Chertsey Artists Limited

Membership Survey 2011

Executive Summary

This survey forms the initial stage in a the development of a longer-term planning and strategy for Chertsey Artists Limited (CAL), which will ensure that the society's activities are aligned with its members' objectives and that its resources are deployed in a manner to best meet those needs.

The survey would furthermore represent a first step in improving the level of member engagement with the society and the levels of response would help indicate members' real desire to become involved and ensure that CAL remained a vibrant and active society.

The survey was sent to all registered members and response levels were surprisingly high at 55% of all members, considerably above the typical response rate (5-20%) to member questionnaires in similar groups, indicating that members welcome this opportunity to engage and to contribute to the future direction of the society. A number of replies included additional comments indicating that members had previously offered ideas and offers to help, which had not been taken up and every effort should be made to ensure such offers are acknowledged and taken up where feasible.

CAL members are mainly keen amateur or part-time professional artists (73%), who have been involved with their art for many years and who spend an average of 12.5 hours a week on their art works. Many are actively involved in several societies and represent a wealth of experience and ideas that can be harnessed to enhance CAL's offering to its members.

Most members joined CAL to attend workshops and classes, which is also reflected in their current and future participation in CAL activities, however they also joined to meet other artists and this need does not seem to be catered for and demand for such opportunities is high.

Life/Portrait drawing is the most popular activity currently supported with 61% of members attending sessions at either Thameside or Windsor St. and 19% attending sessions at both locations. Exhibiting at Windsor St Gallery is also very popular with 39% of members exhibiting their work. 21% of members have used the print room at Windsor St. There is, however, considerable dissatisfaction with the facilities at Windsor St. and strong demand for improvements to be made to improve them.

Members have declared a strong interest in attending Talks and Demonstrations at Windsor St. (up from 6% this year to 39% in future) and it will be important to ensure that future subject matter is carefully selected to capitalize on the interest and demand that exists and convert this into concrete attendance. The availability of a suitable space for these sessions will need to be assured.

The current website is poorly utilized, with most visitors not returning and very little repeat traffic. There is, however appetite for a dynamic and relevant website with many ideas for content proposed, including online artist galleries, online information and diaries, member forums and links to other societies and galleries. This is clearly an area where resources could be deployed to meet real member demand.

Members are keen to support a range of new activities including Gallery Visits, tutored workshops (46%), lectures (48%) and social events with the opportunity to meet other artists. There is also strong interest in studio space, mainly for individual rental, but also some interest in shared studio space for artists

There was a strong message sent by members through responses and additional comments added to the questionnaires, whereby members were very keen to ensure that CAL developed a greater sense of life and vibrancy and promoted greater involvement and engagement with and by members, with some degree of frustration expressed at the current situation.

Many considered the physical conditions at Windsor St. to be symptomatic of their concerns and there was strong support for improvements to be made to the Windsor St facilities as well as the overall management of the space and the society. There is also a clear demand for additional studios to be made available to members.

This survey has clearly indicated that, when consulted, members are willing to enthusiastically support and contribute to the running of their society and this should represent an initial step in continuing and developing this dialogue and harnessing the evident enthusiasm that members have to develop CAL's support for their artistic endeavours. It is essential that the results of this survey are provided back to members and that the key ideas put forward by them be incorporated into CAL's planned future programs and the utilisation of its resources.

Nyall Farrell

Management Committee Member

Rationale for the Survey

Following some intense debate at the last CAL AGM, a commitment was made to try to improve the level of member engagement with CAL and to improve the level of communication between the members and the management committee. It was further agreed that although a medium-term solution had achieved by the committee in relation to the Windsor Street premises, a longer-term property strategy should be developed, based upon a clear understanding of the society's and its members' objectives.

This survey was launched to try to better understand what its members expect and want from their membership of CAL and to seek to ensure that future planning for the development of the society is based upon a clear understanding of its members' needs.

