From: Evan Dawson
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Dear RPS Trustees, staff and volunteers

The following quote came from the Distinctions Facebook page, which has seen a lot of fascinating discussions in the past week:

> *"Then came Corvid-19…. As it happened this has been a blessing in disguise. Because of the lock-down, volunteers and staff have used social media to broadcast interviews, presentations, and courses. For a member living outside the UK it is rich table of desserts that is being spread before us: the recorded shows, accessible at our own leisure; the questions and discussions about Distinction submissions; and, although it may not be an RPS official activity, the photographs put up by Peter are a constant source of interest and exploration. Thanks to everyone concerned."*

My first photo-shoot in months last weekend was a huge pleasure, photographing an outdoor concert here in Bristol. It was very moving actually, as it's so long since I've heard a note been played live - it was quite hard to concentrate on the images…. But at the RPS, things are starting to come into focus for me now I think.

On **Monday**, my week started with a meeting of the RPS's **investments committee**. This is a very new consideration for me, as my previous charity had almost no financial reserves at all! - but the committee was led by some extremely knowledgable volunteers, who held our fund managers firmly to account. I also met **Billy** that day, talking about her role within the exhibitions team, as well as wider ideas about how the RPS can engage more with environmental issues.

On **Tuesday**, the day started with my first "**all staff**" meeting (which was online of course). It was great to see everyone in the team, who have all been working so hard. It's such a shame not to be able to assemble everyone in one big room (with cake) - but that day will come, I'm sure. After that, I spoke with **Kate** about providing more support for volunteers, drawing on her attendance at last weekend's Standing Committee. In the afternoon, we had a **managers meeting**, at which we looked in more detail at each of the different "departments" within the RPS. Each has responded differently to the lockdown challenges, but all have been really supportive of each other.

On **Wednesday**, I spoke with **Peter Hayes** about his Distinctions work, and wider issues about the public role and profile of the RPS; and I spoke with **Kimmi** about her role in the Front of House team, and her ideas for opening up the front of the building for more creative activities. I then had an actual face-to-face meeting with **Nikki** and **Michael** in the (socially distanced) Education Room, reviewing all aspects of the charity's operations. They have been really supportive to me during these first few weeks and I'm sincerely grateful to them. Finally that day, I spoke with the director of partner organisation **Action for Children** (we share a patron!). We started to consider some really interesting ideas about how we might create a photography project amongst the Young Carers network that they support.

Yesterday, I had an introductory conversation with **Jo**, to talk about the annual RPS

Awards, which she has been leading with aplomb for many years. This year's awards will be announced later in the year, but sadly there won't be a proper ceremony this time. I spoke with **Jackie** about her longstanding role as finance officer for the RPS, keeping everyone honest and ship-shape. I spoke with **Simon B** about developing a new strategy for membership growth; and with **Andy** about his (also longstanding) role leading the Distinctions programme. Finally, I had a fascinating conversation with **Rhys** and **Rolf**, the ROs for South and North Wales respectively, about their work as volunteers for the RPS, and their hopes for its future. I have a particular interest in Wales, being a Welsh-speaker, and knowing the Arts Council there very well. I'm hopeful we might soon be in a position to apply for grant funding from them, if we can identify the right project...

And **today** started with a really interesting conversation with the director of **CafeArt**, with whom we have been working on a photographic project to support people affected by homelessness. We discussed some interesting ideas about how to measure the impact on people's lives of engaging through photography, perhaps working with a university. More on this soon! Otherwise, I've been mostly focussing on writing board papers and completing the annual report for the AGM next month.

Next week, I have lots more meetings with staff members (Gary, Simon V, Debbie and Izzy) and volunteers (Ian Race and Richard Ellis); as well as with some partner organisations (Positive View, PAGB and Photo Meet) and some ambassador photographers (Brian Griffin, Jillian Edelstein and Harry Borden).

I hope you're enjoying these weekly updates, and please do send me anything you'd like me to share. I would be grateful if Chairs could circulate this to their group members, if appropriate - and if you are receiving this indirectly, do drop me a line if you'd like me to add your email to the circulation list.

As ever, please do keep in touch, and let me know if you'd like to discuss anything.

Happy weekending!

Evan

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