

## SSI Projects

# Radiators & Drainers

A REPORT ON THE MARKETING STRATEGIES WORKSHOP CONDUCTED BY ROD MCINTOSH, ORGANISED AS PART OF THE JOINT SSI & NSF TRAINING INITIATIVE

**WHEN** a course facilitator tells you that the participants will be doing most of the talking you know you are in trouble! You wonder why you paid good money to hear yourself talk, the really shy people wonder if there is still time to sneak off and the rest resign themselves to their fate. However this was not the case with Rod McIntosh's course 'Marketing Strategies'. Why? He was very methodical and clear about the workshop goals and it is amazing just how contagious this can be. While we did wonder why we all had to get up off our seats (which we were secretly clinging to) and write our names on a rather large sheet of paper on the floor, there was a sense that we could trust this Sheffield boy! He promised with certainty that after two days we would each have produced a personal timeline of marketing goals and I remember thinking that I would be surprised if this happened. However, under his guidance all nine of us left Coleraine House with clearer heads, a stronger sense of who we were and specific strategies to move forward. So how did he do it?

The pace of the workshop was brisk, we moved quickly and easily between topics. We brainstormed at an epic level and everyone participated freely and comfortably. There was a lot of practical information on how to go about writing/updating your CV or Artist Statement. As a trainer Rod was a strong believer in the idea of 'free writing', of going wide with your ideas at first and then getting specific later. The idea is that in allowing yourself to think freely you are more likely to come up with new thoughts and solutions. Many of the theories discussed at the workshop were not new or complicated but we all

began to see the common sense of simple marketing solutions. The idea for instance of asking yourself a series of questions – who, what, where, why, when and how was a very useful and clear-cut way of tackling any proposal/submission.

In some ways the workshop was more a voyage of self-discovery than a hard nosed marketing seminar and yet it managed to be both. We talked about comfort zones and how to avoid them, for instance many of us do not like leaving our studio. We were encouraged to become more aware of who we are and where we are at, because it seems that what we believe about ourselves affects our behaviour and ultimately our achievements.

On a practical level we answered such questions as - what are your marketing needs and who is your audience? Through strong group interaction we learned from each other and in doing so we were able to conclude what our individual marketing needs were. There was plenty of advice and discussion on mailing lists (if you do not have one start now!); tracking your results; networking; submissions; invitations; press releases etc. As a group we were constantly pushed to think of innovative and inexpensive ways to capture the attention of our chosen audience. Incidentally feeding them and giving them alcohol and gifts seems to work well! With regard to press releases we were told exactly how they should look and read and how to adapt them for different editors. In simple terms you need to know what story you are trying to tell and then tell it simply and without jargon or tricks. You need to be specific to your audience and write in short bullet type sentences.

The SMART strategy for goal achievement was strongly advocated – all goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timed. Goals should always be written down and should be backed up with such details as dates, numbers, names etc. There is considerable evidence which suggests that people who have explicit written goals are much more likely to achieve their ambitions than those who do not. So get writing!

At one point Rod told us about a theory that suggests that in life people are either Radiators or Drainers. Rod McIntosh was an excellent radiator for two warm days in May and the nine of us having drained all we could from him, left with a spring in our step and a strategic timeline for the future in our pockets what more could you ask for?

**Michelle Maher**

'Marketing Strategies', conducted by Rod McIntosh artist and professional trainer took place in Dublin on 17th and 18th May. The course offered practical advice on promotion and maximising your earning potential. 'Professional Development Training Workshops for Artists, Cork, Dublin' is a joint initiative between The National Sculpture Factory and The Sculptors' Society of Ireland.