

# AOI Annual Report



*Image credit: Harriet Noble*

## October 2021 – September 2022

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social media: @theaoi



# Chair's Summary

The 2021/2 year was another year of challenges successfully met by the AOI. Whilst Covid was still having an impact on the economy, and the cost-of-living crisis was starting to manifest itself, we continued to offer outstanding service to our members.

This was evidenced by the strength of our membership numbers which have held up well despite all the factors just mentioned. WIA continued to perform with excellent results, with entrants from all over the world.

The AOI continues to perform well financially and we have built up strong reserves to help us address the new opportunities and challenges which are now apparent, including that of Artificial Intelligence to which we will be applying considerable effort.

The Executive Team under Rachel Hill, and our Board, have been performing to high standards throughout this period, and have continued to be great assets of the company, whose reputation has continued to grow strongly.

**David Gilbert**  
AOI Chair



# MEMBERSHIP

Overall the AOI membership base remained stable this year, with only a minor decrease from **2750** to **2653** members, despite a challenging economic climate.

## **Growth trends by membership category:**

Illustrator Members: **-70**

Affiliate Members: **+0**

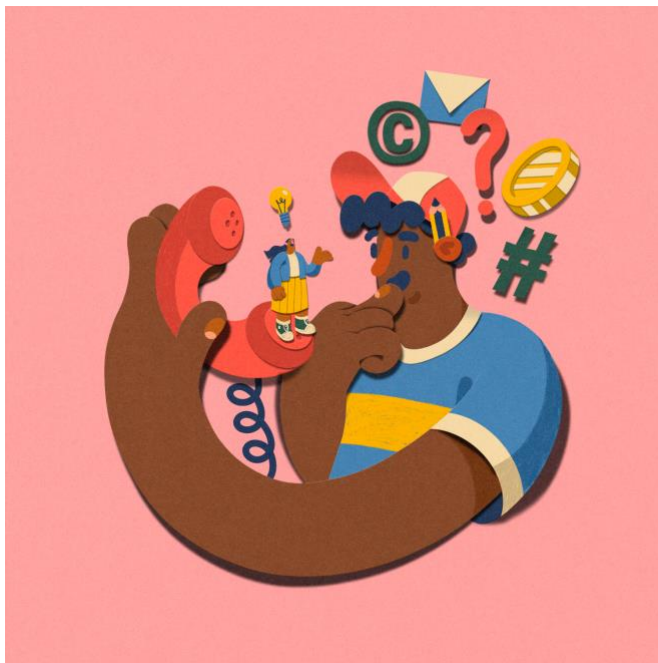
Industry Members: **+1**

College Members: **-1**

Student Members: **-27**

The cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact on the livelihoods of freelance creatives, with many needing to reduce their expenses. Retaining membership levels throughout this time is testament to the value and support illustrators find within the AOI community. Through our helpdesk, events, resources, awards, and campaigning, the AOI aim to offer an inclusive space, where illustrators feel championed and empowered.

## **Supporting Members**



*Image credit: Harriet Noble*

### **1-1 Helpdesk**

The AOI helpdesk team provide dedicated 1-1 support to our illustrator members, responding to over 6000 enquiries per year. Our advisors supported on a range of topics, including licencing, contracts, copyright, and self-promotion. This year we have seen a particular rise in enquiries about copyright infringements, NFTs and animation.

The helpdesk welcomed 3 new staff members, who brought a wealth of knowledge to their roles from previous experience at illustration agencies and in higher education.

### **New AOI Resources**

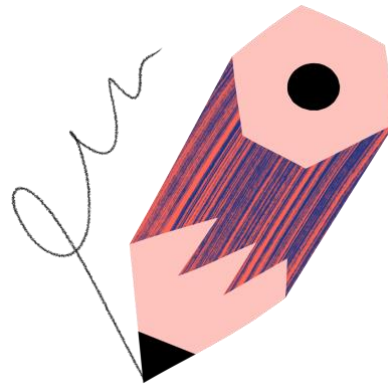
We launched a range of member-exclusive resources, informed by growing trends on the helpdesk. Our new resources cater to varying levels of experience.

Introductory level resources included:

- Copyright Assignments
- Communicating with Clients
- Transferable skills for Illustration

Mid-career resources included:

- Intellectual Property Rights in NFTs
- New EU VAT Requirements
- UK Studio Space Directory



*Image credit: William Luz*

### **Portfolio Consultations**

Following requests for more creative feedback opportunities, we increased our portfolio consultation offering, adding Alice Desmond (Illustration Agent) to our regular roster.

