

SEOS 2020 Annual Report (AGM)

Do you have any comments about SEOS or the Virtual 2020 Event? Members said—

- “The Virtual tour was very professional and thorough, much better than I was expecting & I had very positive feedback from friends and acquaintances.”
- “Huge thanks for running it- amazing effort and work.”
- “I think it was important to keep the momentum due to the circumstances well done and thank you.”
- “I thought that all of you on the SEOS team did a brilliant job for the duration of the entire period. Your constant posts were engaging, so full of interest, humour and enthusiasm...giving such a good feeling about the artists involved. You have been amazing and I thank all of you.”
- “Just many thanks to Polly & Jess and all involved in this year's campaign.”
- “I think communication has been great throughout - thank you to all the organisers.”
- “Perhaps you should have engaged with members before you approached it in this way.”
- “It was very well presented and coverage was excellent.”
- “It was very good and I was impressed although I didn't personally get any further hits on my own site, I thought it gave a great showcase to the artists of the south east.”
- “A great idea to deal with a very difficult time.”
- “I think that what you did was amazing and I'm so thankful to the whole SEOS team for their time and commitment in making it happen and doing it so well. ”
- “It was very good for this to be arranged, but not a lot of use to those with limited IT skills.”
- “You did great, the artists need to join in more.”
- “It was very well managed and the team should be congratulated! It would be great to have virtual content alongside the actual event in future years, but only if the finances allow - obviously this year was exceptional circumstances, but I think changes would need to be made to the budget if this was expected every year.”
- “Go for all out real event next year before we lose impetus.”
- “A wonderful job done with circumstances and time frame to change.”
- “I really enjoyed taking part in this.”
- “Thank you for all the hard work you all put in. It has been much appreciated.”

- “Even though it was a bit of a non-event for me, the organisers and local coordinators did a superb job in promoting everyone. They put in an enormous amount of time and effort so that the event ran very smoothly. Many thanks to all of you.”
- “I feel SEOS works much better visiting studios. I don't think it works virtually very well.”
- “Thank you for all the hard work that went into creating this event.”
- “The daily SEOS Art Tourist guide on Instagram & FB was excellent.”
- “Given the very sudden and unusual circumstances the team did an outstanding job. Thank you.”
- “I really missed the live event this year...I think it is excellent.”
- “Very successful - thank you!”
- “I think the SEOS have done a great job - THANK YOU! Although very little has changed for me, I hope I have learned from this experience and will be better prepared for next year's real life/virtual event.”
- “Thank you for helping so much!”
- “It was a good idea in the circumstances, but I'm sorry that I couldn't view other artists' work. A virtual exhibition would be helpful if it encourages people to come to see the works in person.”
- “All at SEOS did a great job against severe odds. With lock-down, people on furlough or out of work meant that no-one was spending unnecessarily. There were many more things to think about than buying artwork. Gift items perhaps but not serious purchases.”
- “You did a great job, and I think more people saw my work than would have done with studio visits.”
- “I think it is extremely important now that there is a strong social media presence for SEOS as well as a very easy to use website. I miss the facility on the website of a drop down page for searching for particular artists. I think this should really be considered for next year. The flip catalogue is great but a hassle if you want to look up one particular artist with a page of their own. Can this be considered?”
- “I have really enjoyed following the Virtual Event and discovering artists I wouldn't have if the event had been purely 'in person'. However, I believe virtual events and exhibitions will never replace the real thing, but a combination of both would be great.”
- “Thank you for all the work that you all put in!”

SEOS Annual Report 2020

Welcome

Once again we reach the end of the SEOS year – and a highly unusual year – and we take this opportunity to review the event and SEOS membership in 2020. This Annual Report and AGM allow us to present our operations and receive input from the members so we can move the organisation forward to the next event.

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1. Chair's Report

This year has been the most extraordinary year in the history of South East Open Studios. As you know, we were forced to cancel the event due to the pandemic that took over the world and closed down every live event. As was communicated, almost all of our preparations were complete when the world went into lockdown, but fortunately we'd made the decision to postpone the printing of the guide until the last possible moment, which meant that a significant proportion of the money was not committed.

However, what happened next demonstrates the resilience and creativity in SEOS. The social media team of Polly and Jess put forward a way in which we could run a virtual event via our social media accounts. The work that they put in was incredible, and the result was a virtual showcasing of SEOS artists that – if you were following other campaigns – far outstripped what was being put on by national galleries. Their success in bringing this off was Olympic, and I'd like to repeat some of the comments that came through from our participation form to show just how appreciated this effort has been.

