

Young Irish Film Makers (YIFM)

STATEMENT OF PRACTICE & ARTISTIC POLICY:

Young Irish Film Makers (YIFM) is a national youth arts organisation, specialising in film and animation. It is a company limited by guarantee, registered charity with a voluntary board responsible for overall governance. YIFM are in receipt of funding from a range of organisations including Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Arts Council, Kilkenny Carlow Education Training Board and Screen Ireland. YIFM also generate income through their programmes which is reinvested to achieve the organisation's mission.

OUR MISSION:

To make filmmaking and animation accessible to all young people across Ireland.

Our Aim:

YIFM use their unique methodology of filmmaking and animation as a youth arts practice to engage and work with young people across Ireland. YIFM support young people to develop creative abilities, personal well-being, social confidence, critical thinking and life skills. Our programmes help to create pathways for young people to the arts, education, training and employment.

Objectives:

1. Empower young people to develop artistic practices, produce individual and collaborative work, explore new ideas and critically engage in their own production and appreciation of audio visual content.
2. Embed core skills including artistic confidence, communication, teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and resilience through the youth arts practice of filmmaking and animation.
3. Provide opportunities for young people who experience marginalization and/or from under-resourced communities to engage with film and animation.
4. Support young people to tell their own stories, produce/exhibit their own work and build a critical appreciation of screen arts
5. Assist young people to create portfolio work and to strengthen their capacities to pursue further education and/or careers in the creative arts or audiovisual sector.
6. To research, demonstrate and evidence the impact and outcomes of our work with young people.

Target Groups:

1. YIFM work with schools (including DEIS schools), youth groups, youth and community services across Ireland to deliver workshops for ages 9 - 25 yrs.
2. After school clubs and Summer Camps for young people aged 9 - 16yrs in the Kilkenny area.
3. 16-19 year olds interested in a career or college placement in film or animation.
4. Youth Arts workers who wish to use filmmaking or animation in their practice.
5. Young people at risk such as early school leavers, youth who experience marginalization and/or live in under-resourced communities; and the NEET (16 - 25 year old long term unemployed) population.

Methodologies:

Young Irish Film Makers is a specialised youth arts organisation that bringing together the methodologies of youth work and the youth arts practice of film making. **Appendix 1** outlines in detail and methodologies and approaches that underpin our work with young people.

National Programmes:

- **National Youth Film & Animation Network:** Funded by the Arts Council. A national network of young creatives and the stakeholders who support them. Providing resources, information and support for the next generation of screen content creators in Ireland.
- **YIFM NATIONAL YOUTH FILM OUTREACH.** 3 Day intensive youth arts programme facilitating young people to tell their own stories, produce and exhibit their own work. This programme primarily focuses on disadvantaged and marginalised young people.
- **The National Youth Film & Animation School.** 10 Day Residential programme for young persons aged 16-19yrs interested in a career or college placement in film or animation. This programme supports bursary placements for disadvantaged and marginalised young people.
- **Young Women in Film:** 3 Day intensive youth arts programme facilitating young females aged 14-17yrs. YIFM have partnered with IADT National Film School to run an advocacy & training programme promoting gender equality and empowerment of young women to enter the film & audiovisual industries.

Local Programmes (Kilkenny city and county)

- **Local Training Initiative in Digital Media** (40 Week full time course for 20 Learners @ QQI Level 5) Digital Media training model to provide digital literacy, employable skills and pathways to further education for disadvantaged young people.
- **After School Programmes** (4 after school workshops per week for 9-18yrs). Film club for young people, based locally at YIFM Studios in Kilkenny. Film making and digital media production workshops.
- **Summer Camps** (4 week long programmes for 9-16yrs). Young people are given the opportunity to explore all the creative disciplines within film culture. Learning new skills together with their peers in a supported, safe and creative environment.
- **YIFM Media Lab:** A dedicated high spec computer lab for the provision of software training for the animation and film. Pre & Post Graduate training in animation software in preparation for the workplace. Professional development training in various industry level software for Cartoon Saloon & Lighthouse Animations Studios.