Survey Methodology

The survey was sent to all current members in paper format and included a stamped addressed envelope to encourage a high response rate. A two week response period was provided and an email reminder was sent out with a week to go. Although many members do receive their newsletter by email, there remains a significant proportion of members who have not provided email addresses to CAL and the use of email or on-line survey options was not considered to be consistent with the desire to ensure that all members' views were requested.

The survey was designed with both multiple-choice questions (to assist in analysis) and a section for free-text comments and suggestions to ensure that members' views can be fully expressed. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

1. **Members' Profile:**
   which was designed to provide CAL with an understanding of its membership, in terms of their level of artistic experience, involvement and commitment.
2. **Members' Participation in CAL:**
   This section sought to understand why members joined CAL and their level of participation in CAL activities, both over the past twelve months and in the coming year. Use and awareness of the website was also surveyed in this section.
3. **Development of CAL:**
   Here the questions focused on the members' level of appetite and support for additional activities, including choices from a list of suggestions and the ability for member's own suggestions. Suggestions were also canvassed for improvements to the CAL website and other areas where CAL could support their artistic activities.

Members were given the option of signing the survey.

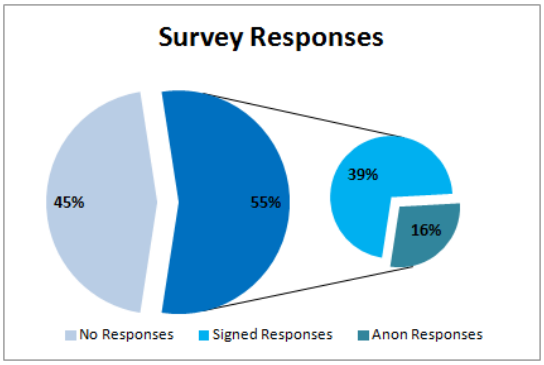
Survey Response Rate

Typical response rates to member-type surveys are between 5% and 20% and past experience of member participation in AGM's and other club activities led to low expectations for responses.

The survey was sent to all 122 members currently registered and the actual response rate was extraordinarily high with 67 responses (55%). Of these 48 (39% of members) questionnaires were signed.

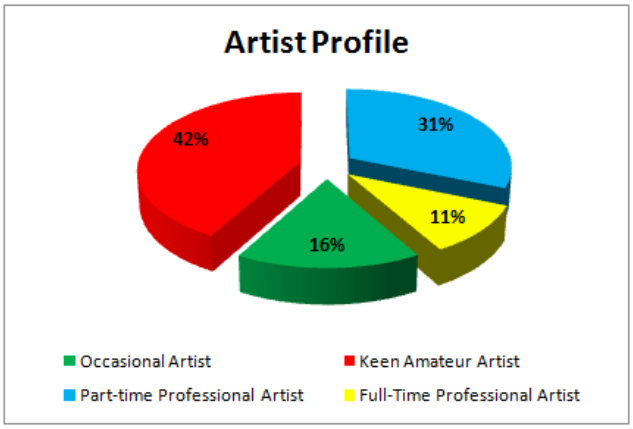
This indicates that members are very keen to become involved with their society and would welcome a higher level of communication and consultation on the development of CAL.

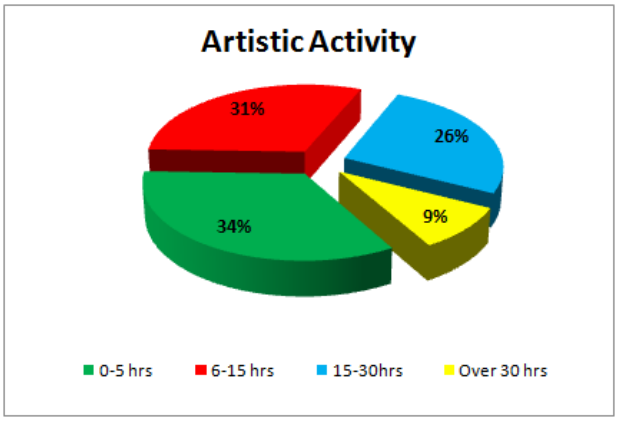
The high level of responses means that the results indicated below will have a high level of validity and will be very indicative of members' views and wishes.