- I thought that all of you on the SEOS team did a brilliant job for the duration of the entire period. Your constant posts were engaging, so full of interest, humour and enthusiasm.....giving such a good feeling about the artists involved. You have been amazing and I thank all of you.
- I have really enjoyed following the Virtual Event and discovering artists I wouldn't have if the event had been purely 'in person'. However, I believe virtual events and exhibitions will never replace the real thing, but a combination of both would be great.
- I think that what you did was amazing and I'm so thankful to the whole SEOS team for their time and commitment in making it happen and doing it so well.

I believe that, despite the fact the pandemic meant we could not run SEOS as we would have wished, 2020 has changed the way that we look at SEOS for the future. Social

media, and the extraordinary reach social media gives us, has meant future events also need a virtual counterpart. As a driver for engagement, it cannot be bettered.

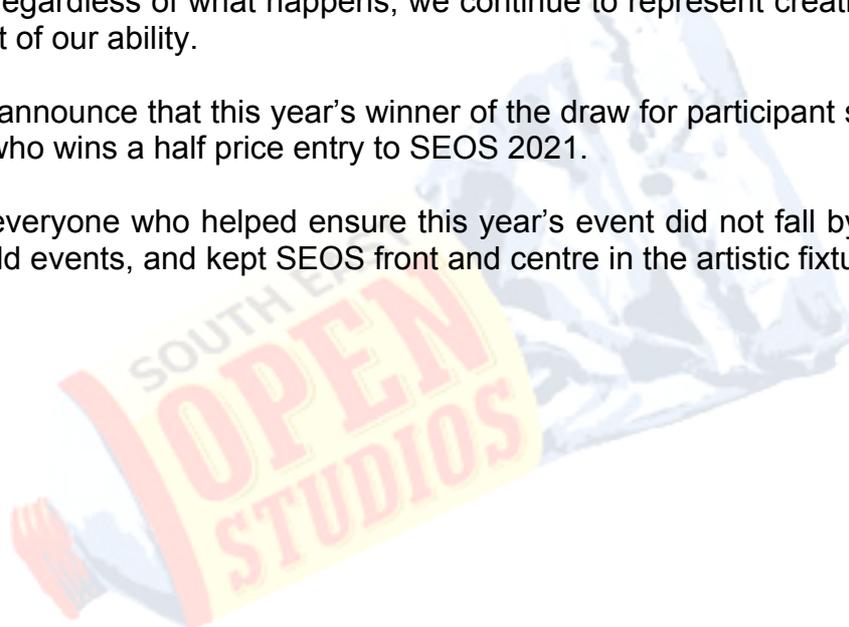
Many of you will have seen one of the coups of the year. On the 10th of June, BBC South East did a segment on the virtual SEOS event to showcase how we were continuing despite the limitations imposed by the lockdown. The artists Richard Heys, Polly Hosp and Anne Wagstaff were perfect ambassadors for us, demonstrating how we were managing to keep our creative selves working and displaying the resilience of SEOS itself. This would not have come about if it hadn't been for the strong social media presence that brought us to the attention of the BBC.

I'd like to thank all the members for being with us throughout in whatever capacity was possible for them, and I hope you'll forgive me for putting so many positive comments at the start of this report. I think it is essential to show just how much positivity is out there, especially goodwill and support for the committee, for whom responsibilities and workloads shifted dramatically in March. In the comments, I'm especially pleased to see a certain defiance that, regardless of what happens, we continue to represent creativity in the south east to the best of our ability.

I'm pleased to announce that this year's winner of the draw for participant survey feedback is Alisa Jaffa, who wins a half price entry to SEOS 2021.

Thank you to everyone who helped ensure this year's event did not fall by the wayside in the light of world events, and kept SEOS front and centre in the artistic fixtures of the south east.

