

THE STINGING FLY



STRATEGY

2021–2023



Introduction

This document lays out our strategic objectives for the years 2021-2023, so that our writers, readers, collaborators and supporters can join us on the next stages of The Stinging Fly's journey.

The Stinging Fly began life back in 1997 because we believed that writers and readers needed a magazine that published and promoted the very best new writing. We wanted Dublin to have such a magazine: one that encouraged new writers as they developed their craft, providing them with support and meaningful opportunities along the way. We have broadened the scope of our activities over the years, all the time seeking to deepen our engagement with writers and with readers. Through the magazine, through our books and our website, and through our mentoring, workshops and seminars, we are now internationally recognised for our work as champions of new writers and new writing.

Over the past few months, we have completed the process of incorporating as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. This is in keeping with best practice for an arts organisation that plays an essential role within the national culture. The move allows us to carry out our work from a more solid foundation.

The support of the Arts Council has been of vital importance to us over the years. We will continue to work strategically with the Council's executive to advance our shared ambitions for literature in Ireland. We are also deeply indebted to the TS Eliot Foundation, who have recently pledged us their support as patrons. This new stream of funding arrives at a crucial time in our development and will enable us to continue to grow as an organisation.

This strategy reaffirms the purpose of The Stinging Fly, sets out our vision and shares our values. In doing so, it gives formal expression to what we believe and what continues to motivate and inspire us. It describes where we will focus our efforts over the next three years. We believe that engaging with literature can add value and meaning to all our lives. Allowing time for careful thought and reflection helps us all to become stronger – both individually and collectively.

Our core priorities remain unchanged. We want to help build a more robust and vibrant literature sector and we want to ensure that more people have access to the benefits that this brings. We want to continue to work closely with writers and help them to produce their best work. We want to continue to share the best new work with readers. To ensure that we maximise our impact in and beyond literature, we also seek to continuously develop our own capacity as an organisation and as leaders within the arts sector.

Declan Meade
Founding Editor and Publisher
July 2021

Context

In the time taken to consider and develop this strategy, the world changed. The global pandemic of Covid-19 created a new context, culture and lexicon for how we live and work.

As we journey through the lifetime of this strategy, further social, economic and political change may be anticipated, hopefully without the same deadly disruption. Ireland's population will continue to grow, to age and to diversify. The environmental crisis will continue to be urgent and important. Our digital reliance will increase.

The Stinging Fly must situate itself in this context, contributing to that which is positive, and prepared for that which will be challenging.

The recent crisis conditions that we are now hopefully emerging from have, in many ways, been a touchstone for the strategy, testing its relevance and resilience, flexibility and durability.

The other critical context within which The Stinging Fly operates is defined by cultural policy. The Arts Council's ten-year strategy **Making Great Art Work** (2016–2025) has a twin focus on the artist and on public engagement. There is strong consonance between the Council's resolve to support artists 'to make excellent work which is enjoyed

and valued’ while enabling more people to ‘enjoy high-quality arts experiences’ and our intent as set out here.

We must also attend to the Arts Council’s **Equality, Human Rights and Diversity** policy, which seeks to ‘respect, support and ensure representation of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities, inclusive of people of all abilities, backgrounds and traditions’.

Likewise, we will work to accord with and advance the Arts Council’s **Paying the Artist** policy and vision of ‘an environment in which artists can make work of ambition and quality and be remunerated appropriately’.

The Stinging Fly looks forward to realising this strategy, alert to our evolving context and aligned with national policy frameworks and developments.

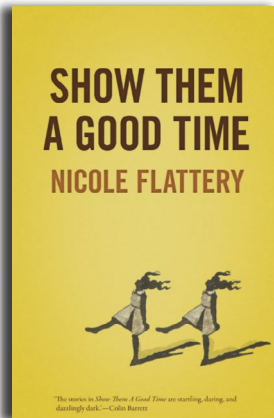
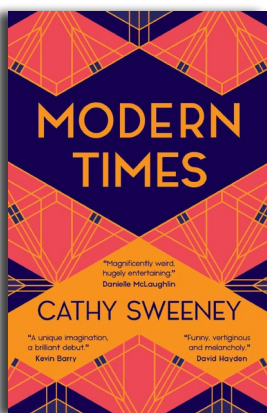
WHO WE ARE / WHAT WE DO