The AOI also partnered with Wonderbly to run an in-person group portfolio consultation event, and accompanying webinar for attendees outside of London.



*Image credit: Harriet Noble*

### **Member Exclusive Discounts**

Throughout the year, the AOI secured a selection of member-exclusive discounts and offers, to help reduce illustrator's day to day business expenses. New partnerships included:

- Dell
- MakeRoom
- RoomFifty
- Dizzy Ink
- The Cartoon Museum
- Briffa

### **Client Directories**

We revised our client directories in November 2021, producing up to date, GDPR compliant listings of commissioners from across the Editorial, Advertising and Publishing industries. In 2021, we expanded our Advertising directory to include commissioners from animation and design agencies.

We worked with freelancer Hannah Clare Gordon, to secure new contacts and compile the final publications. Sales remained positive, with **263** directories sold throughout the year. As always, a discounted rate was offered to AOI members.

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# Empowering Members

## Inside Illustration

In March 2022, the AOI launched a major, new membership benefit called Inside Illustration.

Inside Illustration is a member exclusive area of the website, where two new 'seasons' of content are released each year. Each new season is a tool kit, to help you master specific area of industry - such as editorial, branding and publishing.



**Inside Illustration is a multi platform season for AOI Members focusing on a particular area of illustration for each Season.**

Each season includes an exclusive Podcast, a Creative Course for members, in-depth Article, Resource, Commissioner interview and a comprehensive 'How To...' guide publication for those interested in entering the area based on the season theme.

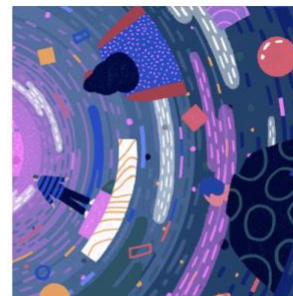
### Illustration for Children Season – New!



**Podcast: Children's Picture Books**



**Article: Almost Anything Is Possible**



**Resource: Illustration for Children Basics**

## Editorial Season (March 2022) included:

- 1. 'How to get into Editorial Illustration'**  
An in-depth guide covering portfolio advice, different specialisms, editorial clients, briefs, deadlines, and fees.
- 2. Creative Practice Courses**  
Four online creative courses, with guest illustrators Kotryna Zukauskaitė, Bett Norris, Sarah Tanat-Jones and Vanessa Lovegrove covering current affairs, lifestyle, food and portraiture in editorial.
- 3. Interview with Art Director Sarah Habershon**
- 4. Resource: Editorial Illustration Basics**  
A public resource covering editorial industry basics. Opening an element of Inside Illustration to the wider illustration community.

**5. Article: Motion in Editorial**

A discussion on animation in editorial illustration with Art Directors from *The New York Times*, and illustrators Rami Niemi, Vidhya Nagarajan, Carl Burton, Nancy Liang and Erik Carter.

**6. Podcast: Artist & Commissioner**

Podcast exploring the qualities that make excellent editorial images, from both a commissioner and practitioners' perspective. With Corinne Myller and André Carrilho, hosted by Rachel Emily Taylor.



*Image credit: Aurelia Durand*

**Branding Season, (September 2022) included:**

**1. 'How to get into Branding Illustration'**

In this guide, Illustration Agent, James Hughes, covers a typical branding brief, portfolio development advice and common branding license terms.

**2. Creative Practice Courses**

Four online creative courses, with guest Illustrators Kate Larsen, Loe Lee, Justin Poulter and Chris Dickason, covering illustrative food branding, representing people, the illustrated brand, and characters for branding.

**3. Interview with head of Studio at Uncommon Creative Studio, Jhy Turley**

#### 4. Resource: Branding Illustration Basics

A public resource covering branding industry basics. Opening an element of Inside Illustration to the wider illustration community.

#### 5. Article: Branding Is Personal

Alix-Rose Cowie interviews clients commissioning branding work for identity and packaging and the illustrators responding to those briefs.

#### 6. Podcast: Artists & Commissioner

Discussion with Heidi Lightfoot, Together Design Creative Director and Founder, and Illustrators Kate Larsen and Nicola Robson, hosted by Rachel Emily Taylor.

#### Members Feedback:

Inside Illustration has been well received by members so far. We plan to expand our promotion of Inside Illustration in the year ahead, encouraging more members to engage with the content and courses.

