



2014 - 2015
Annual Report

ONCA

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“Artists are shape-shifters, and in this there is a perennial, ferocious hope; the hope which transforms, which whispers of possibility, of vision, of change and radical healing.”

Jay Griffiths

“An extraordinary revelation about colour, life, resistance, acceptance and pure exuberant nature, fused with understanding and truth.”

Ali Smith, ONCA patron
‘A Cancer Landscape’, an ONCA exhibition



SQUIDCU
Lilia Y

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What is ONCA?

We inspire creativity and positive action in the face of environmental change

Our gallery in central Brighton is the only combined arts venue in the UK whose primary focus is on ecology/ ecological questions: raising a deeper awareness within the community of environmental and social change. Since November 2012, our programme of exhibitions and outreach has engaged artists, scientists and the general public in vibrant discourse about the environment, and our new 'Upstairs at ONCA' work and research space hosts an exciting community of local businesses, artists and charities, exploring new and more sustainable ways of living and being in Brighton.

ONCA's urban location is both a challenge and a gift in terms of finding ways to reach out to new diverse audiences, creating links with local community action groups and co-operatives, and capturing the imaginations of passers by, people local to the region and beyond.

The aims of The ONCA Trust:

1. To raise awareness of environmental and conservation issues through the arts.
2. To promote educational initiatives relating to art and conservation.
3. To raise funds to support conservation projects.

The aims of The ONCA Gallery:

1. To organise and curate contemporary art exhibitions themed around ecological concerns.
2. To run a programme of workshops - in the gallery, within schools and beyond. These are related to each project theme and include creative writing, poetry, storytelling, doodling, drawing, land art, sculpture, outdoor and adventure, music / DJ-ing, film making.
3. To run programmes of performance, film, debate and discussion.
4. To open the space to independent artists and charities, offering consultancy and gallery hire, for exhibitions that fit within the aims of ONCA.

INVITING PEOPLE TO SEE CHANGING ECOLOGIES IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Charity number 1150539

A foreword from ONCA's Board of Trustees

The ONCA Trust is now in its third year of existence, and we continue to be driving force for change in Brighton, and beyond.

With our committed team of passionate staff, trustees and patrons – including Green MP Caroline Lucas, writers Robert MacFarlane and Ali Smith, and artist Chris Drury – we have grown an empty shop into one of the primary contemporary galleries in the South East of England, known for our ability to couple inclusivity and learning with first-rate commissions and projects.

This year ONCA embarked on a new, exciting development project. The ONCA Gallery expanded, to take over a further 1282 square foot, through which we now rent 18 desks, divided over 5 rooms, on pay-by-the-month permanent and flexi-contracts to creatives, charities and start-ups with a bias towards sustainability and ecology. Our 'Upstairs at ONCA' has a three-fold focus – knowledge sharing, sustainable business development and creative co-working. We also provide a resource centre and rentable meeting space for the community. Downstairs, our public facing gallery continues to provide a high-quality and innovative arts programme, coupled with a commercial shop and rental space.

Groundbreaking achievements this year include:

1. Expanding to take over an additional three floors of space above the gallery, enabling ONCA to generate income to cover a significant proportion of core costs. This extra space provides a uniquely creative work hub for the community, and has been used by partners including Fine Art Critical Practice students at the University of Brighton and a host of local artists, charities and makers.
2. Achieving a two-year £75,000 Grants For The Arts from the National Lottery through Arts Council England to deliver a series of projects and exhibitions under the umbrella title 'Navigating Change', whilst working on developing a sustainable business model to improve ONCA's resilience long term.
3. Delivering ten exhibitions and projects of exceptional quality, and working with a series of local and national partners, including the University of Brighton, artist group Pale Blue Dot, Brighton Festival, Macmillan Cancer Support and the MAP Foundation.
4. Collaborating on two expeditions with Pangaea Explorations, aiming to widen opportunities for artists to work with scientists in the field on topics spanning marine conservation and microplastics.
5. Hosting over a hundred volunteers and four internships across the year, providing mentoring and support for young people looking to develop a career in the arts and/or environmental education.