As of March 2021, **The Stinging Fly** is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital. It is led by a voluntary board of five directors with Declan Meade, founding editor and publisher, as Chief Executive, leading a highly committed artistic and administrative team. **Together, we operate as:**



A book publisher

Since 2005 we have published landmark, award-winning debut story collections by writers such as **Colin Barrett**, **Kevin Barry**, **Claire-Louise Bennett**, **Mary Costello**, **Wendy Erskine**, **Michael J Farrell**, **Nicole Flattery**, **Danielle McLaughlin**, and **Cathy Sweeney**. We have also re-issued key works by **Maeve Brennan**; published anthologies of contemporary fiction and theatre; and published masterful new work by **Sean O'Reilly** and **Philip Ó Ceallaigh**. We tend to work closely with our book authors over an extended period of time so that they can deliver the best possible book. We seek to connect all our authors with the widest possible readership within Ireland and do everything we can to help them establish relationships with agents and editors outside of Ireland.



An education provider

We organised our first one-day fiction workshop in 2007 and developed this into a six-month workshop programme that we have run in association with the Irish Writers Centre in Dublin for the past ten years. Our writer development programme now also includes an annual summer school, regular seminars and a mentoring service. We bring groups of writers together so they can learn to engage more deeply with their own work and the work of others.



An online platform

Our website **stingingfly.org** allows us to engage with writers and readers across the world. It is home to our magazine archive with all of the work we've published since 1998 and it also houses our online store. On the site, we regularly publish original new content, including in-depth book reviews, a new fiction series, and episodes of our podcast.



Everything we do is imbued with the spirit of **the fly that stings...**



‘God has specially appointed me to this city, so as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation **of some stinging fly.**’

— Plato’s *The Last Days of Socrates*

PURPOSE, VISION, MISSION

Our ambition is that The Stinging Fly will remain at the **heart of literary life in Ireland**, playing a crucial role in developing and promoting new writing. We will be recognised nationally and internationally for the **insight and care with which we identify and nurture new writers**, supporting them to achieve their full creative potential, and for the generosity with which we share exceptional new writing with readers throughout the world in our **exemplary publications in print and online**. Through our ongoing commitment to social justice, we will encourage writers and readers to engage more deeply both with one another and with the world around us.

OUR PURPOSE

TO ENRICH LIVES
AND DEEPEN
UNDERSTANDING
THROUGH LITERATURE.

OUR VISION IS OF A
WORLD MADE MORE
COMPASSIONATE
THROUGH LITERATURE

OUR VISION

OUR MISSION

TO SEEK OUT, NURTURE,
PUBLISH AND PROMOTE
THE VERY BEST NEW
WRITERS AND NEW
WRITING.

Specifically we work to:

- create an environment that encourages and supports new and emerging writing talent, and that responds to the needs of writers at later stages of their careers.
- enable new writing talent to develop their craft through provision of editorial feedback, workshops and mentoring.
- produce a world-class literary journal (print and online) featuring a range of ambitious new writing.
- publish in book form fiction of the highest quality by new and emerging authors, particularly those who have been under-represented or otherwise marginalised.
- introduce the work we publish to the widest possible audience.
- encourage writers and readers to discover new ways of thinking about our lives and the world we live in.



VALUES

Quality

We believe that writers and readers deserve excellence. In all aspects of our work – our publishing, our teaching, our mentoring – we push for outcomes of the highest standard.

Social justice

We believe that writing matters and can be a force for positive change. We want to play our part in building a just society.

Community

We believe that literature has the power to bring people closer together. Through our work we create loyal communities of writers and readers, within Ireland and beyond.

Commitment

We believe that writing is a craft, a practice that demands discipline, dedication and time. We support our writers, nurturing their potential and furthering their ambitions. We make space for them to produce their best work.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

By concentrating on these **three areas of work** over the next three years, we will be true to our purpose and work towards our vision.

1. Nurture and Development
2. Publication and Promotion
3. Consolidation and Impact



Nurture and Development

Goal: We encourage and enable writers to produce their best work

Writing can be a lonely pursuit without immediate or obvious reward – and we believe that writers **at all stages** and **from all backgrounds** are deserving of encouragement and support. We want to inspire readers and writers with work that is ambitious, innovative and true, and we want to enable writers to produce work that realises their potential and makes a lasting impact on the culture. We want to create an ecology which ensures new writing thrives.