Jamie Walsh



2. Treasurer's Report

Financial statement for the year ended 30/06/20

South East Open Studios

Chairman	Jamie Walsh
Treasurer	Charlotte Landman
Web Editor	Mark Wellard
Guide Editor	Terry Ayling
Guide Distribution Officer	Charlotte Landman
Social Media Officers	Polly Hosp Jessica de Mattos
Minute Secretary	Victoria Wainwright
Newsletter Editor	Ellita Fell
Publicity Officer	Ellita Fell
ACO Officer	Victoria Wainwright
Guide Advertising	Terry Ayling

South East Open Studios

Report to the Members

In accordance with the engagement letter dated 30 March 2013, we have prepared, without audit, the attached financial statement for the year ended 30 June 2020 as set out on pages 2 to 4 from the books and vouchers of your organisation and from information supplied and certify them to be in

12 Wheatsheaf Close
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 9QA

Dated

B J Rice & Associates LLP
Tax Consultant & Accountants

South East Open Studios

Income and Expenditure Account for the ended 30 June 2020.

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>£.</u>	<u>2019</u>
<u>Income</u>			<u>£.</u>
Members' entry fees & Entry Amendments		24,955	23,115
Entries refunded or held for 2021		(11,286)	-
Advertising space in guide		-	1,700
Bank interest received		8	7
Sundry Income		<u>250</u>	<u>-</u>
		13,927	24,822
 <u>Expenses</u>			
Guide production and signage		358	9,504
Committee honorarium	2	9	8
Committee fees including mileage		9396	9,409
Advertising (£492 2018/19)		657	2,791
Printing and photocopying		34	867
Postage		132	445
Website costs including hosting & Dropbox		737	1,347
Image preparation		463	-
Insurance		0	400
Accountancy		600	600
Other cost	5	55	71
ACO promotion all costs (2018/19)		126	348
ACO mileage (20018/19)		32	109
		<u>12,599</u>	<u>25,899</u>
Surplus (Deficit) for the year		<u>1,328</u>	<u>(1,077)</u>

South East Open Studios

Balance Sheet

31 March 2020

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>£.</u>	<u>2019</u> <u>£.</u>
<u>Current Assets</u>			
Cash in Bank (Savings)		4,508	4,500
Cash in Bank		20,341	8,743
PayPal		<u>-</u>	<u>439</u>
		24,849	13,682
<u>Current Liabilities</u>			
Debtors	3	-	185
Sundry creditors	4	<u>11,589</u>	<u>1,935</u>
		<u>11,589</u>	<u>1,750</u>
<u>Net Assets</u>		<u>13,260</u>	<u>11,932</u>
<u>Represented by</u>			
Brought forward balance		11,932	13,009
Surplus (Deficit) for the Year		<u>1,328</u>	<u>(1,077)</u>
		<u>13,260</u>	<u>11,932</u>

The Financial Statement was offered for approval by the committee

	Jamie Walsh - Chairman
	Dated

South East Open Studios

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2020

1 Accounting convention

The financial statements are prepared under the historic cost convention

2 Committee members

Each committee member receives an honorarium of £1 and in addition they invoice for the services rendered to SEOS. The expenses included mileage allowance at approved rates.

3 Debtors

2019

Committee Overpayment	-		150
Entry Amendments	-		35
			35
	<u>£ -</u>		<u>£ 185</u>

4 Creditors

Accountancy	600		720
Committee Fees	-		1,150
Advertising	-		17
Monies held for Adverts in the guide 2021	900		-
Website costs & Dropbox	50		48
Monies held for Membership for 2021	<u>10,039</u>		<u>-</u>
	<u>£ 11,589</u>		<u>£ 1,935</u>