Members' Profile

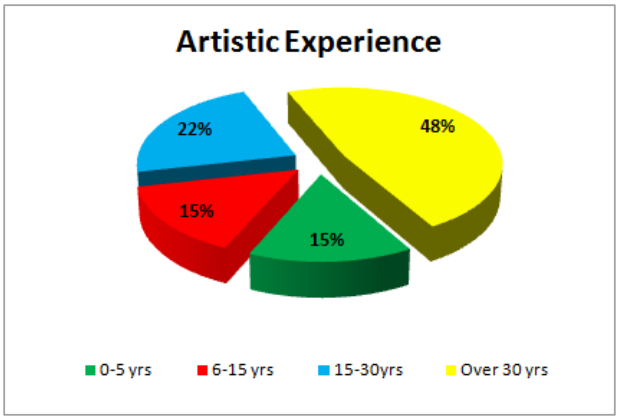
The survey indicates that most of CAL members describe themselves as Keen Amateur Artists (42%) or Part-Time professionals (31%) with 11% of respondents describing themselves as Full-time Professional artists and 16% as occasional artists.

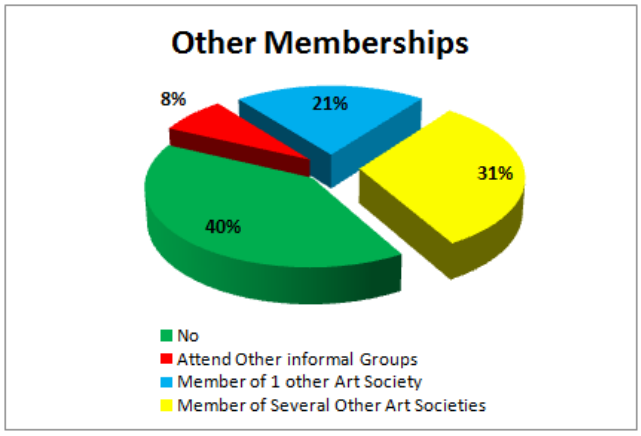




Members spend on average 12.5 hours per week on artistic activities. There is a close correlation between the number of those who spend over 30 hrs per week and those who describe themselves as full-time professional artists. Other members are fairly equally divided between those who spend 0-5, 6-15 and 15-30 hours

48% of members have been involved with art for over 30 years with other members equally spread over the 0-5, 6-15 and 15-30 years categories.



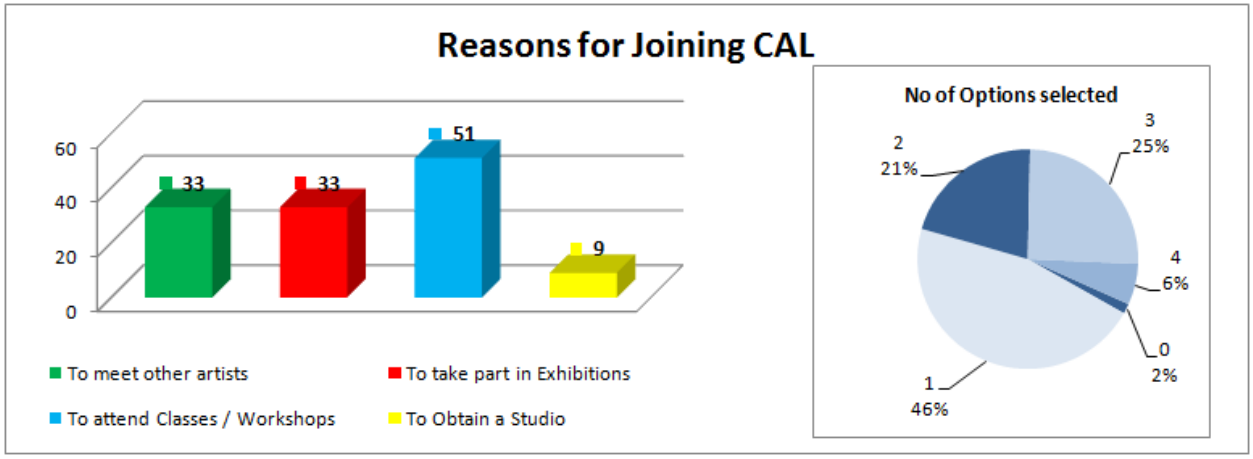


60% of members belong to other art societies or groups with 30% of members belonging to several other societies.