We are extremely proud to be on the board of ONCA, a young and exciting charity that continues to go from strength to strength.

**From the ONCA Trustees:
J C Coleman, E Coleman, M Westbury, D Vose, H Joyce, C Barker, J Doyle**

Who we are



Our team:

Laura Coleman - Founder and Director
Persephone Pearl - Creative Director
Alice Clayton- Gallery Assistant

Our trustees:

J C Coleman
E Coleman
M Westbury
D Vose
H Joyce
C Barker
J Doyle

Our patrons:

Ali Smith
Chris Drury
Caroline Lucas
Robert Macfarlane
John Vernon Lord

What our patrons say



A NOTE FROM CHRIS DRURY:

'In an art world which is cynical and aloof, ONCA is a breath of fresh air. It is lively and alive. It cares about the world we live in and the way we lead our lives, it connects us to aspects of our lives we haven't considered. It acts as a hub connecting us to other disciplines and other ways of thinking. Art and Environment are not mutually exclusive because they are both connected to our deepest human emotions. So this small modest gallery is unique and deserving of our support.'

A NOTE FROM CAROLINE LUCAS:

'I'm very proud that Brighton is home to ONCA - a unique and inspiring gallery that acts both as a showcase for our relationship with the natural world, and as a spur to protecting and enhancing it. The arts have a vital role to play in encouraging more people to care for our environment, and to take action to defend it. At a time of increasing environmental destruction, we need to reach the hearts and minds of as many people as we can with a positive message that urgent change is possible and desirable. ONCA shows how that can be done - and offers a wonderfully creative space for exploration and reflection.'



What our patrons say

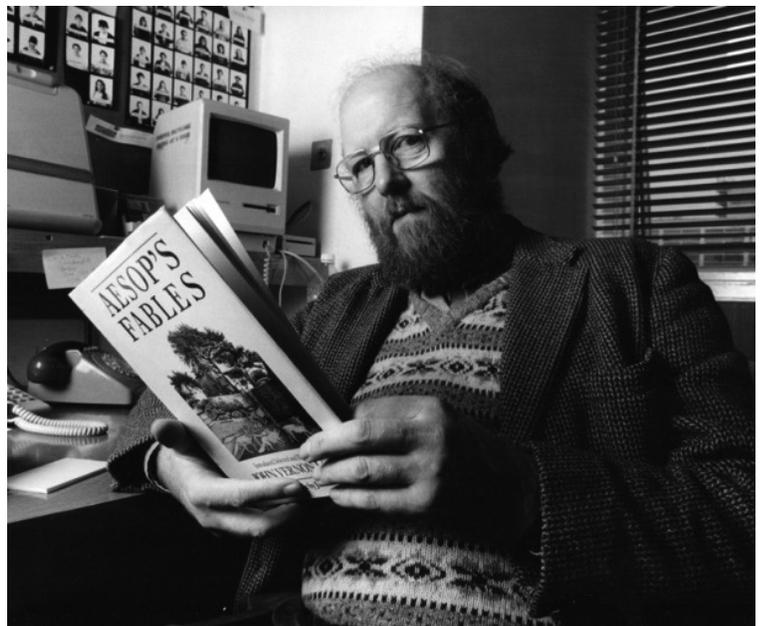


A NOTE FROM ROBERT MACFARLANE:

'ONCA brings together communities and creativity in open-hearted and mind-altering ways. The great American essayist and agrarianist, Wendell Berry, reminds us that technological fixes for global problems will only get us part of the way; cultural change is, eventually, far more powerful and far-reaching. But cultural change is also, of course, mysterious in its origins and unpredictable in its outcomes. Organisations such as ONCA help to stimulate and shape such change for the good: I am proud to be one of their patrons.'

A NOTE FROM JOHN VERNON LORD:

'I am honoured to be part of ONCA. Its aim in raising awareness of environmental and conservation issues is something that is not just worthy but is crucial for the world to sort out now. To do it through the arts is a wonderful way of alerting our consciousness to the important issues that affect the world we live in. (...) We depend on Nature's bountiful provision for our existence and there is little point in jeopardising its benefits for short-term gains without being sensitive to the possible consequences.'



