

SVA

Guidelines and criteria for selection process for studio provision at SVA

Introduction

Stroud Valleys Artspace (SVA), is an ambitious artist led project for the promotion of contemporary arts, providing studio space for professional artists. SVA serves local and regionally based artists through a support and information network, a digital arts resource and project space facilities. Local, regional and national audiences engage and participate with the SVA's innovative and diverse artistic programme through a range of initiatives that occur throughout the year.

After eleven years of continuous activity Stroud Valleys Artspace is now moving into one of the most significant stages of its development with a major refurbishment of its John Street site in Stroud town centre. Led by Tony Fretton architects (Lisson Gallery, Camden Art Centre, Artsway) it is set to become a new focus for the arts in Stroud, the county and the region. SVA moved back into the building in January 2007 after the completion of the 2nd phase of the £1.6 million pound refurbishment, and rented the 1st spaces in April 2007.

Background

Initiated by artists for artists in 1996, SVA was set up in response to a local need for low cost workspace, exhibition and networking opportunities. From the beginning, the founder members of SVA realised that providing studio space alone would not produce the vibrant and engaging environment that many artists and audiences were seeking. The first open studio's event was held six weeks after moving into the John Street site in July 1997 and this annual event has since evolved into the Site festival, which last year involved over 250 local, national and international artists in 88 sites throughout the Stroud district.

A collaborative, informed and outward looking stance has always been part of the SVA ethos and the development of a dynamic arts infrastructure that engaged with the wider contemporary art scene has been an essential part of supporting local and regional artists. Key to this was the creation of physical and critical spaces in which art and ideas could be presented and debated, as well as produced. But rather than running a gallery, the artist-centred approach and a desire to promote experimental and critically engaged practices led SVA to develop a model that was closer to that of a flexible 'agency'. Through the collaborative involvement of active artist-members a wide range of events have been developed through a process built on necessity, interest or opportunity rather than through the establishment of a formal exhibition programme. Another essential ingredient has been to develop the artists network far beyond the confines of the Stroud district. By initiating collaborations with artists and organisations across the UK and beyond, SVA continues to build a profile and a constituency that engages on a regional, national and international level.

Alongside the annual Site festival and open studios events recent and on-going SVA projects include the Elixir commissions for Gloucester Royal Hospital; an exchange project with artists in Morocco; Resound audio arts festival; Trial Pit Cinema artists' video programme; the Hub Musicians collective which provides low cost rehearsal space for musicians and promotes regular music events in local venues; and diverse programme of exhibitions, performances, screenings, installations, residencies, and public art projects. Integrated within SVA's activities is a developing interactive, educational programme with artists, schools, colleges and community groups.

As part of the recent process of fundraising and redevelopment SVA has undergone a number of significant reviews, and business planning health checks. The key outcome of this process is that SVA is still fundamentally committed to its core aim of providing high quality, flexible low cost production and presentation space for artists.

SVA's studio letting policy

A new selection process

Previously SVA did not operate a selection process for studio spaces. The structural and organisational changes that have recently taken place have offered unique challenges and opportunities to develop SVA's artistic and educational programme. As part of this SVA has developed a studio letting policy in response to the increased demand for space, the higher professional and public profile of SVA as an organisation, and a desire to create a stimulating and creative working environment for all users of the newly refurbished building.

The studio letting policy is guided by SVA's mission statement and vision (see attached document) and by the charitable objects which are written in SVA's constitution. These state that SVA "shall be for the benefit of the community to advance the education of the public in the practice and appreciation of the arts."

Studio letting policy aims

SVA aim to operate an open and accessible decision-making process which will be based on the following criteria:

- To encourage studio members to contribute to SVA's artistic and educational programme both within the building and beyond.
- Create a stimulating, creative and flexible working environment that will challenge, develop and inform studio members practice
- Increase the support to studio members practice through offering opportunities for critical debate, mentoring, training.
- Develop a working environment that is outward looking and well networked with other regional, national and international arts organisations.
- To encourage collaboration and experimentation
- To develop studio related activities that will engage and challenge new audiences.

Interaction and the collaborative process

One of the most promising aspects of artists moving back into the building is the opportunity to establish a partnership between the studio holders and the organisation, a partnership that realises the potential of the studio group and artist led activity. Previously studio members were often divorced or isolated from the artistic programme. In order to avoid a situation of the 'artist and the institution' a structure is being developed that will encourage and support studio members to become more integrated within the programme and the activities of the organisation.