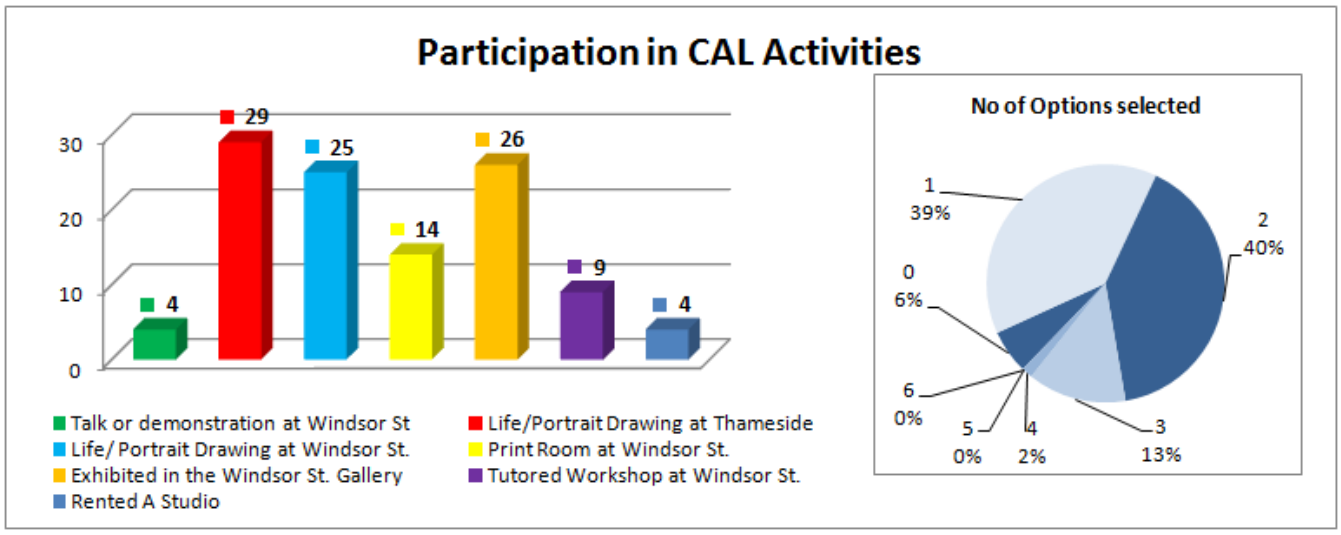
This means that members will be a rich source of ideas and experience in areas in which CAL can develop and improve.

Members' Participation in CAL

As most of the questions in this section allowed members to select multiple options, the percentages are calculated on the number of responses over the number of responses received.