Volunteer and internship programme

Since our inception, ONCA has had a team of skilled and creative volunteers. While all the volunteers help run the gallery space, each has a unique skill and ability that they use to support ONCA's mission. Whether it be as an invigilator, fundraiser, curator, event planner, or educator, the program allows each volunteer to gain experience, develop their skills, and make connections within the community. We believe that volunteers are invaluable to our success and we continue to seek the best and brightest in Brighton to join our team.

This year we were lucky enough, through support from the University of Sussex, Santander and the London Community Foundation, to host four internships across the year - providing skills and training to four incredible young women.

WHAT OUR VOLUNTEERS SAY:

"Volunteering at ONCA you really feel part of the team. Their eagerness for you to get involved and the trust they place in you makes it a great environment to be in. The team at ONCA are very inclusive and open to all suggestions, meaning there is a wide variety of activities to dip into. By helping with gallery set ups/take downs, as well as invigilating I got the chance to meet with artists, other volunteers and the general public, which was a lovely chance to be able to connect with and built new relationships. I mainly found out more about our environment and the issues surrounding it. This has caused me to be more aware of what effect we have on not just the earth but the creatures who live alongside us, something I will carry with me for the rest of my life."

- Faye Bentley

"Volunteering with ONCA has been a great experience. It's very gratifying being part of the overall ONCA mission and knowing that you are an integral part in achieving this."

- Majken Disch

"So far my experience of volunteering at ONCA has been absolutely positive. I had the opportunity to explore the relation between art and conservation (two themes really important to me since I want to integrate them in my career plan) and I also met really interesting people, both artists and other volunteers that I would like to keep in my social network. Definitely being in contact with art is always very enriching as well as beautiful. The job of my dream consists of using art as a medium to rise awareness about social/environmental issues and ONCA represents a really good example to me. To be honest I might also think to reproduce what we do at ONCA in my home country."

- Sara Shokry



Gallery programme

This year we have curated and hosted over ten exhibitions and projects of exceptional quality, bringing in new and diverse audiences, working with a selection of incredible artists, both locally and from around the country.

- November: Remembrance Day for Lost Species

This is, as every year, a chance to learn and tell the stories of those lost in the sixth mass extinction, and to renew commitments to those remaining. This year we hosted a procession to the Life Cairn in Glynde.

- December: Winter Window Display

We collaborated with Moulsecoomb Primary School on a thought-provoking and beautiful window display for the gallery. Over the course of a month, students designed and created different elements of the piece using waste materials.

- January: Blackbirds Film Festival/ Wall of Ideas

We hosted the inaugural Blackbirds community film festival, inspired by the life of community activist Adrienne Campbell. The weekend included a wide range of screenings and discussions on sustainability, learning, food, culture and diversity. It also featured Change the Future's Wall of Ideas - an interactive opportunity for people to think critically by posing an issue, demand or question that they felt could change Brighton for the better.

- February: Social Seeds

This event unearthed the realities of seed sovereignty and chemical use, with work from artists Aurora Sciabarra and Lorenza Ippolitio, and talks exploring the themes of seed and human diversity, and cultural identities.

- February: A Cancer Landscape

A Cancer Landscape was a collaborative exhibition, led by Sussex Community NHS Trust, presenting the paintings of artist Michele Angelo Petrone alongside bio medical, diagnostic images from the Wellcome Medical Photographic Library. Also featured within the exhibition were the personal artworks of people affected by cancer, created during a series of workshops held at ONCA.

- March: The Whale Road

ONCA hosted an exhibition featuring four artists, Katie Henery, Helen Cann, Stuart Kuhn, and Jonathan Hyde, in response to WhaleFest, the world's largest festival about whales, dolphins and marine life, and the collaborative expedition these artists undertook with ONCA and Pangaea Explorations in the summer of 2014, sailing from Iceland to Sweden.