In order to begin this dialogue between artists, the programme and SVA, a number of commitments will be expected from studio members: At least once a year all studio members will be expected to:

- make a presentation to other studio members.
- curate/co-ordinate one event or exhibition.
- commit to two open studios weekends at SVA during the Site festival and to adopt a collaborative and integrated approach to this event.

SVA is keen to develop a flexible approach to these commitments, the main aim being to encourage an innovative, proactive and critically engaged culture within the studios. Artists are asked to consider these commitments in their application for a studio at SVA and at the follow on meetings for shortlisted artists.

Length of studio occupancy

SVA will offer studio space on a fixed term basis for a minimum of three months to a maximum of three years. The length of time required can be requested on the application form and will be discussed in the interview.

Studio Leases

Although you may be offered a studio for the maximum period of three years, artists are obliged to renew leases annually as this provides SVA and the artist adequate legal protection. Studio members who wish to continue occupancy after the maximum three-year period can re-apply for a further fixed term tenancy. Renewal of leases will take place in March each year. SVA have taken the most up to date legal advice from ACME's solicitors in terms of appropriate leases for studio space provision. The leases that will be issued are opted out leases. SVA will guide artists through the main aspects of the lease at the time of issue. The lease is available prior to this if artists wish to get independent advice.

Rental costs

Studio costs are based on an inclusive sq.foot basis which is paid by monthly standing order. Cost of spaces vary depending on a number of factors including whether they are refurbished, lockable, individual spaces or open plan, or have use of additional workshop space (as in sculpture). The costs are set out in the attached rental chart. SVA have endeavoured to keep the costs as low as possible and have undertaken a comparative cost exercise with other studios in the country. A deposit of 1 months rent will be required in advance which is returnable subject to the conditions of the lease being fulfilled. A key deposit of £20 is also required which enables artists to have 24hr access to studios. Rents include VAT and increase by 3% annually with the cost of inflation.

Membership

All studio holders will become full members of SVA and are required to pay an annual subscription of £20. Full members are entitled to vote at SVA's AGM.

Application process

1. Submission of application

Artists interested in applying for studio space must submit:

- A completed application form. This form covers questions which directly relate to SVA's studio letting aims.
- An up to date CV. Please include details of any experience of working on artist-led projects or with other arts organisations; self initiated exhibitions and events, or other collaborative ventures that you feel relate to the studio lettings aims.
- This can be in the form of photographic prints or digital images on CD (max 10), DVD show reel (10 mins), publications, reviews, or text based information.

SVA's main criteria for selection are based on the aims listed above rather on quality of work. However in order to define your practise, as requested in the application form, you asked to submit additional material as part of your application. This can be in the form of :

- photographic prints or digital images on CD (max 10),
- DVD show reel (10 mins)
- publications, reviews, or text based information.

Deadline for applications: Last weekday of the month

Please send to Stroud Valleys Artspace, 4 John Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire. GL5 2HA

2. Shortlisting Week 1 of following month

A team of three selectors will be asked to shortlist the applicants based on the studio letting policy, available space and matching appropriate studio spaces to artists working practice. These selectors will be an SVA artist member, Jo Leahy and Neil Walker, SVA directors.

Artists will be notified in the first instance by telephone followed by an email. We will endeavour to give clear and instructive explanations of decisions taken.

3. Informal interviews: Week 2

Shortlisted artists will be asked to come to an informal meeting with Neil Walker and Jo Leahy.

This will give an opportunity for:

- SVA to be able to present clearly and directly its aims and proposed activity as a studio providing organisation.
- For the shortlisted artists to discuss more fully their professional aspirations and intentions in terms of being a studio member at SVA and to ask further questions.

4. Final selection: Week 2

SVA will endeavour to let artists know the final decision by the end of the week

5. Studio leases and rental agreements: Week 3

Issuing/signing of studio leases and standing order forms, deposits etc. Studio members will be asked to sign a lease 14 days before taking a studio which states: "To comply with SVA's charitable objects, the tenant agrees to participate in SVA's artistic and educational programme including the annual visual arts festival as set out in SVA's letting policy"

6. Studio spaces available: Start of following month

Studio spaces will be available from the start of the following month. It is expected that selected applicants will take spaces from this date.

