

To the AUE National Executive Committee, all reps and members

This year has been difficult, to say the least, for us all.

We know that for many members paid work ceased with immediate effect at the start of the pandemic, with a devastating impact on incomes, future opportunities and the ability to continue to practice as a professional artist. Throughout the crisis we have lobbied government and worked alongside the wider union movement, both within the cultural sectors where other workers share many of the issues affecting artists' livelihoods, and beyond. We have raised our collective concerns on both national and international platforms, as well as representing and winning cases for a number of individual members during the year.

AUE members working together in this difficult environment were successful in creating and launching the union's Good Practice Charter this year, the starting point for what is to be hoped is an industry-wide standard, and which highlights many of the issues we want to focus attention on as a union for and run by artists. The Charter has already received endorsements from a number of art organisations and trade unions. This year, too, a group of members have set up the union's Solidarity Fund, now helping our members with small grants.

AUE members have come forward to take on various roles throughout the year as executive members, regional representatives or as members of working groups on projects. As current joint chairs of an entirely volunteer-run union we would like to heartily thank everybody for their extraordinary work this year. If you are interested in getting more involved in helping to run the union, in whatever capacity, then do get in touch - we would love to hear from you! As we have mentioned in recent newsletters, we hope to organise elections and an annual general meeting in the new year.

We know that going into 2021 with the pandemic still impacting on us in every way life will not be easy, but we wanted to send a thank you to all our members for everything you do in our sector, ensuring that the contribution that artists make to the cultural, economic, educational and social life of the nation is recognised, and demonstrating that art and the role of artists within communities are not luxuries but an essential part of any recovery worth having.

We hope that you are able to still enjoy the festive period in spite of everything, most especially the fact that many may not be together with loved ones or friends, and that everyone has a well-deserved rest - we know we will have a continuing fight on our hands to defend the interests of artists, and we will need both personal resilience and confidence in the strength of collective action to take us through 2021 together.

Please sign our petition if you haven't already ; <https://www.change.org/p/boris-johnson-provide-appropriate-and-adequate-support-to-self-employed-workers-including-those-in-the-arts-and-culture-sector-impacted-by-coronavirus>

If you are experiencing financial difficulty you can access our AUE solidarity fund here: <https://www.artistsunionengland.org.uk/aeu-solidarity-fund-for-members/>

Best wishes, Seasons Greetings and let's continue to work together for a better new year in 2021!

Zita Holbourne and Martin Sundram

Joint National Chairs AUE