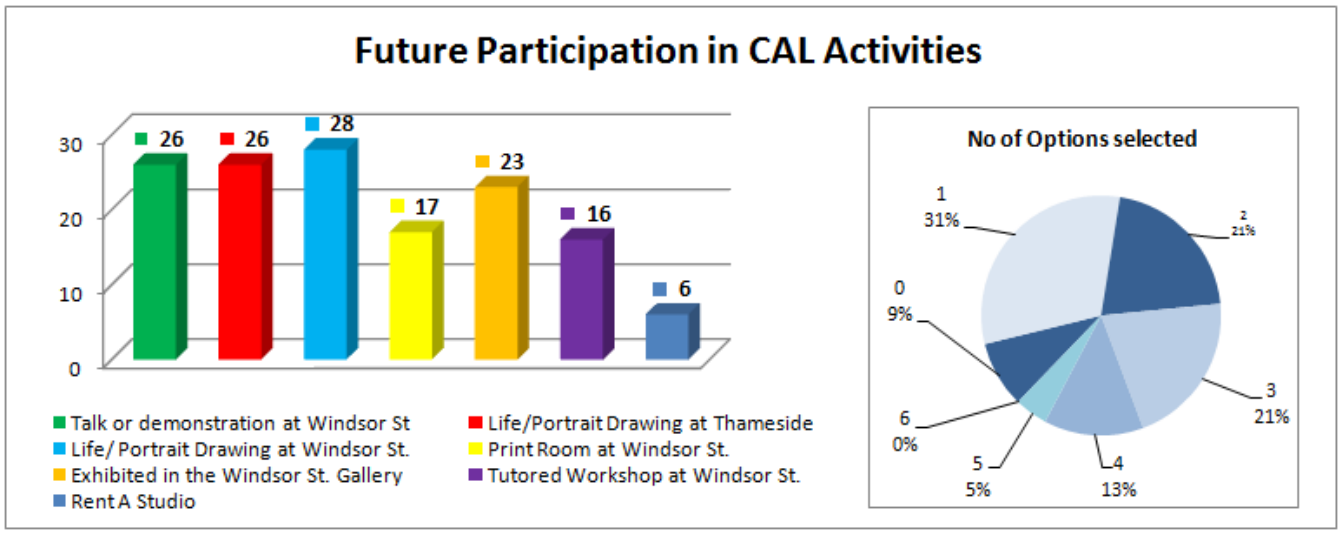


Just over half of members had multiple reasons for joining CAL, although the most popular reason for joining was to attend classes and workshops (76%), although almost half of respondents also wished to meet other artists and to exhibit their work with CAL.



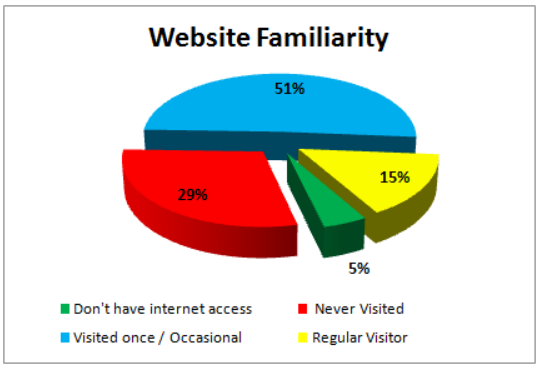
Of the activities organised by CAL, Life/Portrait drawing is the most popular with 61% of members attending sessions at either Thameside or Windsor St. and 19% attending sessions at both locations. Exhibiting at Windsor St Gallery is also very popular with 39% of members exhibiting their work. 21% of members have used the print room at Windsor St.

Members have declared a strong interest in attending Talks and Demonstrations at Windsor St. (up from 6% this year to 39% in future) and it will be important to ensure that future subject matter is carefully selected to capitalize on the interest and demand that exists and convert this into concrete attendance. There is pretty consistent interest in the other activities between past experience and future intentions.



Website Recognition and Development

Almost one third of all members have never visited the CAL website (29%) but most people who do so do not return after their initial visit with only 15% (i.e. 10 respondents) declaring themselves to be regular visitors.