*"I have read the section of Editorial Illustration Basics and listened to the podcast and I found that all this info is really useful for who is starting in this area like me"* AOI Member

*"Thank you so much for the information, interviews and resources you have made available on the Inside Illustration page. The event was wonderful, very inspiring. Her talk, presentation and Q&A was informative, very insightful and candid."* AOI Member

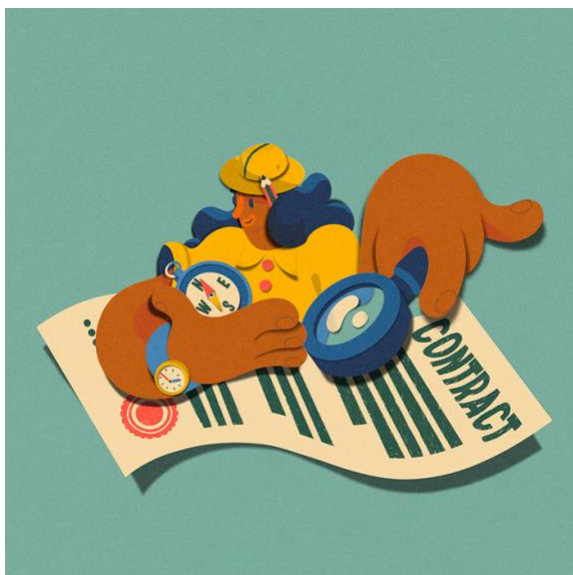


Image credit: Harriet Noble

#### Practical Webinars

Outside of Inside Illustration, the AOI delivered a successful webinar series, designed to build confidence, and advance illustrator's general business skills. We reached a broad range of illustrators with **90+** attendees joining each session.

Topics included:

- Understanding Publishing Contracts
- How to Find New Clients
- Negotiating with Confidence
- Tax for UK Illustrators
- Starting Out as an Illustrator
- An insight into illustration agencies

### **University Collaborations**

Following 2 years of lockdowns and social distancing, we received the feedback that many students and graduates felt at a disadvantage. Working closely with College Members, this year we developed several initiatives support and champion these emerging illustrators.

### **College Masterclasses**

We developed an updated version of our Illustration Business Masterclasses and delivered this to 49 university courses across the UK - helping 1600 students kickstart their careers with confidence.

### **Graduate support scheme**

We continue to offer our Graduate Support scheme, giving universities the opportunity to gift AOI memberships to their students. The scheme was well received and helped over 200 students bridge the gap between education and industry.

### **Illo Grad Network**

We introduced the Illo Grad Network in 2021, a 4-part event program, that ran across the academic year. Each event consisted of a business skills presentation, interview with a professional illustrator and breakout room networking. The goal was to connect new graduates from around the country, encouraging ongoing peer to peer support.



*Image credit: Harriet Noble*



# Connecting Members

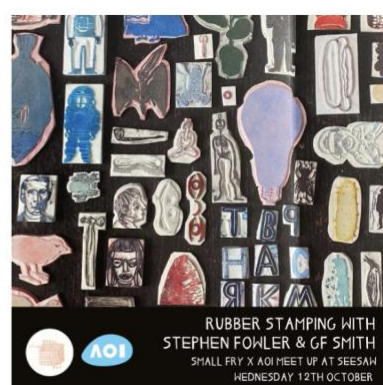
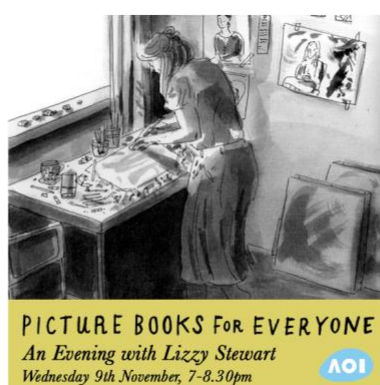
## External events

The AOI membership team attended and delivered talks at several industry events, building connections between illustrators and other areas of the creative industries. Events included Thought Bubble, London Book Fair, Pictoplasma and New Designers.

## Meet Ups

Our volunteer led 'Meet Ups' continued to bring local communities together across the UK, returning to mostly in-person events post-pandemic. Over the course of the year, **1,200+** illustrators attended Meet Ups events. Our Freelance Meet-Ups coordinator, Dave Bain, successfully lead on the expansion of our illustrator networks, launching new Meet Ups in Cardiff and Newcastle. As well as a new an online group connecting illustrators from the disabled community.

Thanks are due to all our wonderful Meetup Hosts, who are each succesfully engaging and celebrating their local communities.



