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Canada Council for the Arts nurtured artist-run culture in the early 1970s with a program for newly incorporated alternative galleries. The funds created a wave of new artist-run galleries across the country, but the Council's requirements that artists' cooperatives be incorporated and have a board of directors imposed a formal bureaucracy over artist-run culture.

Eye Level artists were challenged by almost every aspect of the gallery's administrative requirements. In an October 31, 1974 letter to Ron Shuebrook, artist Julia Schmitt Healy describes how she had worked with artist Roger Savage to “more or less arbitrarily” choose board members from the larger group of artists that had previously expressed interest in the artists cooperative:

“We chose people we felt would best serve on the board and tried to get a good cross-section of artists working in the province. It was basically fascism prompted by our Catch-22 situation: To apply for the grant we had to have a board of directors yet we had no members who, under a true co-operative would elect the board. In two years time the board will be totally elected by the members of the co-operative and the gallery will be happily democratic.”

Letters and meeting minutes in the Eyelevel Gallery fonds reveal the contentious decisions made during early board and general membership meetings. At the first board meeting on October 24, 1974, the board made the poor decision to appoint Healy as the gallery's first paid “co-ordinator” even though she was already a sitting board member. The board resisted giving any real decision-making authority to Healy and some members took issue with her performance on the job. She resigned just six months into her one-year term. The board accepted Healy's resignation as gallery coordinator but refused her resignation as a member of the board of directors until she resigned again in July 1975.

Affordable space for the gallery was, and remains, an ongoing challenge. The gallery operated out of Pier One Theatre for a brief time, but the theatre closed and the gallery was forced to move to 5785 West Street before the first exhibition, *Peggy's Cove Syndrome*, was mounted. In late 1975, the gallery moved to the Marble Building at 1672 Barrington Street, where things began to stabilize. Artist and board member Karl MacKeeman wrote in the March 1976 issue of *Art Magazine* that “Eye Level has gone through all the growing pains and difficulties that can be expected in any venture of this nature. We hope it will continue to thrive as an important link in the visual arts community of this city.”

In the late 1970s, the gallery prospered and began participating in local and national cultural policy debates. Gallery director David Craig even became national spokesperson for the Association of National Non-Profit Artist Centres (ANNPAC) in 1983. Eye Level survived its tumultuous early years and became an integral part of the Canadian artist-run network.

This cluster of administrative documents and letters by artists highlights some of the interpersonal exchanges and ideological debates that helped shape the emergence of artist-run culture in Halifax.