Building design and facilities

Building design

The key spaces within the building are flexibly designed studio environments for contemporary artists working with a variety of mediums and methodologies. These spaces are the core activity in the building. The recent refurbishment of the building has enabled SVA to provide spaces that are heated, well lit and secure. In addition we have ensured that the majority of the spaces are open plan with easy circulation between studios. A key priority through the design process was to ensure that SVA could maintain the building efficiently and sustainably, without dramatically increasing our running costs and thereby losing the principle of low cost studios. The studios have been self-financing and we are keen to ensure that the continued success of the studios is through its sustainable management.

As well as the permanent studios spaces other parts of the building will also be a resource for non-studio based members and occasional other users. The digital resource, project spaces and meeting rooms has a flexible usage for training, presentations, exhibitions and meetings.

However the ultimate success of a contemporary studio practice and the principles behind which SVA operates is an interaction with and support from the wider community. The challenge is to present a public face while not creating the expectation of the building being fully accessible on a daily basis to the general public. Access by the public to the studios will occur once a year during Open Studios. The building therefore has a level of accessibility, to enable the public into particular areas in the building for particular events such as exhibitions, installations, performances, meetings and debate. The public access areas will be flexible spaces to enable them to be work/ residency /project spaces when not in use for public events.

Artists studio spaces

Sculpture studios. Ground floor, single storey building

This floor benefits from overhead daylight from the skylight window. There are three large windows, large door access, high ceilings and a hard standing, load bearing floor.

The studios are:

Studio no.s 1-6: 6 open plan individual studios for sculptors Size: average 8 sq.m.

All artists renting sculpture studio space have shared use of the sound proofed workshop (20 sq.m) with extraction facilities, industrial sink and work benches for equipment and shared tool facilities.

Painting studios. Top floor, rear three storey building

This floor benefits from overhead daylight from the skylight window. In addition all the studios have windows.

The studios are:

Studio no.s 7- 13: 7 open plan studio spaces. All the spaces share the use of a studio sink.
Spaces vary from 10.72 sq.m – 13 sq.m.

Studio 14 Separate and lockable studio space with sink and data point. Size: 9.39 sq.m
PLEASE NOTE: This space is only available on short terms lets between 3 and 6 months. The studio will be also used as a space for artists residencies

Studio 15 Separate and lockable studio space with sink and data points. Size: 13.75 sq.m

Studio 16 Separate and lockable studio space. Size: 9.1 sq.m

Textiles studio Middle floor, rear three storey building

(Studio 17. Size: 86 sq.m)

In addition to the painting and sculpture studios there is a textiles studio which is rented by Liz Lippiatt. Artists should get in touch directly with Liz regarding opportunities for training and usage of the facilities.

Contact details available in SVA office.

All studios are in the rear three storey and single storey buildings are fully accessible with a lift and disabled toilet facilities.

There is a tea station located on the top floor

Mixed use studio spaces First and second floor, front three storey building

This space will be redesigned as part of the Phase three refurbishment. These spaces are not accessible to wheelchair users.

The studios are:

Studio no. 18 1st floor large lockable studio with two windows and sink. Size: 31 sq.m

Studio no. 19 2nd floor lockable studio with window and shared sink. Size: 12.7 sq.m

Studio no. 20 2nd floor lockable studio with window and shared sink. Size: 19.4 sq.m

Multi use spaces for events, exhibitions, training, digital resource access and meetings

Project Space 2 Ground floor, rear three storey building (76 sq.m)

This is a public fully accessible project space with door access from the courtyard. It is a well-designed space benefiting from natural daylight, spot lighting and florescent lighting. It is used for SVA activities and by other users for workshops, performance art, music, video and film screenings, artists' talks, seminars. This space can also be booked by studio and non-members as a clean 'try out' space for work in progress, photography etc. Separate access into the space from the courtyard would allow it to be booked out and used without users having access to the rest of the building. The space would be opened out to the courtyard for specific events.

Mezzanine room Middle floor, rear three storey building (21sq.m)

This well lit room is used for training and meetings by SVA and is also available for hire.

Project space 1 Ground floor, front three storey building (34 sq.m)

This space will be redesigned as part of the Phase three refurbishment. Currently it is a publicly accessible project space with high visibility from street. It will be used for SVA activities and other users for showing a range of work, temporary installations, work in progress, collaborative projects, residencies, shop window display. This space will have a 'show' or 'project' or display to the public visible from the window during the majority of the year.