### **Mid-Career Residency**

In August 2022, we were able to deliver our Mid-Career Residency programme in partnership with Atelier Olschinski, following pandemic related delays.

We received many outstanding applications but were delighted to award the residency place to AOI member Alé Mercado, offering an intensive, collaborative masterclass programme in Vienna.



*Image credit: Verena Weiss*

### **Communications**

Throughout the year we featured hundreds of members across our social media and AOI Folios. Our social media community continued to grow to over 180,000 followers across the three platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).

## **DIVERSITY & EQUALITY**

The AOI is committed to challenging ourselves and others to ensure an equal, diverse industry that we can all be proud of.

### **Drawing Diversity**

Throughout the year, AOI Director Montana Forbes led on series of events titled Drawing Diversity, exploring how illustrators depict a more inclusive range of people in their own illustration practice. We explored several important topics, such as representing different skin tones and gender identities.



Image credit: Jeez Vanilla

### Working with Disabled Illustrators

To celebrate the launch of our new resource 'Working with Disabled Illustrators' the AOI hosted an insightful panel discussion with Illustrators Megan Rhiannon, Hayley Wall and agent James Catchpole, covering visibility for disabled artists and helpful considerations during a commissioning process.

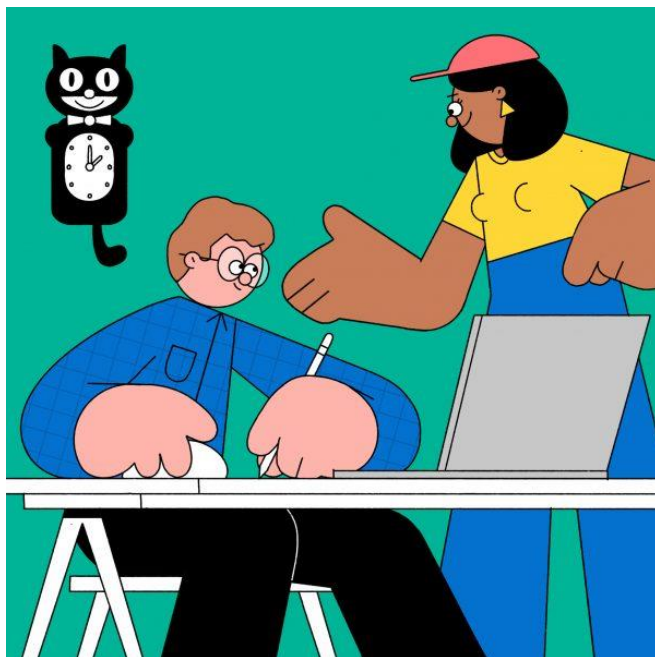


Image credit: Dan Woodger

### Mentorship Scheme

In 2022, we ran the third edition of the AOI Mentorship Scheme, growing the cohort slightly from 14 to 16 mentees. The scheme offers underrepresented artists 6 month's of mentorship support, tailored to their own professional goals and aspirations. This year we also introduced networking sessions and online features for the mentees, to increase the impact of the programme.

Many thanks to the AOI mentors, many of whom return year on year to volunteer their time and expertise.

# WORLD ILLUSTRATION AWARDS

## Entrants

The World Illustration Awards 2022 celebrated the exceptional creativity and talent of illustrators from across the world. We received an impressive **5,029** entries, from **3034** entrant, based in **77** different countries. We are proud that this is a truly global award, celebrating a diverse range of styles and voices.



## WIA Bursary

We continued our annual bursary scheme in 2022 for UK and USA entrants who were unable to pay the entry fee. **40** artists were supported to enter their work.

## Promotion and Benefits

Each year we aim to increase the value of the awards for all entrants.

Initiatives included:

- All 500 longlisted entrants promoted across the WIA Instagram account.
- Exclusive resources, meet ups and a self-promotion webinar for all shortlisted entrants.
- A catalogue of all **200** shortlisted entries was released in print and digital form and sent to commissioners worldwide.

### Showcase and Awards Night

We launched the **200**-strong shortlist and associated showcase in September 2022, receiving **14K** views across the awards pages in the first week. The showcase included a fascinating range of content, including in-depth artist features and a selection of curated galleries.

The WIA2022 celebrations culminated in an online Awards Night event, using the Hopin platform, featuring announcements from judges, sponsors, and special guest Oliver Jeffers. The evening was completed with 1-1 networking opportunities, a drink & draw activity and group meet-up sessions.