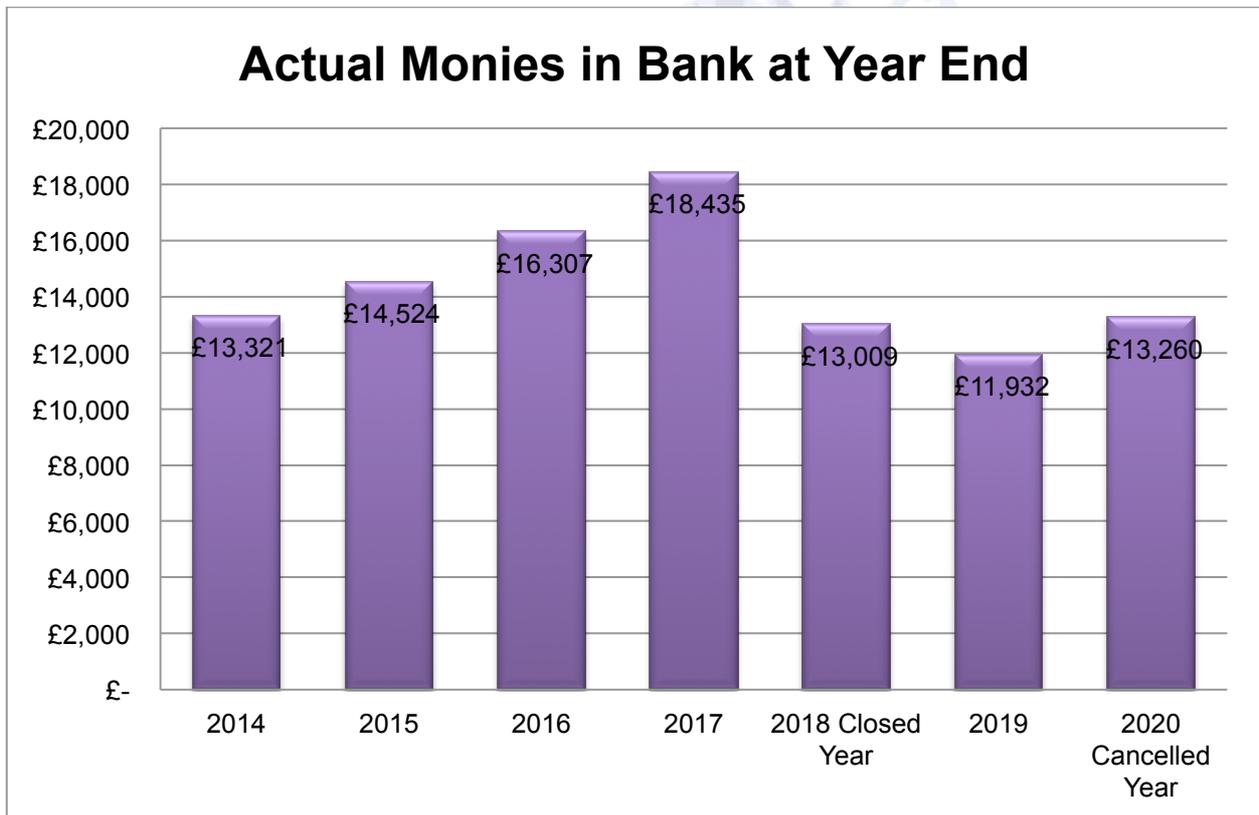
5 Sundry

Card Fee	35		35
AGM Hall Hire	-		30
Glue	-		6
Sundries	<u>20</u>		<u>-</u>
	<u>55</u>		<u>71</u>

This year has been unprecedented in the history of South East Open Studios. Yes we have had a closed year but with planning we kept the expenses down and cut our cloth according, we did not get to the point of sending the guide to print before cancelling.