Gallery programme

- May: A Murmuration

Teaming up with the Brighton Festival, A Murmuration was a collaborative, site-specific set of installations from artists Sarah Wood and Lucy Harris, and writers Helen Macdonald and Olivia Laing, in response to the Brighton Festival 2015 theme of migration, asking what freedom of movement and thought really means. The different spaces at ONCA were used imaginatively, with a real size bird hide upstairs and audio through the basement and the cave. A Murmuration combined film, text, images and cross-artform dialogue to rethink how we frame the natural world, how we understand patterns and just how free is the modern gaze. It was during this exhibition that ONCA gained its newest patron, writer Ali Smith.

- May/June: Sound and the Urban Environment

This exhibition and symposium was produced in collaboration with the University of Brighton, exploring our auditory encounter with the urban environment and asking how we might plan for the soundscape of our futures cities, homes and dwellings. It asked in what ways could the soundscape and the practice of listening inform and make meaningful the experience of living within urban environments.

- July/August: SQUIDCUT

This was ONCA's first exploration into sustainable and ethical fashion, linking the gallery with Brighton Fashion Week 2015. Lilia Yip's collection investigated her fascination with squid and synthetic biology – a new area of science that deals with the reconstruction of nature. Asking: 'We now possess the ability to alter and create new organisms that function to our design. But what if we go too far?' In response to this fear and fascination, Yip's collection used the lab coat as a starting point for both artwork and pattern cutting. Digital imagery was then created using microscopic photos provided by synthetic biologist Matthew Jones who researched the squid's iridescent colour changing properties. Our exhibition showcased the SQUIDCUT garments and cutting, with artwork made in collaboration with photographer Nicol Vizioli and filmmaker Jessica Kneipp. This was SQUIDCUT's second iteration, with its debut exhibition at Boutique gallery Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, March 2015.

- August/September: Lost and Found

Lost and Found was a powerful and challenging multi-media installation of visual arts created by arts/science organisation Pale Blue Dot. Founders Jane King and Neil Mabbs presented evidence of links between our consumer culture and the decline of the natural world, communicating complex scientific and social issues through printmaking, textiles, photography, films and podcasts, artists' books and installations of found objects. This interdisciplinary project, launched in Oxford in 2014, was based on research by scientists at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and pollinator specialist Professor. Dave Goulson and his team at the University of Sussex.

'Upstairs at ONCA'

This year we embarked on a new, exciting development project. The ONCA Gallery took over a further 1282 square foot, through which we are renting out 18 desks, divided over 5 rooms, on pay-by-the-month permanent and flexi-contracts to creatives, charities and start-ups with a bias towards sustainability and ecology. 'Upstairs at ONCA' will have a three-fold focus - knowledge sharing, sustainable business development and creative co-working. We will also provide a resource centre and rentable meeting space. Downstairs, our public facing gallery continues to provide a high-quality and exciting arts programme, coupled with a commercial shop and rental space. There is a need for external funding to deliver the gallery's creative programme, however within three years we hope to cover 100% of our core costs, and be contributing match funding of up to £30,000 per year for the gallery's activities.

What We Offer

We offer flexible workspace for creatives, charities and start-ups with a bias towards sustainability and ecology. Members of ONCA become part of a vibrant community hub, with creative thought and environmental awareness at its core. We offer three types of membership:

Level one (Caracara): £210 per month - A permanent desk in one of our five office hubs; use of the garden and communal area/kitchen; use of our arts and ecology resource centre; fibre optic broadband; 24/7 office access; lockable storage space; postal address; recycling and composting facilities; office cleaning and maintenance; free, bookable meeting space; discounted use of the gallery for meetings, parties and exhibitions; priority booking for gallery events; invitations to both online and offline community activities.

Level two (Lapwing): £59 per month - A flexi-desk one day per week; use of the garden and communal area/kitchen; use of our arts and ecology resource centre; fibre optic broadband; 24/7 office access; recycling and composting facilities; office cleaning and maintenance; free, bookable meeting space; discounted use of the gallery for meetings, parties and exhibitions; priority booking for gallery events; invitations to both online and offline community activities; option to add postal address and storage.