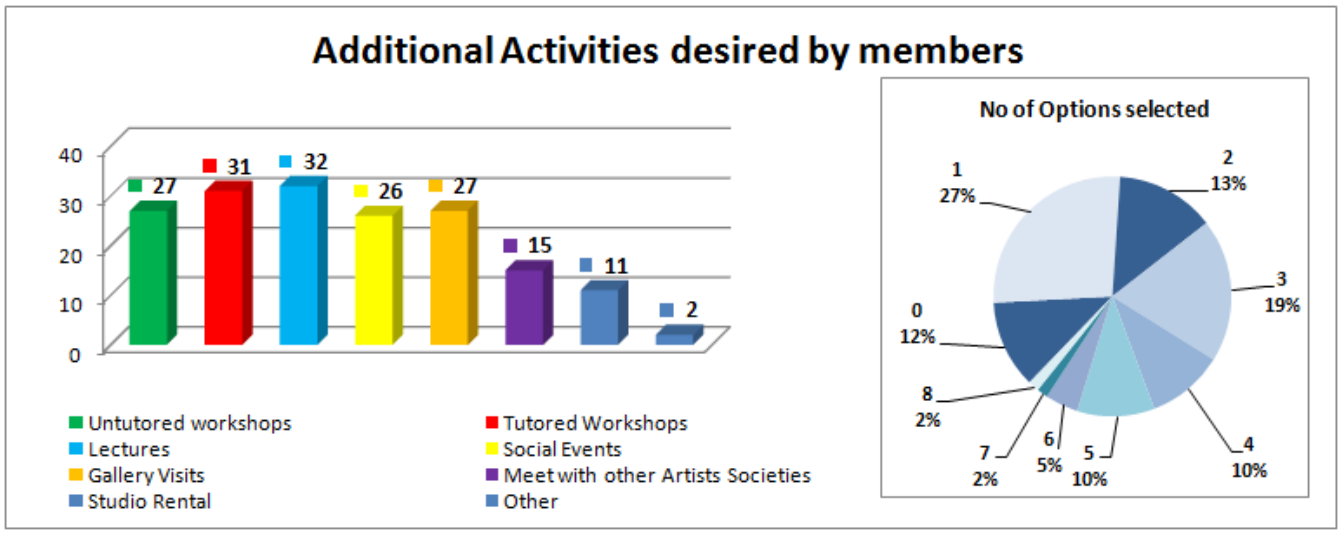


There was a good response to the question relating to features that members would like to see on the website. The main features that people would like to see included are:

- Artist Profiles and Galleries, with facility for members to upload images and provide details about themselves and their work.
- Other variations of this including “Works of the Month”, “Artist of the Month” and Online Exhibitions.
- On-line sales of works, prints, cards etc.
- On-line newsletter, including future events, workshops and a calendar of events.
- Contact details of event organizers.
- A members’ forum and /or Contact details to facilitate contact between members.
- Links to other artistic societies and to local galleries.
- Chertsey Artists should set up a Facebook Account and have links to it from the website

Development of CAL

There is strong support amongst members for CAL to develop its activities (72%) and members are committed to supporting new activities (82%), although some additional comments provided indicate that it would depend on what activities are put on.



Members would be keen to support a range of new activities including Gallery Visits (40%), Tutored workshops (46%), lectures (48%) and social events with the opportunity to meet other artists. There is also demand for more untutored workshops (40%), and to develop links with other artistic societies (22%).

There is clearly a demand for additional studios to be made available to members, both for individual rental and some form of shared studio space.

Additional ideas for organised activities included:

- Social events, esp. a Christmas party, with opportunities for artists to meet each other.
- Collaboration with other Artists' groups, to include potentially joint exhibitions.
- Alternatives to life/portrait classes, including Costumed models/ staged settings, longer poses over several sessions, painting days.
- Organised Gallery visits to museums and other exhibitions.
- Organised exterior painting trips.
- Lectures on artist development, portfolio development and business aspects of artistic career.
- Learning opportunities, including demonstrations by professional artists, introductions to different Media, Beginners classes.

When asked how CAL could better help support their artistic endeavours, members were keen to ensure that CAL developed a greater sense of life and vibrancy and promoted greater involvement and engagement with and by members. There was a high degree of concern identified in the comments section with some frustration expressed at a perceived lack of current commitment.

Many considered the physical conditions at Windsor St. to be symptomatic of their concerns, there was strong support for improvements to be made to the Windsor St facilities, including the Life/print Room, the Kitchen & toilet, the provision of hot water as well as the overall management of the space and the society.

Other ideas expressed included:

- Other exhibition options, including Open studios, one big annual exhibition, taking a stand at the Affordable Art fair and more long term exhibiting opportunities.
- Higher levels of Publicity for CAL and its activities
- Greater interaction with the local community and schools and between Studio renters and other members.