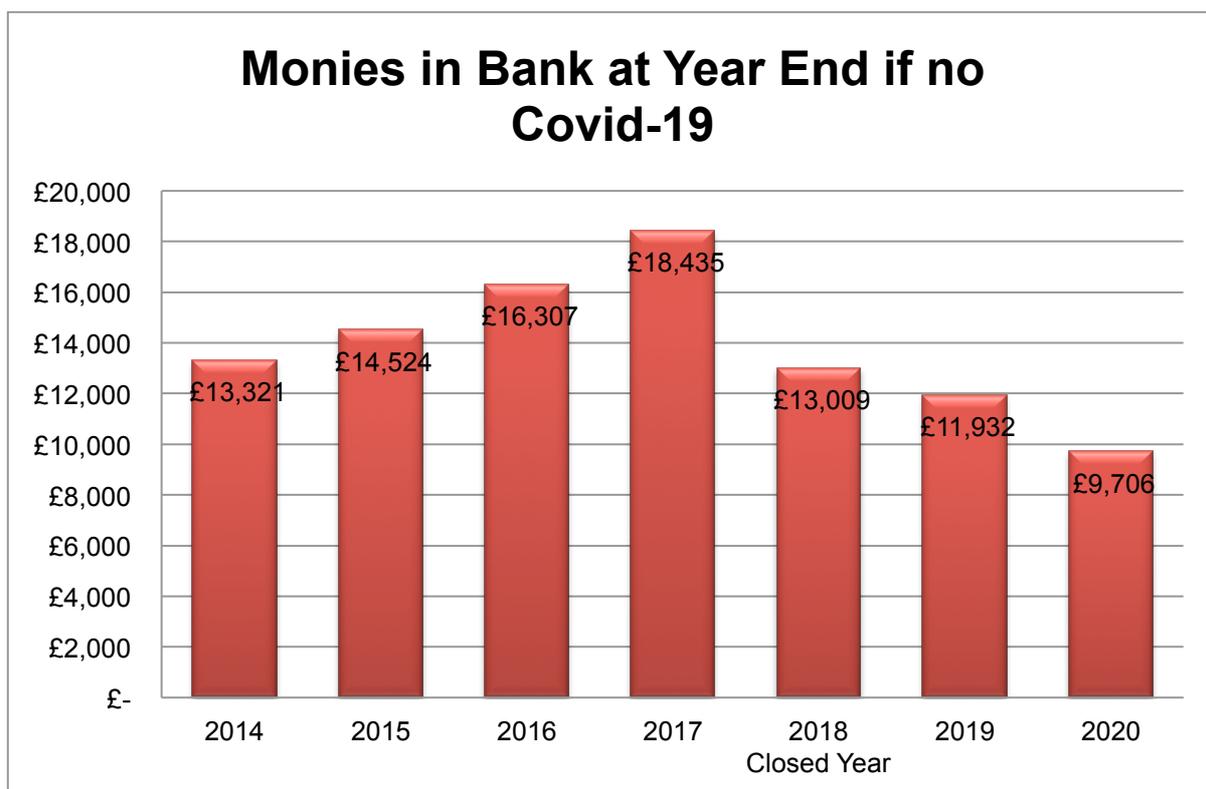
SEOS is a whole year round event for the committee; costs are incurred throughout the year. A relatively small amount before sign-up but once your money is paid the momentum just builds financially to our largest expense of the year, our guide printing. This year we did the preparation but then had the rug pulled out from under us, we put the brakes on as soon as it became apparent that the year was not going to take place in the usual way, but with the exception of the guide printing, adverts in magazine and some other minor expenses the year was planned and paid for.

As you can see from the accounts above detailing the monies received, spent and a surplus of £1,328 at the year end. To clarify the reasoning behind the amount of refund we decided on I would like to draw you attention to the graph below.



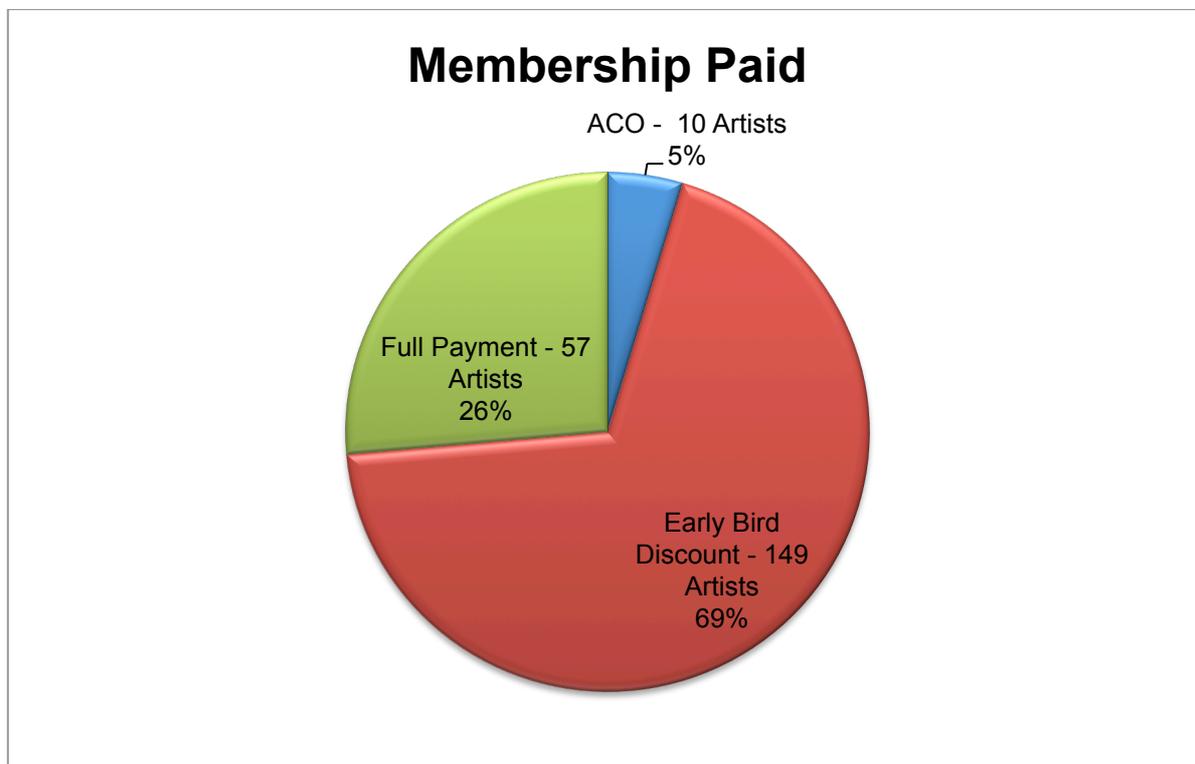
As you can see I have been doing this job for quite a while and practically every year I have closed my report with the comment “Yes we have money in the bank but if we have a problem we do not have the reserves to cover emergencies”. Unfortunately my words have come true we do not have the money to cover refunds due to cancellation.

