

Dear Llyr, Mark and (especially) Carolyn,

It's been almost exactly a year since The Conference of the Birds ended. Unfortunately I feel compelled to write to express my anger and concern.

This Welsh Labour government is quite quickly destroying the freelance not-for-profit creative workforce in Wales.

The void this is creating will render the propaganda stories that you (Carolyn) and leadership have put out in the last twenty four hours largely pointless.

How much of the additional funding that Welsh Government had found for the art organisations will be spent on holiday pay, pensions and sick leave?

How much will be spent on assessing funding applications written by people who have spent days and weeks of unpaid time developing and writing them - especially as the chances of success increasingly dwindle? This is not 'competition' - it's the systematic exploitation of hope.

All the while the freelance workforce that is the heartbeat of the largely urban 'bricks and mortar' institutions – which you so visibly celebrate – is rapidly draining away.

Mark might remember ██████████, the young artist who was assisting me when we met ██████████ a year ago.

Aged 27, ██████████ is an extremely talented Welsh speaking practitioner. She already has work in the ██████████ and this year had a solo exhibition at ██████████ ██████████ exploring through her work her ancestral connection with culture and landscape. Generations of her family worked in the quarries and her home was until a month ago ██████████. Her achievements are astonishing given her age.

In October ██████████ left for ██████████ having purchased a one-way ticket. She is utterly disillusioned with the way the arts are 'done' in Wales and feels that there is no future for her here.

Again: ██████████ is 27 - and should have a future ahead of her as a shining light in the visual arts in Wales.

This loss is on you.

I find myself wondering if you grasp that freelance experimentation yields the innovation that brings tomorrow's financial success. The National Theatre's War Horse was, for example, founded on puppetry evolved by Handspring Theatre Company whose roots lie in South African experimental political theatre.

I understand that these are challenging times - but Brexit can no longer be used as an excuse. Cuts to arts funding in Wales exceed those in all of the other home nations.

Welsh Government's decisions are creating a wasteland which will impact on the wellbeing of future generations.

This will be your legacy.

Regards,

Sean Harris