

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Cost of Integrity

As founder of New Blood Art, one of the UK's earliest online galleries for emerging artists, Sarah Ryan says her experience of defending the business against much larger interests has sharpened her focus on how small galleries and artists can build sustainable careers without losing integrity.

London, May 2026 – Sarah Ryan, founder of New Blood Art, says her experience of sustaining an independent gallery for more than 22 years without venture capital has brought into sharp focus the cost of maintaining integrity in an art market where financial power often shapes visibility, access and survival.

Founded in 2004, New Blood Art was one of the earliest online galleries dedicated to identifying and introducing emerging artists. Over more than two decades, the gallery became known for identifying artists early whose careers and market values later rose significantly, with coverage appearing in the money sections of major national broadsheets and financial publications.

Ryan says the real cost of staying independent was not only commercial. The personal costs of defending her business through a legal process against much larger interests have led her to downsize, step back and reflect on the structure of her gallery business model.

“I took time out - 18 months in a small Cornish fishing village, to reflect on what really matters and if it's even possible to operate profitably in the art market whilst maintaining integrity. I've lived through legal and financial pressure defending the business against much larger interests, and now understand very directly what it costs to maintain integrity in a market where money and power so often decide who gets to carry on in a system shaped by inequality and capital.”

“The same financial power that decides which businesses survive also decides which artists survive. Money shapes survival at every level of the ecosystem - the gallery, the artist, and ultimately the cultural record itself. I have seen that outside of talent the artists who survive long enough to build meaningful careers are usually those with some form of structural protection around them,” she says. “Time, money, geography and stability shape who remains visible long enough to sustain a practice. And if only certain galleries and only certain artists can survive long enough to continue making work, then the history of art itself becomes narrower.”

While her gallery New Blood Art has helped introduce artists to collectors and supported the early stages of their careers, she says the gallery has effectively carried a broader public-interest function that was never fully reflected in the economics of the sector.

“The commercial gallery was carrying far more than straightforward commercial activity,” Ryan says. “Any profits we generated funded years of artist visibility, development and early-stage career support, while much of the long-term financial upside around artists’ careers often moved elsewhere as those careers matured and they were signed by galleries who discovered them on our platform.”

She says the experience of being forced to confront the personal cost of sustaining that model alongside protecting the interests of the business against more powerful players has led her to radically rethink how the work now must be structured.

The plan is for New Blood Art to continue as a focused commercial gallery, while the New Blood Art Foundation (currently in formation) will carry the Emerging Art Prize in collaboration with UK Fine Art departments and the wider public-interest work around visibility, access and emerging artistic talent. Ryan says the separation is intended to make the structure more honest and more sustainable.

“The commercial gallery needs to operate commercially. The wider work of identifying and opening doors for artists without existing advantage needs its own structure, funding and protection,” she says.

The New Blood Art Emerging Art Prize, launched in 2023 with its inaugural exhibition at Saatchi Gallery, returns in 2026. It gathers tutor nominations from Fine

Art degree courses across the UK to create a national snapshot of emerging practice at the point of graduation.

Ryan says the Foundation model has emerged from a recognition that commercial gallery economics and public-interest cultural work require different structures if both are to operate sustainably. The governance and funding model for the Foundation is being developed.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- New Blood Art was founded in 2004 as one of the UK's earliest online galleries dedicated to emerging artists.
- Over more than 22 years, New Blood Art has identified artists whose careers and market values later rose significantly, with coverage appearing in the money sections of major national broadsheets and financial publications.
- Sarah Ryan has spent more than two decades identifying exceptional artists early, often at the very beginning of their careers, and introducing them to collectors.
- This release concerns a restructuring of work and a reflection on the cost of maintaining integrity in the art market. It is not a formal foundation launch with a finalised governance board.

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- Interview & Images available on request.