To make things as fair as possible I decided to calculate the refund by trying to return our accounts to the figures at the start of the year. There was a surplus but I had to keep some money back if unexpected bills turned up. The held-back figure I was working on was £2,000 but as you can see some bills did turn up. I would now like to draw your attend to my next graph.



This is what I calculated we would have had left if this year event had not been cancelled, a deficit of approximately £2,226. Now I am going to say again SEOS needs to increase its income and reduce its expenses if we are going to remain a viable organisation. If you use an inflation calculator on the 2017 figures and then allow for the £5,000 deficit in our closed year we should have something in the range of £15,000 which would have allowed us to possibly give a larger refund.

One reason why our income may not be growing as well as I would like is because of our early bird discount bought in to spread Terry's work load out over the sign-up period but now I feel that we have just reduced our prices as most artist sign-up during this period. Please see chart below.



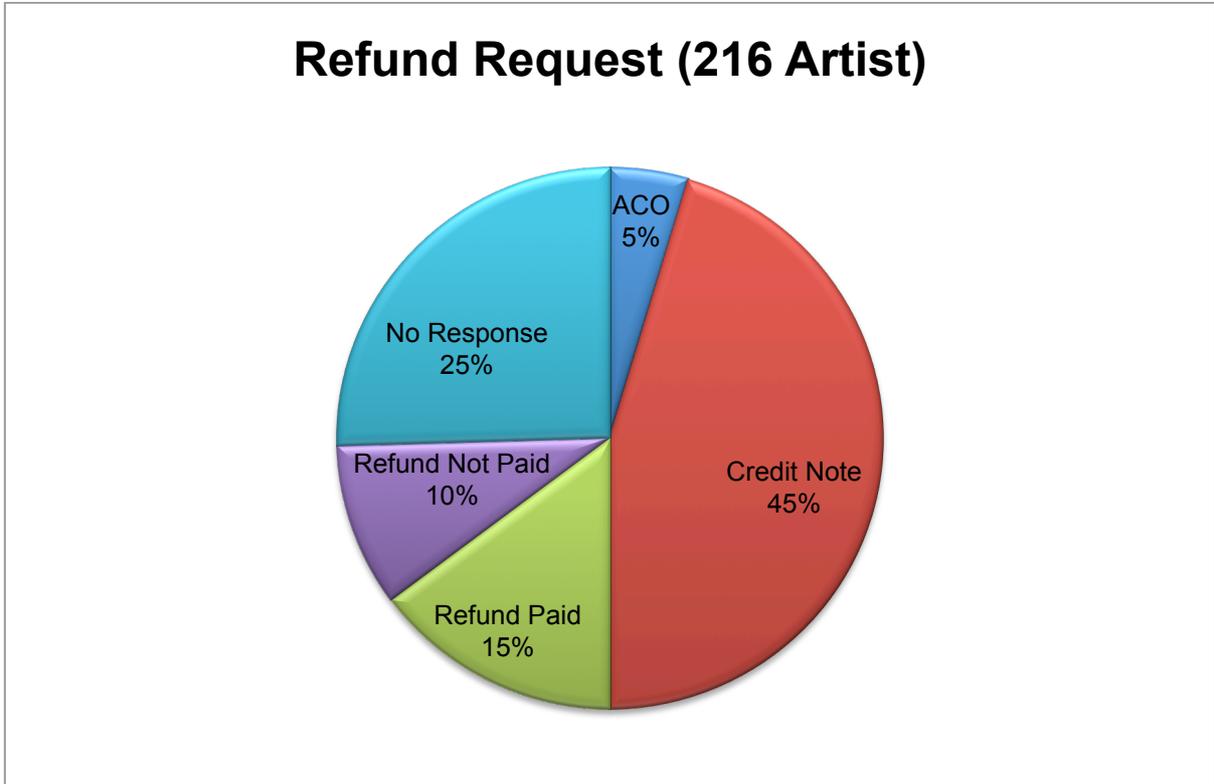
This year's discount cost SEOS £2,980 (if all paying artists paid the full £135 entrance fee), this amount of money would start helping us to get back to a point where SEOS could start looking at new ways of promoting ourselves. Instead of working on ways to offer the event on 'fresh air'.