Level three (Warbler): £19 per month - Be a friend and support ONCA. Use of the garden and members' room/kitchen; use our arts and ecology resource centre; recycling and composting facilities; discounted use of the gallery for meetings, parties and exhibitions; priority booking for gallery events; invitations to both online and offline community activities.

We also offer meeting room space (£12-15 per hour), which is used by both local and national partners.

Current members of 'Upstairs at ONCA' include:

What We Sow, Ernest Journal, Articulate, Sarah Edmonds, Quest Overseas, Quest for Change, Friends of Inti Wara Yassi, Creative Bloom, Joanne Matthews, Yada, Platypus Digital, Jonathan Marshall, University of Brighton Fine Art and Critical Practice Year Two, University of Brighton PAVAs.

Expeditions

eXXpedition

eXXpedition is an all female voyage and long-term engagement programme that explores the unseen chemicals inside ourselves and inside our seas. Throughout a series of expeditions, groups of women will sail across the world's oceans raising awareness of toxic pollution. The mission is to start a dialogue about the plastics, chemicals, endocrine disruptors and carcinogens that are in our personal and global environments, and explore how these may cause disease, in particular working with evidence that links these chemicals with the rise in breast cancer rates. ONCA Director, Laura Coleman, took part in the first flagship eXXpedition in November 2014.

Scientists estimate that everyone alive today carries at least 700 contaminants within our bodies, most of which have not been well studied. Wherever you live in the world, you have been exposed to a cocktail of chemicals. All women on eXXpedition in November had their blood serum sampled for contamination. This is known as a body burden analysis, to assess personal exposure to toxic substances. This analysis was conducted by Dr Anna Karman, forming part of a database collected for the UN Safe Planet campaign.

We engaged audiences of young women in these scientific narratives, through the personal stories of the women involved, and related this to the consumer choices we make, and the long-term health impacts of these choices on ourselves and our environment. By working with high-profile, cutting-edge and inspiring female role models, we found through a series of talks, workshops, discussion groups and exhibitions, new ways to engage women aged 13-30 in these essential, under-researched and under-talked about issues.

The long-term change we strove to achieve was to inspire women to value themselves and their environment through the choices they make and the products they chose. We aimed to make audiences aware of the links between chemical pollutants, buried within our daily environment, and rising rates of illnesses such as breast cancer. By establishing groups of female role models, we provided young women with the opportunity to learn about and discover these issues, thus working towards a sustained and long-term change in widespread attitudes towards the female body and the health of our planet.



Audience development

The ONCA Trust has an exemplary record in its short, pro-active history of establishing partnerships and delivering projects to initiate, support and drive conversations around art and ecology.

ONCA provides an annual public programme of exhibitions, performance, talks and discussions, workshops and events. These occur both onsite at the ONCA Gallery, and for partner venues and initiatives such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Brighton Festival, Macmillan Cancer Research, and local schools including Dorothy Stringer and Carlton Hill. Over three years, ONCA has built up a loyal supporter base, as evidenced by a successful £15,000 crowdfunding campaign via Kickstarter to support the organisation's core costs in early 2014. We have used Audience Finder to help us map our current audiences. We receive an average of 30 visitors per day, and the following data is based on 6-month audience data collection (900 people, approximately every 4th visitor to the gallery, surveyed May to Oct 2014):

- 79% live within 5 miles of the ONCA Gallery
- 33% are artists living in Brighton and Hove
- 13% aged 0-15; 23% aged 16-25; 41% aged 26-39; 12% aged 40-65; 11% above 65
- 66% individuals; 25% families; 9% groups

Volunteers

- Between 2012 – 2014, we worked with 103 volunteers
- 74% were aged 16-25; 5% aged 26-39; 19% aged 40-65; 2% above 65
- 51% were students; 34% were unemployed; 10% were in part-time employment; 5% were in full-time employment