### Winner Announcements

Congratulations to this year's talented Overall Winners Daniel Liévano (Professional) and Tara Anand (New Talent).



Image credit: Tara Anand

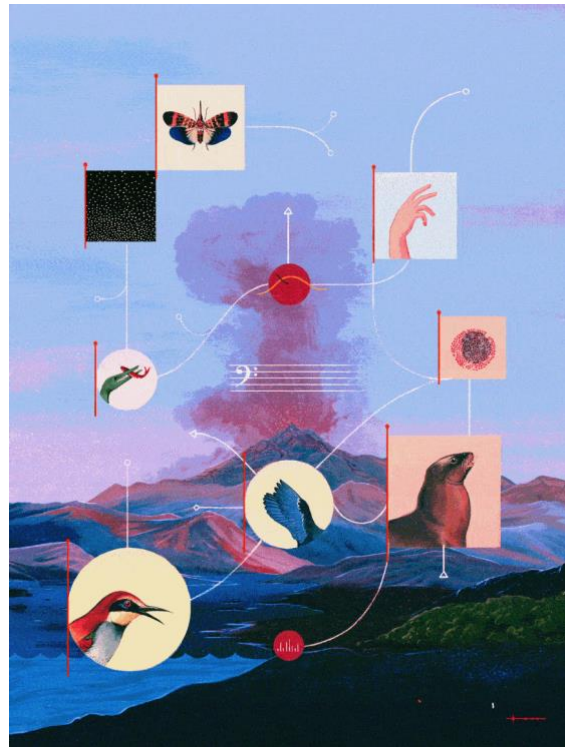


Image credit: Daniel Liévano

## International Tour

Our ongoing relationship with the Shenzhen Illustration Association will see the 2022 winning projects exhibited in several major cities across China, including Fuzhou, Nanchang and Shenzhen.



WIA Touring Exhibition, Nanchang, China

# CAMPAIGNING



Image credit: Olivier Heiligers

## Keep Your Copyright

We launched the wide reaching 'Keep Your Copyright' campaign in January 2022, empowering illustrators to protect their copyright. Recent survey results showed that **40%** of our members did not have a confident understanding of copyright or licensing - leading to high rates of copyright assignments. The goal of this campaign was to help educate illustrators and commissioners on the value of copyright and encourage them to push back on rights grabs.

As part of the campaign, we published two public resources, an interview series, a free 'Licensing 101' event, collaborative content with Creative Lives in Progress, and widely recirculated our guide on 'How to Licence Illustration'.

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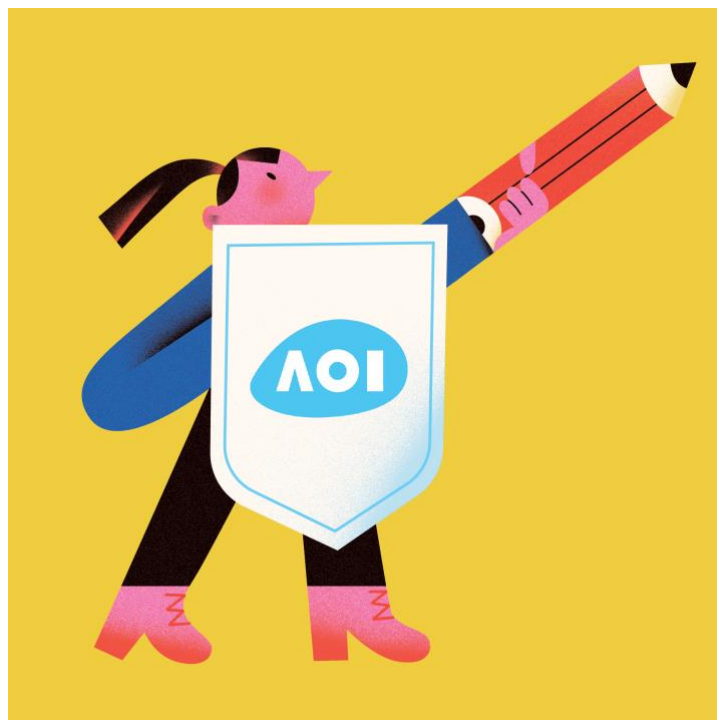
The Keep Your Copyright campaign has received positive feedback, with over 2500 page visits. The campaign was widely shared, and featured by Creative Boom, Creative Lives in Progress and DACS

### **Artificial Intelligence and Text and Data Mining**

Towards the end of the financial year, AI image-generating software began advancing very quickly, leading to increased concern from members. The AOI are working alongside several industry wide campaigning organisations, to campaign against the unremunerated use of copyrighted works in AI datasets and to amplify the voice of creatives in conversation with government, as new AI regulations are being formed.