How we will achieve this goal

Provide tailored support and activities responding to the needs of writers at different stages of their careers.

Deliver programme of developmental activities specifically to foster and enable new writing talent.

Support and develop those writing experimentally or in forms that may not be seen as commercially viable.

Improve access to our programmes for writers from a diversity of backgrounds.

Animate our values to advance the culture and conditions that support the development of writing talent.

What success will look like

A suite of supports are providing or facilitating access to information, advice and activities that support writers at all stages of their careers.

Distinct initiatives are identifying and encouraging a cohort of new writers and progressing their work.

Writers have the confidence, capacity and opportunity to explore and innovate form.

We are engaging with writers from existing and new communities and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions.

There is an environment that supports writers to make work of ambition and quality.

Publication and Promotion

Goal: We introduce exceptional new writing to the widest possible audience

We believe that there is a wealth of writing talent in Ireland that deserves to be read – and which readers all over the world will want to read. We believe that writing can provide a mirror in which readers are better able to see themselves and the world they live in. We want to provide opportunities for writers to connect with readers everywhere, helping build a strong, inclusive community of writers and readers.

How we will achieve this goal

Produce an excellent literary journal (print and online) featuring ambitious new writing.

Publish in book form quality literary fiction by new, emerging or otherwise under-represented authors.

Curate a programme of activities that advance the public's engagement with new writers and new writing.

Further invest in our digital platform and creative content to reach new and diverse audiences and drive deeper engagement.

Deepen existing relationships and foster new connections in Ireland and internationally that expand the reach and impact of our work.

Increase and diversify our subscriber base.

What success will look like

Six issues of the journal will have been produced over the lifetime of this strategy, including a number of special features, achieving recognition for the ambition and quality of the writing.

We have furthered our standing as a publishing house by publishing at least one new work of literary fiction each year.

There is increased interest in and enthusiasm for new writing in the reading public.

Our website is a dynamic, content-rich portal, reaching and engaging with an extensive, world-wide audience of writers, readers and industry peers.

We have new and stronger, mutually beneficial relationships within the literary sector and civil society.

Our work is reaching people the world over, with over 2000 national and international subscribers.

Consolidation and Impact

Goal: We are a strong organisation, contributing to culture and society as leaders within the Irish literature sector

To achieve our ambitions on behalf of writers and readers, our organisation needs to be well-funded, well-managed and well governed. We need to sustain the valued support of the Arts Council and also strengthen and diversify our funding base. We need to have the skills and capacity to operate and evolve in a very dynamic context.

How we will achieve this goal

Develop and maintain an effective, fit-for-purpose and empowering operating model.

Develop the capacity of the organisation to deliver this strategy, ensuring critical expertise, competencies and culture are in place.

Effect best practice governance, welfare, equality and sustainable policies that ensure we are a fair and responsible organisation.

Build the financial resilience of the organisation by developing its capacity to fundraise and diversify its income streams, and by putting in place appropriate financial controls.

Continue to work closely with the Arts Council and advance their strategic objectives.

Continue to advocate for writers and for the development of literature and literary culture in Ireland.

What success will look like

We have an organisational structure that best supports our ambitions and ethos.

Our board and executive have the experience, enthusiasm, skills and values to deliver this strategy.

Our governance and management processes and procedures are up-to-date and of the highest standard.

Our financial profile is assured by a diversified income stream and robust controls.

We are a valued partner of the Arts Council in receipt of multi-annual strategic funding.

There is greater understanding and support for writers and literature in Ireland.

Acknowledgements

This strategy was developed following consultation among The Stinging Fly's executive and members of the wider editorial team. The process was independently facilitated by Janice McAdam.

Chief Executive: Declan Meade

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Magazine Editor: Danny Denton

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Poetry Editor: Cal Doyle

Eagarthóir Filíochta: Aifric Mac Aodha

Contributing Editors: Dan Bolger, Mia Gallagher, Lisa McNerney and Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe

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A stylized, handwritten-style logo of 'T.S. Eliot' in black ink.

T. S. ELIOT FOUNDATION

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