Online

As of 21st March 2015: Database (1388 people); Facebook (1407 likes); Website (114 average visits per day); Twitter (1081 followers); Tumblr (612 followers); Instagram (73 followers); YouTube (all videos under 100 views)

Aims and Objectives 2015-17 (dates connected with Navigated Change Arts Council goals)

1. To develop a baseline understanding of audience reach, numbers, location, and basic profile
2. To increase our depth of engagement within all our target audiences
3. To increase onsite audiences 100% by June 2017
4. To increase online audiences 200% by June 2017
5. To expand participation amongst primary and secondary school children, principally within 5 miles of the gallery, targeting both SEN and mainstream learners
6. To expand participation amongst interdisciplinary researchers from Brighton, Sussex and more widespread universities, and improve our offer as a research centre for arts/ecology collaborations
7. To deepen strategic cultural/environmental partnerships
8. To develop key revenue streams including philanthropy, shop, print collection, and membership schemes
9. To provide consultancy for other cultural organisations looking to develop more collaborative methods of working and/or greater financial sustainability

Words from the community

The gallery:

“Lovely and effective collection of important messages, art and the essence of life, and the complexities between the natural and the human world” Nic Allen

“Amazing show - very engaging and thought provoking. Great to see art and science together” Tracy

“Thought provoking - a call to action” Abbie

“Well done all of you for your imaginative ideas. Well presented exhibition and really interesting.” Michelle

“Brilliantly curated diverse selection of work. A real eye opener for some local talented artists” Euan

“The world needs more of this! Inspiring! Love it.” Kath

‘Upstairs at ONCA’:

“I am a self-taught illustrator and designer based in Worthing. Whilst I mostly work from home, I thrive from meeting people and a different space to work from to gain new perspectives on my practice. ONCA is the perfect fit for me, offering a base in Brighton one day a week, the opportunity to exchange ideas with others and the potential to collaborate. The natural world is a big influence on my work and so ONCA’s connection to conservation makes it the ideal place to gather. inspiration. It’s a lovely space, everyone has been very welcoming and I look forward to a creative and productive year working here!”

Sarah Edmonds

‘Upstairs at ONCA’s meeting room:

“We really enjoyed using the ONCA meeting room to host our international team last month - our colleagues from Kenya were especially excited by room being named for Wangari Maathai! We were very well looked after by a very friendly and enthusiastic team at ONCA and loved being in the bright, well-lit room. It was a real pleasure to find a like-minded organisation offering a well resourced space full of character and charm. We would highly recommend ONCA to anyone looking for an inspiring meeting space that is really well placed in the centre of Brighton.”

Sam Webb (Cafédirect Producers’ Foundation)

Fundraising

2014/15 has seen an exciting increase in fundraising activity for ONCA, namely through the success of our landmark two year project through Arts Council England called Navigating Change.

Arts Council England (£75,000): Navigating Change 2015-17

'Navigating Change' is an innovative, interdisciplinary programme about how society and culture – both on a microcosmic and macrocosmic level – are being called to respond to environmental change. Our creative programme has been structured to cultivate understanding and resilience within our target audiences, and research how these tools can be best delivered in the future.

Between July 2015-2017 we will conduct a series of activities on- and off-site. We will deliver eleven projects, underneath the title 'Navigating Change', dealing with a variety of interrelated themes including soil, food and plastics. The programme has been curated to include prominent and emerging artists, who are either already working with ecology/sustainability, or who are passionate about exploration/communication.

Each project includes an exhibition, mentored residency, or a performance, plus audience engagement within two educational strands.

Examples of work we are programming within this project:

'Earth', by Chris Drury and Daro Montag: Drury's work, using soil as pigment, will sit alongside Montag's participatory project 'RANE-CHAR'. Engagement activities include one situated conversation at Stanmer Organics, 2 tactile printmaking workshops for SEN learners aged 7-14, 1 creative writing session for ages 7-11.