Our recent AI campaigning work has included:

- Collecting data from illustrators about their views on text and data mining and using survey results in evidence submitted to government.
- Hosting an AI round table event for agent members, to discuss industry wide concerns, challenges, and opportunities.
- Released an AI statement on the AOI website.
- Launched an AI Updates page, to share important articles and information with members as the situation develops.
- Took part in the AI/ML Media Advocacy Summit.
- Worked closely with CRA and BCC to feed into government consultations regarding regulations and remuneration.



*Image credit: Tania Yakunova*

## Retained EU Laws

We worked with the British Copyright Council in their call for written evidence regarding the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill. We continue to campaign for the sunset provisions to be extended or removed, to protect various EU copyright laws that strengthen our creative industries.

These include:

- The Artist's Resale Right Regulations 2006
- The Copyright and Rights in Databases Regulations 1997
- The Collective Management of Copyright (EU Directive) Regulations 2016

## Partnerships



### The European Illustration Forum

The AOI continued to lead this dynamic group of international throughout our third consecutive term as EIF President. In 2022 we circulated a Europe wide diversity survey, to assess how the EIF can effectively support underrepresented illustrators.

### Agents for Change

The AOI continue to support the work of Agents for change, a group of illustration Agents looking to actively diversify the illustration industry. Together the group have launched a range of initiatives, including portfolio consultations and self-promotion opportunities for BAME illustrators.

### Creative Rights Alliance

The AOI remains an active Board member of the Creative Rights Alliance. In March 2022, we collectively launched the 'Pay the Creator' campaign. This is an umbrella campaign to bring together and amplify individual organization's campaigning work.

### British Copyright Council

We continued to contribute to the British Copyright Council's 'Copyright Education and Awareness Working Group', allowing us to not only enhance to the work of this group but to also ensure illustrators' voices are heard in these conversations.



# ADMINISTRATION

## Internal processes

As the AOI continued to grow, we reviewed and improved many of our internal processes.

For example:

- Formalised student verification process on the website.
- Reviewed and increased staff salaries in line with inflation.
- Prepared our database for migration to new CRM system, allowing us to support members more efficiently.
- Onboarded additional staff members to help support administration in the Membership and Awards departments.

In 2022 we also welcomed Tsveta Todorova, as our new Finance Manager, who has done excellent work streamlining the AOI's finance systems.



*Image credit: Harriet Noble*

## **Staff During the Financial Year 2021/22**

Ren Renwick, CEO (to February 2022)  
Rachel Hill, CEO (from February 2022)  
Rasheed Musa, Finance Director (to July 2022)  
Tsveta Todorova, Finance Manager (from September 2022)  
Sarah Morris, Membership Manager (from May 2022)  
Derek Brazell, Projects Manager  
Sabine Reimer, Awards Manager  
Daisy McMullan, Awards Coordinator  
Sam Walker, Membership Adviser (to March 2022)  
Saskia Cameron, Membership Adviser (from June 2022)  
Natasha Knight, Membership Executive (from February 2022)  
Marianna Madriz, Communications Coordinator  
Tania Duarte, Membership Administrator

### **We work with several freelancers, in particular:**

Simon Davies, Finance  
Helen Ridley, Awards  
Dave Bain, Events  
Hanna Clare Gordon, Directories  
Fig Taylor, Portfolios  
Alice Desmond, Portfolios  
Charli Vince, College Talks

### **And with thanks to our Volunteers leading meet-ups through the UK:**

Alexandra Ramirez, Rachel Stubbs, Emily Haworth Booth, David Barrow, Birgitta Sif, Lana Le, Melanie Smith, Julia Triay, Matt Joyce, Will Rea, Vicky Hughes, Ekaterina Sheath, Rachelle Panagarry, Tita Berredo, Sarah Wilson, Maisy Summer, Frances & Nick Moffatt, Abbie Reilly, Katherine Tromans, Pickle, Jen Leem-Bruggen, Tom Woolle

## **AOI Directors**

David Gilbert, Chair  
Darryl Clifton, Deputy Chair (to May 2022)  
Silvia Baumgart, Deputy Chair  
Ren Renwick  
Montana Forbes  
Deirdre McDermott  
Dan Woodger  
Ciara Phelan  
Daniel Moorey  
Jhinuk Sarkar