YOUNG IRISH FILM MAKERS

Artistic Policy

Introduction

This document contains the artistic policy for Young Irish Film Makers (YIFM). Its aim is to concisely describe the way in which YIFM operates as a youth arts organisation serving young people across Ireland, and to give a rationale for this approach. The need for such a document has arisen due to an increased need to explain and describe our processes and methodologies to outside bodies and the general public. It is the culmination of an internal process of reflection, discussion and research. It is not a departure from the past nor a dramatic shift in our values, rather it is an effort to clarify and define our methods in a more formal way than has been the case in the past. Nonetheless the process of producing this document has been valuable and brought with it some lessons that we can take on board. It could be said that creating this document has allowed us to grow as an organisation by helping us to know ourselves better.

Context

Young Irish Film Makers is a specialised youth arts organisation founded in 1991 with the aim of bringing together the methodologies of youth work and the youth arts practice of film making. What started out as a local club with just 15 members based locally in Kilkenny city, has grown to become a sustainable national organisation which serves over 1500 young people annually across Ireland, doubling its engagement with young people in the last four years alone.

YIFM delivers a variety of specialised programmes in both film and animation in various locations nationwide; engaging young people in artistic process of writing and producing films. YIFM work with youth organisations to target marginalised and disadvantaged young people, in schools to engage with primary and secondary students, and a number of partnership and collaborations which deliver complex and unique programmes both locally and nationally. As a specialist organisation member of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), YIFM has become recognised for their unique and valuable contribution to the youth arts landscape in Ireland.

In alignment with the Arts Act 2003 and Making Great Art Work 2015, YIFM have focused on supporting young creatives to make excellent work which is enjoyed and valued, while at the same time building public engagement in the arts practice of film and animation. Through engagement with the Department of Children & Youth Affairs and the National Youth Council of Ireland, Young Irish Film Makers have implemented the core principles of the National Youth Strategy 2015 - 2020, delivering high quality, outcomes focused and evidence based youth development programmes.

Over the past few years, YIFM have successfully completed the National Quality Standards Framework and the Governance Code journey, all while maintaining the highest standards in youth arts practice, child safeguarding and GDPR processes. This capacity to deliver high standards at a sustainable level has seen YIFM grow their national footprint through engagement with a broad range of funding bodies (Arts Council, Department of Children & Youth Affairs, Education & Training Board, State Street and Screen Ireland).

Artistic Policy

YIFM programmes create a safe space for young people to explore and create in an informal setting. This space holds the balance of self awareness and self expression, providing an environment where young people develop both personally and creatively.

We support young film makers in their development as artists and work to develop an awareness and appreciation of film culture amongst young people across Ireland. We believe creativity and discovery play an important role in the development of appreciation and understanding in young people. For this reason we facilitate young people to actively participate and explore the medium of film by engaging with it as a multi disciplinary artform and creating their own work both individually and collaboratively. While those who engage with us will often complete a piece of work, at all times it is the process of creation that is our focus. We aim to bring young people into the culture of cinema as an engaged and critical audience, capable of participation.

YIFM view filmmaking as the collaboration of many artforms to produce one final outcome. The exploration of language and literature to write a script and tell a story. The capturing of light to produce beautiful images and cinematography. The interpretation of a performance by and actor. The exploration of sound and music to enhance and contribute to the feel and experience of being in the story. The piecing together of these performances to produce the final edit.

It is through exploration of each of these artforms and experiential learning that yifm engage with young people. This exploratory process is one of great personal and artistic growth for the young people involved. Throughout their journey with YIFM, young people are mentored and empowered to become critical thinkers, collaborative artists, accomplished performers, musical composers, directors of a performance, and curators of their own art when screening to the public.