I have now included the honoraria list for this year and as you can see we have not taken a raise for many years, I know we have added a new role but over the years we have shed others so the total bill has not changed.

	Name	2019/20	2014/ 15
Chair	Jamie Walsh	£ 800.00	£ 800.00
Guide Editor	Terry Ayling	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Website Editor	Mark Welland	£ 800.00	£1,500.00
Publicity	Elitta Fell	£ 500.00	£ 700.00
Area Co-ordinators Officer	Victoria Wainwright	£ 700.00	£ 700.00
Treasurer	Charlotte Landman	£ 700.00	£ 700.00
Minutes secretary 6 @ £40	Victoria Wainwright	£ 240.00	£ 228.00
Guide Distribution	Charlotte Landman	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Guide Advertising	Terry Ayling	£200 + 5% of revenue	£ 350.00
Social Media Officer	Polly Hosp	£ 400.00	
Social Media Officer	Jessica de Mattos	£ 400.00	£ 300.00
Newsletter Editor	Elitta Fell	£35/Newsletter	£ -



One final point on the subject of refunds, I have no way of making a refund unless you give me your account details. SEOS' bank statement only shows your name, the reference you add and the amount you pay, this is the same for all BACS payments. On the chart below you can see the amount of people who requested refund and have received them. You can still get a refund if you want please send your details to the treasures' email address.



3. ACO Officer's Report

A big thank you to all of the ACOs who put in an enormous amount of time into recruitment and also for being so supportive and understanding during this unusual time. We would also like to say a massive thank you to Felicity Flutter who has been an ACO, and was also a committee member for years, who will now be retiring from her role. We will miss your relentless energy and wisdom.

I recruited two new ACOs this year, Claudia Weigand for Tunbridge Wells and Polly Hosp who took on not only Sevenoaks but Edenridge and the role of Social Media with Jess de Mattos. I hope that next year goes back to normal. I can't wait to open up to real people! If so so we will be looking for ACOS for the Edenbridge and Cranbrook area.

4. Website Officer's Report

Website seos-art.org

Now in its second year, the website has continued to function as per the plan that was created for it in 2019. Given that this year has thrown many events into turmoil, we utilised features to help support the virtual online presence of member artists. This included a flip book style version of the 2020 guide, which allows both artists and visitors to share specific pages from the guide to their friends and followers.

To support the social media campaign the website also integrated the SEOS Instagram feed into the home page. This was in part to allow visitors to see the very latest posts and information that SEOS provided on the platform and to encourage artists and SEOS followers to join up on the platform.

Moving Forward

Although the site does not hold artist or visitor information, a suggestion for next year would be to make the website HTTPS compliant by purchasing an SSL certificate. The SSL certificate encrypts the site, providing a more secure connection. It also overcomes the 'This site is not secure' message found when using the Google Chrome or some other browsers.

We hope to reuse the amazing Studio Location Map that proved so popular in 2019. Having a resource like that available online really helped support the physical guide.

Mailchimp Newsletter

Mailchimp continues to act as the SEOS direct email messaging platform. We have been using it to both showcase artists via the newsletter and keep artists informed of SEOS events.

Google Forms

We have continued to use Google forms for member feedback and sign up activities.

5. Publicity Officer's Report

I had already sent out the TW Lifestyle mag ad and the Ingenue Arts mag before the decision to cancel the 2020 SEOS event, both had very early deadlines in March.

All other magazines had deadlines after that date, therefore I was able to cancel them quite easily.