'FutureCoast': We will respond to the online game 'FutureCoast' by artist Ken Eklund. Participants, imagining they live in a climate-changed future, are asked to record a voicemail from the future. We will install a Future 'phone' Booth in the gallery, where participants can record and upload voicemails. Working with a group of 20 GCSE Drama students from Dorothy Stringer School, we will create a climate change conference delegation from the future, and hold a young people's 'Conference of the Parties' to coincide with Paris COP 21.

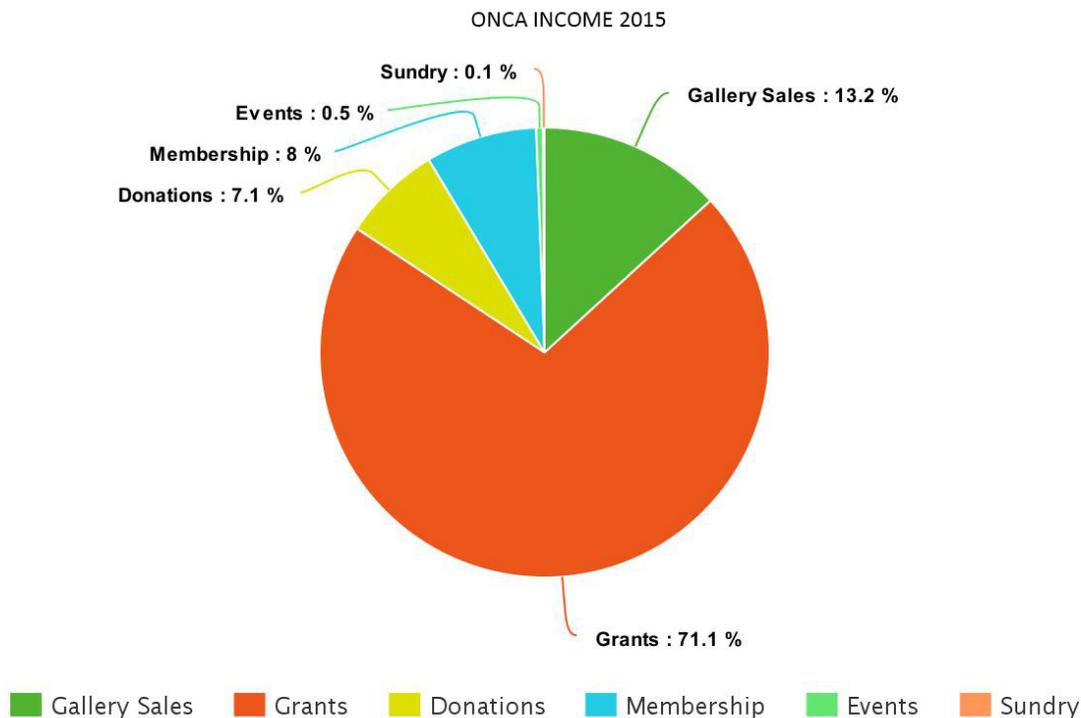
Other successful grants for this period:

London Community Trust - £5,000 for business development

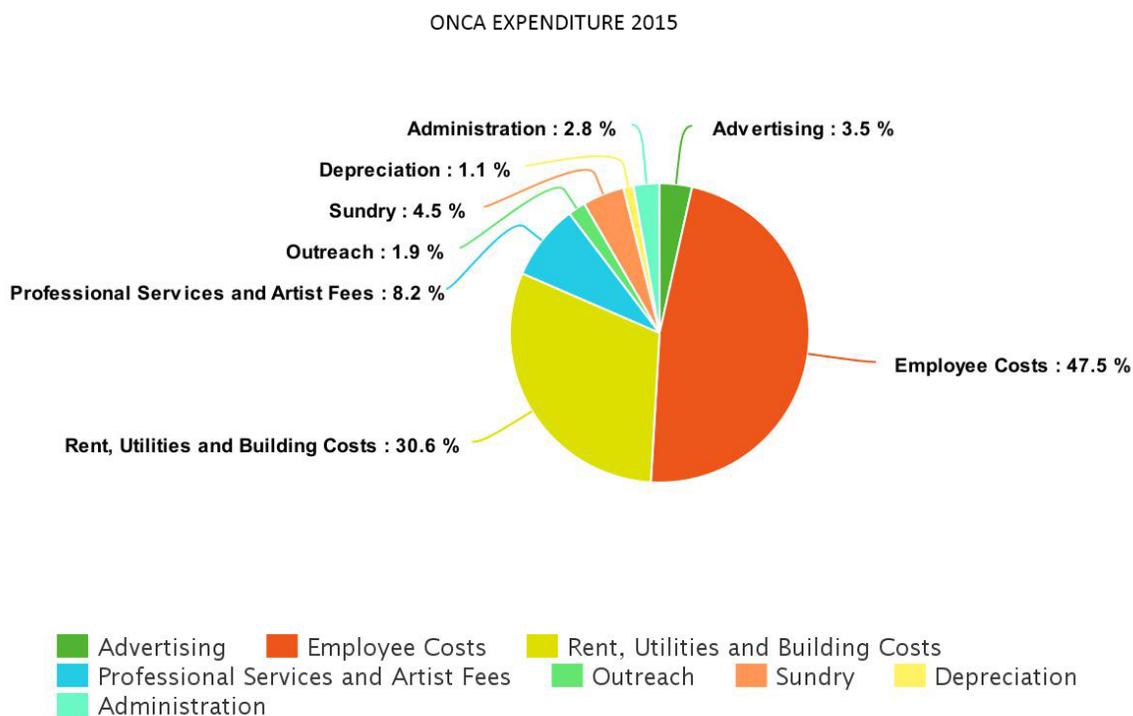
University of Brighton CUPP partnership programme - £3,137 for FutureCoast development

Financial overview

Total income 2014: £50,538 / Total income 2015: £85,611.95



Total expenditure 2014: £26,931 / Total expenditure 2015: 60,651.63



Looking forwards

ONCA is a vibrant, emerging organization. As arts commissioners, we believe in galvanising the creation of a critical mass of work that responds to environmental change. We are passionate about helping to create cohesive communities, in Brighton and beyond, and believe that art has a key role to play as we move towards more sustainable ways of living.

Our Arts Council England supported project 'Navigating Change' is enabling us to develop our vision of interdisciplinary arts practice, whilst providing a hub for the arts/ecology community in the city and beyond, and building a viable business model for the gallery and its work. We have a real opportunity to become sustainable, whilst also continuing to deliver an innovative and thought-provoking programme built around strategic partnerships and artistic quality - enabling us to work with renowned artists including Chris Drury and Daro Montag.

We will also build upon our commitment to inclusivity, and test new supportive ways of helping propagate work including residencies, mentoring and outreach with harder-to-reach groups (including SEN and BAME), plus researching the delivery of a cohesive volunteering programme.

We are already a key player in the local arts landscape. In the future, we aim to deepen relationships with neighbouring cultural service providers/agencies, and with the local (London Road) and broader (Brighton/Sussex) communities. National partnerships will also widen our reach and enable us to have a greater impact. We will work on the development of new education partnerships to strengthen future programming, generate income and enable us to ground our interdisciplinary work and empower us to become a key research centre into art/ecology collaborations.

Through our expansion into the upstairs building, we want to extend our ability to offer not only memberships to a community of creatives (thus bringing in skills/partnerships to aid our own development), but also an arts/ecology learning resource centre, a shop to sell merchandise, and a print collection. All of these are new activities, and will generate income, audiences and artistic relationships. We will refresh our website, selling artwork online and improving our blog to become more participatory. Also by engaging digital artists, through a 'Citizen Science' programme and through memberships, we will strengthen our ability to work with new technologies - opening the gallery as an exploratory hack space for analogue/digital artistic collaborations.

We are also aiming towards becoming a model for environmental/financial sustainability, ensuring that all our processes are green and well communicated for the benefit of ourselves, and others.

Most importantly, we want to deepen our relationship with the local community - always making sure that our work is impactful, and that we are in service to as broad a range of participants and artists as possible.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us over the last year - we wouldn't be here without you!

The ONCA Team x

