



About MFPFA

The roots of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists (MFPFA) go back to 1957, when the painter Erich Stegmann and a small group of disabled artists from eight European countries created a self-help association in Britain.

A polio survivor, Erich Stegmann grew up without the use of his arms, yet built a highly successful career in Germany by painting with a mouth-held brush. It was his belief that if painters with similar impairments formed a cooperative it would be possible for them to live by their artistic efforts and enjoy a sense of work security that, until then, had eluded them.

This aim was to be achieved by selling their work in the form of greetings cards, calendars, prints, and illustrated books. The result has been a unique worldwide art movement and commercial cause.

One of the main themes of Stegmann's credo was that the Mouth and Foot Painting Artists must never be regarded as a charity, because many of its members were wheelchair users or even in hospital beds.

To him the key word was "partnership" – the word "charity" was as abhorrent to him as the word "pity" – and the MFPFA has always proclaimed that it is not a charity and does not qualify for charitable assistance.

From the beginning its members have had full control of their enterprise, which enables them to enjoy a secure livelihood despite severe disabilities, and has given them a purpose in life. Many have achieved international recognition through work produced with brushes held by their teeth or clenched between their toes.

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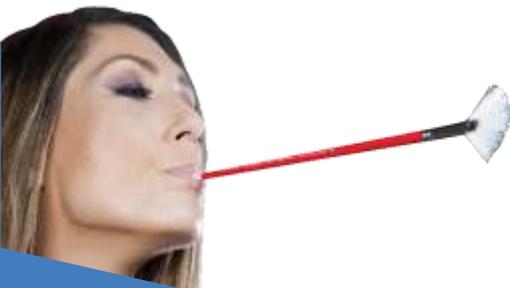




Our Objectives

- Make contact with all people who have lost the use of their hands through accident, or birth and wish to learn to paint and support themselves through the sale of their work.
- Take care of its artists' financial needs by helping them sell their work, primarily in the form of reproductions as greetings cards, calendars, and other paper products.
- Market and promote the work of MFPFA artists as a commercial cause able-bodied people can enjoy and support.
- Cooperate in the interests of self-helping disabled people, worldwide.
- Establish publishing houses.
- Give disabled people who are interested in becoming art students moral and financial assistance to do so and give them financial, practical, and creative support to become fully developed artists and members of MFPFA.
- Help disabled artists attain self-respect, creative fulfillment, and financial security.
- Stage exhibitions and conferences worldwide.

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An International Art Movement

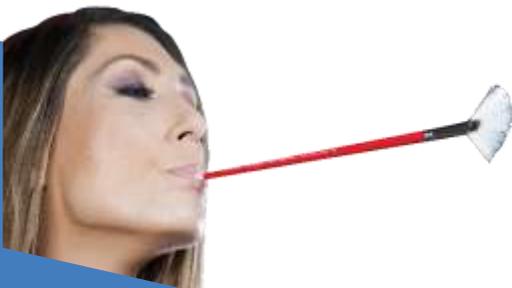
Sarah Biffen was the first recorded internationally recognized mouth painter. Born in Somerset without arms or legs, she lived from 1784 to 1850.

During her adult life she managed to make a living in a travelling sideshow by demonstrating her ability to paint with a brush held between her teeth, yet her talent was such that she had a painting accepted at the Royal Academy.

A century later, mouth painter Erich Stegmann turned interest in Biffen's unique talent into a commercial cause able-bodied people could enjoy and support. He traveled the world to seek out fellow mouth and foot painting artists in order to join him in his dream of establishing an organization that would give them independence by marketing and selling their work for them.

From the small group he gathered for the inaugural meeting of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists held in Liechtenstein, the number of members have since exceeded 800, based in over 78 countries. Their work has attracted the attention and support of former Vice President Al Gore, Prince Charles, Prince Harry, actor Pierce Brosnan, and singer Tony Bennett.

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Who Can Join

Anyone who has lost the use of their hands, or was born without hands, and paints by holding the brush in their mouth or with their feet can join MFPA.

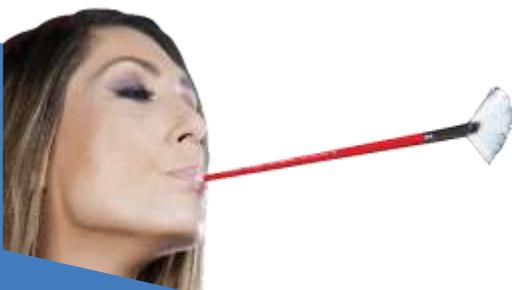
MFPA has three qualifying levels: Student Member; Associated Member; and Full Member. The majority of artists are normally admitted as student members. To maintain consistently high standards, artists must attain a level of expertise that will satisfy the critical examination of a panel of assessors before they are promoted to a higher level.

The panel of assessors comprises the serving MFPA president or his or her delegate, appointed from the MFPA's managing board, and two eminent non-disabled artists. When approved, the managing board can admit the new member or student subject to ratification by the members at the next delegates' convention.

MFPA is constantly seeking promising new talent among disabled people who, perhaps, first take up painting as a form of therapy. In addition, MFPA follows up news media reports identifying disabled painters previously unknown to the organization. The MFPA also invites the public to recommend potential members.

Students are provided with a substantial grant to pay for tuition or a scholarship to an art college. Their work is periodically reviewed until they achieve a standard which enables them to be considered for promotion.

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How we are managed

MFPFA is run as a "democratic co-operative". All the member artists have a voice in MFPFA operations and it is owned by all of them.



Not all wish to be directly involved in the management of the business, and such an arrangement would be impractical for reasons of geography and health, so they elect by postal ballot delegates to represent their interests.

The management procedures are governed by the statutes, which require that a delegates convention be held at least once every three years. In practice, this has taken place much more frequently.

For electoral purposes, the MFPFA divides the world into four regions: Europe, Africa and the Middle East; the Americas; the Far East; Australasia and Oceania. Each region deposes at least one delegate for every five members.

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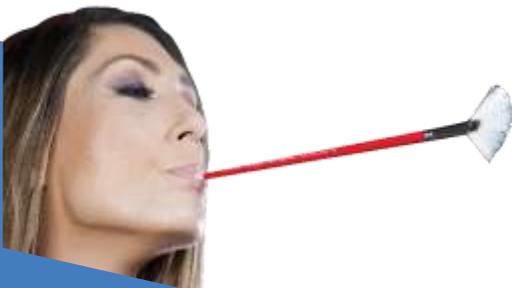
How we make our policies

The delegate's convention is ultimately responsible for control of all the MFPA's activities and, among other matters, the democratically elected delegates pass necessary resolutions, amend the statutes and approve annual accounts and budgets.



First Delegates' Convention in Toronto, Canada 1965

The Delegates appoint from among themselves a managing board. With the exception of their legal consultant, all members of the delegate's convention are disabled artists.





How we make our policies

The managing board is comprised of a maximum of seven artists, plus the legal consultant. The president of the managing board is also the president of the MFPA, and must be a mouth or foot painting artist who has won recognition as an artist and achieved success in international exhibitions. The managing board appoints non-disabled staff to run the publishing houses.



A modern day delegates' convention in Lisbon, Portugal

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