All editors fully understood and emailed to say they hope we would be advertising with them in next year's event.

6. Guide Editor's Report

In a normal year, the job of guide editor starts in October and finishes in early April. At our meeting in November last year I told the committee that I had booked a holiday to Australia to visit my son who was out there for a year. This meant getting the guide finished and to the printers before 22nd March - about ten days earlier than normal. Everything went really well and I was ready to send the final artwork to the printers around 18th / 19th March but it became apparent during that week that there was doubt over the event which was quickly followed by cancellation.

By the time we made the decision to cancel I had completed everything I needed to do for an Open Studios event. Unfortunately, because of my holiday, this included printing the posters.

My memory of those few weeks leading up to lockdown was that we went from normal life to lockdown with all public events cancelled in a very short space of time and I don't think any of us saw it coming. We were very lucky that the pandemic struck when it did. If it had been two or three weeks later 28,000 guides would have been printed at a cost of around £10,000.

We did have to pay the printers something this year as they had printed out two sets of proofs of the guide for us to check through. One of these they put together and bound as the finished guide, so I have the only copy of the SEOS 2020 guide - it could be worth a fortune in years to come!

7. Guide Advertising Report

This year with the help of Polly and Jess on Social Media we had the most advertisers we have had for a while. I sold £3,000 worth of ad space in the guide - and then we had to give it all back! That's not strictly true - a few have asked for credit notes for next year's guide, which is good.

In my report last year I mentioned that ACO's could help getting adverts in the guide by suggesting businesses to approach in their area. Victoria sent out a request for this but I think there were only two replies from ACOs. I'd like to try this again next year, so to all of those who didn't respond could you have a think over the next few months about businesses or attractions that might benefit from advertising in the guide and let Victoria know?

I took this position on two years ago because there was no one else to do it but I would be very happy if someone else took it over now. It's a straightforward job that means you're active in January and February, but for me that's my busiest time with the guide. You don't have to do any hard selling on the phone, well I haven't. I email all the contacts on our mailing list in January, with a follow up in early February and a few phone calls to some of our regulars to give them a nudge. Last year Polly and Jess helped a lot by posting information on line which brought in a number of extra advertisers. If you're interested or know someone who might be please contact us.

8. Guide Distribution Report

This year's guide distribution went well, nowhere! I collected all the guide request numbers ready for grand printing total, then my job finished for this year. Hopefully business as usual next year.

9. Social Media Report

Building on previous efforts, we have spent the past 9 months further establishing South East Open Studios as a professional organisation across all key platforms; developing a consistent look and feel through our tone of voice and imagery, and slowly building an even stronger following of artists and art lovers.

Following the decision to cancel this year's event, it was especially important to do as much as we could to fill the vacuum and give our artists a different kind of exposure, at no extra cost to the artists. Our role, as with the physical event, was to provide the platform for our artists to promote themselves, their process and their work.

Between 5 and 21 June, we conducted a virtual trip around the participating artists' studios, showcasing the work of all 216 artists to demonstrate the breadth and depth of talent we have here in the South East. We also streamed it on our website so that everyone could follow along, even if they weren't on social media.

We produced a variety of materials: a video for each artist showcasing their work; maps and icons to track the route and supporting copy/tags to direct to more work and contact details, we posted 5 times per day on both Facebook and Instagram, and signposted from Twitter and to YouTube.

Thanks to the wonderful support from our artists active on social media, we achieved some remarkable results:

Through Instagram, posts have been viewed an incredible 50,000+ times, whilst generating over 5,200 engagements throughout the event.

Through Facebook we reached nearly 13,000 people, our posts appeared 60,000+ times on people's screens, and our artist feature videos were viewed over 11,500 times.

Social media is fast becoming an essential tool for the artist. At present, only around half of our members are active, and we are working hard to encourage more artists to get involved; this year we produced a free set of guidelines for the 3 key platforms, successfully used by a number of artists to get them started.

Feedback from the questionnaire has revealed some confusion regarding our role. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the SEOS social media platforms, and we, the social media officers, are here to share and showcase artists' work. Whether the event is virtual or 'in person' the responsibility to generate and manage sales of artwork is, and always has been, the responsibility of the artist.

Going forwards, we have had overwhelmingly positive feedback from our artists and intend to run a simplified online campaign alongside the 2021 event, our key challenge is to find a way of working with non-technical artists so that we can achieve even more engagement and involvement next time around.