The process of making a film involves many artforms, each of which is important in the production of an artifact which can be enjoyed by an audience. Much like a theatre production, modern dance, a novel or a painting, a film shown in a darkened room or cinema has the capacity to engage its audience and make them feel a certain way. It has the power to pose questions, create controversy, change an audience's viewpoint, make the viewer laugh or cry just as any other artform can.

This unique approach of working with young people through the medium of film and animation supports and enables young people not only to explore and participate in, but also contribute to and enrich the artform. While doing this, YIFM hold in balance the young person's personal and artistic development.

“Cinema gave me a means of understanding and eventually expressing what was precious and fragile in the world around me. This recognition, this spark that leads from appreciation to creation: it happens almost without knowing. For some, it leads to poetry, or dance, or music. In my case, it was the cinema.” - Martin Scorsese on the power of filmmaking as an artform.

Methodology

Young Irish Film Makers deploy a planned programme of youth-centred film-art practice, based on voluntary participation. The programme is developmental, in a non-formal way that compliments the formal curriculum (Links to Education, 2018), and practitioners are engaged in a reflective practice that evaluates itself in terms of the development of youth participants. This focus on youth development is enhanced by a commitment to high quality arts experiences, which extends to all of the component disciplines within film making; writing, visual language, drama, lighting, sound, post production, costume and art design (Appendix I).

The process is facilitative, working in partnership with young people and beginning with team building exercises influenced by group dynamics theory. It progresses through the dissemination of technical expertise to idea generation, discussion, constructive criticism and the iterative process of collaborative problem-solving. In this way the process develops critical thinking, literacy and social awareness as well as giving an outlet to creativity in multiple disciplines. The value of the problem solving process is enhanced greatly by the fact that the task is situated within a practicable social activity. Ultimately the outcome is a project that is genuinely a collaborative artistic expression of the young people in the group.

YIFM is a member of the National Youth Council of Ireland and our practice maintains the principles of the National Youth Strategy. We utilise film as an activity around which both personal and artistic developmental processes can be mediated in tandem. We evaluate our programmes in terms of their educational and developmental goals using combinations of formal evaluation and self evaluation, making use of the NYCI's Capturing Magic toolkit (2017). We provide training to our facilitators and encourage all of them to be reflective practitioners.

Arts-in-Education Practice

As detailed above our approach is non-formal and voluntary. We do, however, on occasion engage directly with the formal education sector and in addition to this we make efforts to compliment the formal education curriculum in a variety of ways, across multiple strands and at primary, junior and senior cycles. In this way we deploy, on occasion, an arts-in-education practice that is mindful of the interdisciplinary nature of cinema and in-keeping with the arts-in-education charter (Dept. Arts, Dept Ed, 2012). A full breakdown of how our practice compliments and achieves the distinct curricula is given in our Links to Education document (2018).

Rationale

The Government of Ireland recognises the importance of young people enjoying the arts (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014). Film is an integral artform as defined in the Arts Act (2003) and the Arts Council supports opportunities for young people to experience, explore and understand film (Film Policy 2018). This artistic policy embraces these three forms of encounter (experience, explore and understand) in a holistic and multi-faceted way, we help build understanding through exploration and experience. There is a solid pedagogical basis for discovery learning and our own Project-Based Learning policy (2018) documents this. There is a similarly holistic nature to our view on the value of art.

The Value of Art

The approach described above is founded on the belief that art has an intrinsic social value, beyond the instrumental goal of maintaining an industry. For this value to be realised there must be public engagement with the artform and also a commitment to excellence from artists. These two elements are complementary and indeed, as the Arts Council have recognised (2015), they are interdependent. It is this dichotomy that is at the heart of our approach. Public engagement with art needs an appropriate commitment to artistic excellence for it to be valuable and meaningful and likewise art has a value deficiency without authentic public engagement.

