



Artists' Union England

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--- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ---

Artists' Union England demands that Arts Council England reverses Elisabeth Murdoch's recent appointment to the National Council.

We question the appointment of an under-qualified and non-representative member to a public body responsible for shaping national art policy and urge the Arts Council to consider the significant conflict of interests that we believe played a part in this opaque and possibly undemocratic decision.

In particular, we would like to highlight Murdoch's ongoing financial contribution, personally and through the Freedlands Trust, to the Tate under Serota's leadership and to various organisations led by his wife Teresa Gleadowe. We demand to know what part these financial contributions played in this decision.

See [here](#) for more detailed information about the long and complex relationship between Serota, Gleadowe and Murdoch, through a myriad of public and private institutions.

Furthermore, The Murdoch family, through its international network of media outlets, has consistently proved to be antithetical to the values Arts Council England claims to promote, including diversity and equality, fair pay and above all, the distribution of public funds in the interest of the public good. The Murdochs, in contrast, have consistently promoted hate, bigotry, opposition to workers collective rights and to public investment in general.

Artists' Union England executive, therefore, believe Murdoch's appointment demonstrates another step in the corporate takeover of our public institutions and a direct threat to Arts Council England.

We call on artists, arts organisations and all others objecting to the abhorrent political views espoused by the Murdoch media empire and the questionable nature of this appointment to add their names to a petition demanding the removal of Elisabeth Murdoch from the Arts Council England's National Council.

See [here](#) for the open letter from Artists Union England executives, sent to Nicholas Serota on Friday 15 December and publicly collecting signatures from Tuesday 19 December 2017 - at 5pm on the 20th, the letter had 609 signatories. Today the letter has 1690.

See **here** the response from ACE 20th December 2017 and AUE response 12th January 2018.

Martin Sundram, AUE Chair says: *"This ill-judged appointment highlights the opacity in decision-making at government level by the Secretary of State for Culture, as well as the suspicion of patronage influencing Arts Council Policy. Artists' Union England calls on all concerned parties to register their disapproval by signing our petition calling for a reversal of this decision."*

Andrew McNiven says *"The Murdoch family and its companies have had a malign influence on the UK's public discourses and media culture over the last forty years. The appointment of Elisabeth Murdoch to the ACE National Council extends this malign influence into the governance of our public arts sector."*

Alison Lloyd, artist: *"As an ex employee of Arts Council England who has returned to practice and research I am dismayed that Elisabeth Murdoch has been appointed a member of the ACE National Council. I am asking you to reverse your decision."*

Terry Anderson, from Cartoonists Rights Network International, says: *"While it is true that the sins of the father need not always be visited upon the son or daughter, there is insufficient clear blue water between Elisabeth Murdoch and her forebears and siblings. She comes from a background that is definitely anti-art and anti-democracy. It is utterly baffling to see her considered for a role such as this. She should be removed immediately."*

Shiri Shalmy, AUE member says: *"As a curator and art producer I am extremely concerned about Elisabeth Murdoch's potential influence on national art policy. The Murdochs have proved again and again to be working only in their own financial and political interests. They should have no say on public matters that affect us all"*

Matthew Rogers: *"Please reconsider this appointment. This dynastic family already has too much influence and power over the cultural tapestry of the United Kingdom why give them even more? Surely the risks significantly outweigh any benefits. The Murdoch family do not have a sound history of contributing to the artistic landscape of the United Kingdom in fact I believe it could be argued that the opposite is in fact a truer statement."*

Pam Foley, AUE Treasurer says: *"Artists applying for ACE funding undergo a rigorous process to verify every budget line item, the professional vetting of artists and commitment to providing a service for the public good. We should expect the same level of scrutiny to apply to persons joining ACE's National Council. Reverse the appointment of Elisabeth Murdoch."*

Elaine Drainville: *"Appointing a member of the Murdochs family to the board of ACE is a shocking and very foolish decision. Elisabeth Murdoch has no relevant experience. This puts corporate interest and ideology at the heart of a public body. Shameful"*

Neil Cocks: *"The aim here is rarely to promote diversity, tolerance and experimentation, however. Surely there are less divisive and more exciting candidates?"*

Theresa Easton, AUE Secretary says: *"I have no confidence in the appointment of Elisabeth Murdoch to the National Council. The legacy of the Murdoch family from the treatment of Liverpool fans after the Hillsborough disaster in The Sun to the Leveson inquiry into phone hacking, signifies self interest in profit before people. There should be no place in the arts for profiteers."*

Notes to editor

- Artists' Union England is a new trade union for professional visual, and applied artists and artists with a socially engaged practice. Unlike other cultural professionals, artists have had no collective voice in the form of a trade union, to represent them at work and to lobby and advocate on their behalf. As an independent trade union, we aim to represent artists at strategic decision-making levels and positively influence the degree to which practice is valued and the roles artists play within society. For example, view our democratically agreed '[Rates of Pay](#)' [document here](#).

- Arts Council England's [announcement](#) of Elisabeth Murdoch's appointment.

- AUE member Stephen Pritchard's [article](#) about the financial links between Elisabeth Murdoch and Nicholas Serota

Media Coverage

- [a-n](#), [Arts Professional](#), [Artlyst](#), [i-News](#), [Guardian](#) , [Private Eye](#), [Hyperallergic](#)

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