised, to inspire and stimulate new thinking about where links exist and how they can be exploited.
- The establishment of a London-wide showcasing programme for all of the creative industries, as promotion and marketing are often beyond the resources and expertise of small creative businesses, but essential for accessing production chains in the London and international markets.
- A programme of intensive learning for London's creative entrepreneurs, with opportunities to learn new forms of entrepreneurship, management and sustainable business practices.
- The Centre for Systems and Services Design: the establishment of a HE-level initiative dedicated to researching and teaching the principles and practice of systems design across all sectors.
- Network everything! To ensure that emerging talent and new market opportunities are quickly integrated into London's wider creative economy there should be a network of networks that links all of London's existing support provision together.
- Intermediaries, agents and scouts should be used to develop and expand creative networks, build bridges between them, and to provide local access points. Certain agents should have a particular remit for building diversity across the sector.
- An audit of the creative skills and access to international creative markets that the refugee and immigrant communities are bringing to London, and the opportunities for exploiting these further.

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- Telecommunications technologies suggest new ways of linking and enabling creative networks that should be explored further.
- Sector specific bodies and support agencies have a vital role to play as channels for the more generalised support infrastructure – adapting, interpreting, re-packaging and marketing existing expertise and resources.
- The development of technological infrastructure as a means of consolidating, developing and enriching creative production chains. As new creative products and processes emerge from the convergence of media and ICT, creative businesses will increasingly require access to this infrastructure.
- The creative production chain is well understood in its abstracted, generalised form but is much more difficult to apply to the individual sub-sectors. A SWOT analysis of the main linkages in each sub-sector would make this process easier.
- The establishment of regionally based licenses, which offer member organisations access to commercially valuable market information at an affordable rate.
- Initiatives to shorten production chains in localities, thereby enabling a more direct transfer of creative goods and services from the producers to consumers.
- The establishment of Quality Assurance intermediaries that develop benchmarks and standards which creative suppliers meet in order to reassure larger companies of their quality and reliability, while incentivising small businesses to improve their production processes.
- Public sector bodies should be encouraged to develop new procurement procedures for creative products and services that give better opportunities to small businesses.

For more information about the Commission's activities, please get in touch with Paul Owens, paul@creativelondon.org.uk or 020 7468 2334