WORKING GROUP REPORT: PHOTOGRAPHY

1. Background

i. There were approximately 40 participants at the panel discussion; this decreased considerably during the working groups; 25 people attended the first working group and 10 the second.

ii. The organisations represented included: TIC; BFTF; The Photographic Society of South Africa; ACAC; ANC regional representativeⁿs; DAC; Market Photoworkshop; and Phototeach. There were also freelance photographers, curators of museums and photographic educators from the Vaal Technikon and Wits University.

iii. Summary of discussion.

The discussion revolved around three issues:
   i. The need to from a representative, umbrella organisation
   ii. The critical issue of promoting photography at formal and nonformal levels of education and ways of putting this into practice.
   iii. Issues relating to funding and finance, particularly as these relate to the promotion of photography in SA.

Many attempts have been made over the years to form an umbrella organisation but the tensions within the photographic community have prevented this happening. Indeed, the process at this conference was indicative of past failures. The 40 participants whittled away to about 10 at the last working group. This drop out began even before the panel discussion was held with three panelists failing to arrive. As one panelist pointed out: "The situation in photography is that of dog eating dog."

Nevertheless discussions were informative and we hope will be fruitful. More detailed commentary can be found in the minutes of the working groups.

2. **Recommendations and resolutions:**

See attached list.

3. **Way forward**

See attached comments.

Adele Gordon
30 April 1993

Resolutions and Recommendations from the Working Group on Photography:

It must be noted that this working group is not representative of South African photographers, and any recommendations made by the group must be read with this in mind, and be considered as guidelines, not a mandated position:

1: Formation of a Photographers' Forum:

That a national, representative, non-sectarian body of photographers should be formed. That the DAC or Board of Trustees be requested to facilitate this process, in consultation with photographers and photographic organisations.

That, since there are in the region of 10 000 photographers who are not members of any photographic organisation, both individuals and organisations be invited to take part in this process.

That the process be as inclusive as possible.

That the photographers' forum will define its own functions and powers.

2: The economics of photography:

Noting:

That the high cost of photographic equipment and materials is crippling the discipline and making it inaccessible to the majority of people,

and that photography cannot develop in this country until these costs are reduced, therefore recommends

a)   -   that the duties on photographic equipment/material should be reduced

        -        that a percentage of this income should go directly to the promotion and development of photography in the communities;

        -        that there must be accountability for the use of this money.

b) That the state should fund the arts, through a National Arts Council, consisting of representatives of all art discplines, and including representatives of the photographers' forum. The NAC must fund all art forms, including photography. It is the duty of the state to fund, but not control art. However, it is the duty of the state to ensure that the enequities of apartheid are redressed. The NAC must be accountable.

c) That donations to educational institutions, including community art centres and community colleges be made tax deductible.

d) that if, in a new dispensation, funding of the arts happens at a local level, that photography should be equally funded with other art disciplines at this level.

3: Photographic Education:

Noting: that very few schools offer art as a subject at school;
Resolve that: Access to photographic education should be increased at a formal and non-formal level;
and therefore recommends:

a) That visual literacy should be an integral part of the core curriculum from a primary school level, and be accorded equal importance with literacy and numeracy.

b) That as an ideal, photography should be offered as an option in all schools at secondary level, both as a vocational option and as part of the art course.

c) That career guidance in schools and guidance centres offer information on photography as a career;

d) That community colleges should be established that offer courses in photography, including courses such as curating, taking photographs, technical aspects etc.
That the establishment of photographic courses at such colleges be taken forward in association with ACAC, educationalists, and the photographic forum.
That such community colleges should offer certification for courses. Criteria for such certification to be devised in association with community, technikon/university, and photographer representatives.
That such colleges should act as bridging institutions allowing students to move on from the community college to a technikon or university.
That such colleges should be accessible to the community in terms of location and cost.
That such colleges should be state-funded but run with community representation on decision-making structures.

e) That other innovative forms of education such as mentorships should be investigated.

f) That structures must be set up for the training of photographic educators from the community.
That the initiative for the training of these educators should come from the community.

g) That additional educational facilitities such as community colleges, community art centres, workshops on wheels, distance education (especially through the electronic media), and books appropriate to the South African situation should be created/developed.

h) That central resource units can be developed that could be used by several schools, and/or community arts centres/ community colleges, providing facilities such as darkrooms, and equipment. Such equipment could also be available on hire to community photographers for a low fee.

4: Popularisation of photography:

Noting that: visual literacy (including photography) is not a luxury, but an essential ingredient of modern life, affecting every member of society,
therefore recommends:

a) That photography must be popularised as an art form, and put higher on the arts agenda, eg. through museums, exhibitions, publications, the educational system etc. To this end, money should be allocated by the state for the publication of photographic books, including text books and publications of portfolios.

b) That there should be state funded galleries and museums with an accountable structure, whose purpose would be both educational and serve to develop and stimulate photography in South Africa.