YIFM values young people as artists, with value in what they have to say and produce. Young people's work is important and should be held in the same regard as that of any adult artist.

Youth Led Practice - All YIFM programmes are youth led in terms of their creative development of work with the group. YIFM staff facilitate and mentor the group throughout the creative process, regardless of which artform they are exploring or engaging with. The process is facilitative, working in partnership with young people and beginning with team building exercises influenced by group dynamics theory. (*see methodology, YIFM Artistic Policy 2019*)

Focus Groups - YIFM regularly hold informal meetings and post programme or workshop discussions with young participants. Conducting focus groups with young people forms part of our participatory approach to explore the effectiveness of a programme and recruit participants for future work together with young people.

Group Contracts with Young Participants - Children and young people feel more secure when they know the limits and boundaries appropriate to their own behaviour and that of others. In recognition of this, and in order to create an environment in which children and young people feel valued, encouraged and affirmed, YIFM draw up a group contract in collaboration with each group to develop an appropriate code of behaviour during their time working together.

Implementation

Our aim is to achieve this in a targeted way, with regional and national strategies for both public engagement and artist support.

	Public Engagement	Supporting Artists
National		
National Youth Film Outreach (ages 9 - 18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration - screenings of young people's work. • Critical Analysis of films as an artistic expression. • Targeting disadvantaged and marginalised communities. (partnerships with youth work orgs and Youth Arts hubs through NYC1 youth arts programme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screenings of films from young people and professionals with facilitated critical analysis and discussion. • Young people are facilitated to collaborate in a multidisciplinary artform to create a finished product. • Not just potentially becoming artists in the future, but actively creating art now.
Young Women in Film (Ages 16 - 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting gender equality through the profiling of women in film. • Encouraging young women to explore discover and engage with film culture. • Challenging barriers to participation through the development of pathways to the arts for young women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted initiative at a crucial stage of personal development to support young women to develop their artistic voice and consider themselves in a way that may otherwise not have happened. • Screening of films made by women and those with strong female characters. • Supporting young women to write scripts, create and produce films.
National Youth Film & Animations School (Ages 16 - 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 day Residential programme working with young filmmakers and animators from across Ireland. • Bursary award encouraging and supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to engage with film & animation as artforms. • Public screenings of their work with panel discussion to explore the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid professional artists working with young people to create art. • Targeted engagement with high aptitude young filmmakers and animators increases potential for them to develop as a professional artist. • Supporting and mentoring young writers, actors, make up artists, animators, cinematographers, musicians etc. to explore, create and discover their artform.

	Public Engagement	Supporting Artists
Regional		
After Schools (ages 9 - 16yrs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to young people in the Kilkenny region. • Provision of a centre where children and young people can experience, explore and make films and animation. • Longitudinal research and development of practice with young people. Informs the practice of YIFM programmes across Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a safe space for young people to express themselves through arts practice. • Screenings of films from young people and professionals with facilitated critical analysis and discussion. • Young people progress from film making on to further engagement with other film making programmes and film culture.
LTI Local Training Initiative (QQI Level 5, Ages 16 - 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting disadvantaged young people. • Embracing the arts to enhance civic engagement & social inclusion of young people. • Creation of an arts practice educational model which can be used across Ireland • Integrates the arts into other govt. funded activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using film as arts practice to support project based learning. • Engaging with the arts practice in order to achieve formal qualifications. • Exploration of multidisciplinary projects such as music & film productions.
YIFM MEDIA LAB *NEW PROGRAMME 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD Training for professional artists/animators and youth film practitioners. • Supporting disadvantaged young people in their creative journey. • End of year screening of work to family, friends and public. • Integrates the arts into other govt. funded activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting young artists to develop their skills in drawing and animation. • Engagement with professional artists through CPD training. • Connected with an award winning animation studio, recognised world wide for their artistic integrity and approach to traditional animation. • Developing pathways towards a career / college placement in the arts.