External spaces (front and rear courtyards)

These spaces are designed to offer opportunities for temporary installations, performances and exhibitions that are open to the public from time to time. At most times this space is used by studio artists for relaxation, meetings, coffee breaks, assessing or piloting projects etc. Car parking will be prohibited here except for loading and unloading.

Stroud Valleys Artspace

Application form for John Street studios, Stroud

Contact Details

Name:

Address

Phone No

Mobile:

Email

Website

Self employed

Yes

No

(please tick)

Studio space required

Please read the studio accommodation details enclosed in the pack and tick which studio area you would like to work in.

Also please indicate if known, a particular space that you wish to rent within that area.

1. How would you define your practice?

2. What working methods and equipment (if any) do you use for your practice?

3. How do you define your personal and professional commitment to your work?

This can be expressed through the amount of time committed to your practice both in and out of the studio, training previously undertaken, mentoring, project involvement or other relevant experience or information. Just give a brief summary and ensure that the details of any professional involvement are shown on your CV.

4. How do you financially support your practice? Please try to indicate the percentage, and give further details if you wish or indicate if they are on your CV.

	Please tick	%
Art sales income		
Private and public Commissions		
Residencies		
Public or privately funded projects		
Art teaching		
Other arts related work		
Other		

Please read carefully SVA's Studio letting policy aims for reference in completing your answers below.

5. Why do you want a studio at the SVA studios in John Street?

6. What kind of support would you like to receive from SVA and its members during you studio time?

7. How do you imagine that you will be able to develop your practise within the SVA studio environment?

8. How do you envisage contributing to SVA's artistic and educational programme as expressed in the Studio letting policy and vision statement? Please try to give some actual examples that could encourage further discussion.

9. Have you been involved in artist led projects or other arts membership organisations before? If yes, please describe in what capacity. Please indicate if there are further details on your CV.

10. Where did you find out about Stroud Valleys Artspace studio space?

SVA Mission Statement

Stroud Valleys Artspace's (SVA) mission is to raise the profile of artists and their role in the community by supporting the production and presentation of their work, thereby increasing opportunities for access to and active participation in the arts for a diverse range of people. SVA will enable artists to work without undue financial pressure within a practical supportive framework through the provision of space, resources, training and support. SVA aims to act as a catalyst for experimentation and collaboration by promoting a programme of innovative projects to the general public. As a unique cultural focus for the community, SVA will make a significant contribution to the economic prosperity of the area.

Vision

Multi dimensional project

SVA is an ambitious artist led project which is developing a unique environment of professional arts activity in Gloucestershire. Successful capital and revenue funding will build the capacity of SVA enabling the organisation to provide a permanent and supportive production and presentation space for artists. SVA will be a multidimensional 'space' provider which includes studio, resource, project, exhibition, web and publishing spaces. SVA aims to initiate, commission and promote an accessible and innovative programme of projects in collaboration with regional, national and international artists.

The capital project

SVA has completed the 2nd phase of a £1.6 million refurbishment of a 7000 sq.ft warehouse building in Stroud town centre that it previously occupied, taking twelve years of studio practice and projects into a new phase. The acquisition and renovation of this building has enabled SVA to permanently provide good quality low cost sustainable workspace, resource facilities, project space and a support network to a wide number of artists. The design of the building will reflect the innovative and collaborative nature of SVA's artist led programme, providing vital arts infrastructure and an interactive cultural focal point from which a high quality arts programme will be promoted.

Artistic programme for the general public

At the heart of SVA's vision is an ambition to engage new and diverse audiences and participants in its activities to create a greater appreciation and understanding of artists and their work. SVA's innovative artistic programme will create new opportunities for participation at all levels and strengthen the cultural diversity of the locality. This will be achieved through an annual festival of the visual arts, open studios, exhibitions, performances, film and video events, installations, residencies, public art projects and an integrated educational programme.

Investment in artists

On a local level this is being achieved by providing vitally needed low cost workspace, facilities, training and a supportive network. Bringing in regional, national and international artists to participate in a diverse range of exciting projects will raise the profile of Stroud and the members of its artistic community. SVA aims to strengthen networking, stimulate critical debate, and encourage new ways of working for many participating artists. In particular the creative use of new technology will be supported, developed and promoted. SVA will support the professional development of artists, enhancing their economic status and employment opportunities.