

# PAYING ARTISTS

VALUING ART, VALUING ARTISTS

**SECURING A FUTURE  
FOR VISUAL ARTS IN THE UK**

[www.payingartists.org.uk](http://www.payingartists.org.uk)

# FOREWORD

Without artists there is no art. Artists are the innovators from which great art emerges and on which our society's well-being depends.

It is through artists' ideas, experiments and ingenuity that creative ideas and products are made manifest. Art by its nature presents a wide range of levels of engagement and participation for people and audiences. Artists thrive on such engagement as an essential ingredient to feed what is their continuous, life-time's dedication to a creative practice.

The world is always looking for new ways of seeing. Art practice – the collective performance of art making between materials, artists, artworks, galleries and people - is an inter-disciplinary reflexive process that enables us all to rethink and re-imagine our realities, which creates cultural value.

Paying artists is about transforming opportunities for artists, galleries, funders and policy-makers alike. In removing the financial barriers faced by many artists, it will give publicly-funded galleries – and the public themselves – access to quality art which covers the spectrum of human experience.

It will bring value to the investment of all who fund the arts by encouraging and enabling diversity and equality of opportunity for all artists now and in the future. In doing so, it will play a direct role in ensuring we retain our reputation here for supporting creative talent and delivering world-class art.

Now is the time to demonstrate in the arts how much we value art and value artists. By working together to define and adopt practical steps and frameworks for good practice, we can safeguard and strengthen the symbiotic relationship visual artists have with publicly-funded institutions and with the communities and audiences they collectively serve.

**a-n The Artists Information Company / AIR Artists Interaction and Representation**

May 2014



a-n's mission is to stimulate and support contemporary visual arts practice and affirm the value of artists in society. Founded in 1980, a-n is a significant national visual arts network and lead body for visual artists, publishing The Code of Practice for the Visual arts, visual arts contracts, fees guidance and conducting on-going research into artists' practices and livelihoods. Through AIR: Artists Interaction and Representation, the professional needs and artistic aspirations of 18,000 visual artists members are represented and impact on consultations and debate on developments in arts and cultural policy, arts education and social change.

a-n The Artists Information Company 2014 [www.a-n.co.uk](http://www.a-n.co.uk)

# GREAT ART NEEDS GREAT ARTISTS

**Galleries and the great visual art they display are fundamental to society.** They inspire, educate, and, at their very best, transform us. Through employment and tourism, they help fuel the economies of towns and cities across the UK and are cultural magnets that attract millions of visitors.

Yet this success is under growing threat, as the expectation that artists will work for free erodes their ability to produce the art that sustains public galleries and the benefits they bring.

The **economic benefits** of visual art in the UK are clear: Over 37,000 people work in the visual arts sector<sup>1</sup>, bringing an economic contribution of £1.9 billion each year<sup>2</sup>. There are more than 40 million visits to the UK's galleries and museums a year, including over 7 million by overseas tourists<sup>3</sup>.

**“Overall in terms of culture, the UK is perceived to be the fourth best nation out of 50. This is as a result of Britain being seen as the fourth best nation in terms of having an exciting contemporary culture.”**

The value of arts and culture to people and society:  
An evidence review, Arts Council England<sup>4</sup>

And the visual arts help us **see the world from other perspectives**. For many people, art provides a view through the eyes of someone with a different background, experiences and beliefs. Equally, many find expression for themselves through the art of people from their own communities.

At the heart of this is the need for diversity among people who create art. It is only when artists bring a range of perspectives that visual arts can help us truly appreciate the world from different angles, and can continue to attract visitors – from the UK and abroad – to our galleries.

Imagine a world where we did not have this diversity, where visual arts were created only by people with a certain background. Art would lose its ability to transcend boundaries and bring people together across communities. It would no longer surprise and challenge audiences in ways that attract millions to galleries across the UK.

Yet this is exactly the threat facing us. Across the country artists are not paid as a matter of course to exhibit their work. For many this is unsustainable: without change to the way we value and reward artists, we will lose the diversity that makes visual arts so economically and culturally valuable.

It doesn't have to be like this. It is possible for art both to be affordable for galleries and the public, and for its creators to be paid. In many other countries, and some galleries in the UK, artists are already paid for their exhibitions. This report sets out a plan for how we can do the same across the UK.

We can afford to pay artists. It is increasingly clear that – if we want visual arts to remain at the heart of the cultural and economic life of the UK – we cannot afford not to pay artists.

**“Running through any culture strategy must be a fundamental principle – that the arts must be a right for everyone, not the preserve of a privileged elite. Not only is this important in principle, but to carry on as world leaders we need to continue to draw on the widest possible pool of talent.”**

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Shadow Culture Secretary

# THE EROSION OF VISUAL ARTS

No-one would expect a surgeon in this country to operate on a patient for free; a teacher to give a lesson unpaid; or a plumber to install a boiler as a favour. Yet, visual artists are regularly expected to develop and exhibit their work without any payment, with the expectation that the exposure is reward enough.

Over the last three years, **71% of artists exhibiting in publicly-funded galleries received no fee** for their work. In fact, **59% did not even receive payment for their expenses**<sup>5</sup>; leaving them not only unpaid but out-of-pocket when presenting exhibitions for the public to enjoy. Exhibitions are often the result of months or years of an artist's time and expenses, yet this cost, commitment and effort can be unrecognised and unrewarded.

With such little payment for their art work, many artists have to take on other jobs to cover living and professional expenses, giving them less time to produce great art: **57% of artists generate less than a quarter of their income** through their art<sup>6</sup>. For many, this does not offer enough stability and life as an artist is unsustainable, even when their work may be displayed at galleries that attract tens of thousands of visitors.

**“The issue is ensuring sustainability for the artist so that they are able to produce the work for a gallery that they believe in but also being in a position where they are able to work as an artist rather than having to stop their practice in order to raise money again, just to survive.”<sup>7</sup>**

The result is a loss of art: **63% of artists have had to turn down requests from galleries to exhibit their work** because they cannot afford to do so without pay<sup>8</sup>. Over time it means that more and more artists cannot see a future for themselves in art – and are giving up on art altogether.

This will rob us of the diversity that is so central to the importance of visual arts in our culture and economy. The expectation that artists will exhibit their work for free means the public will no longer see art by people who must make a living from their work and have families to support. Art will lose its ability to help us see the world from other perspectives and to give voice to different communities.

**“We need to make entry routes into employment, and opportunities for people to further their careers, fairer and more accessible to all.”**

Great Art and Culture for Everyone, Arts Council  
10-Year Strategic Framework 2010-2020

Without action, we will undermine one of our most precious assets. But experiences of other countries, and some galleries in the UK, show that there is a solution.

**The 500,000 visitors to the Hepworth Wakefield during its first year contributed an estimated £10 million to the local economy in Wakefield and a recent economic impact of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park estimated its annual contribution to the local economy to be £5 million.**

Local Government Association 2013<sup>10</sup>

# WHERE VISUAL ARTS IS NURTURED

Galleries across the world<sup>9</sup> have found strategies to support visual artists while addressing fluctuations in public spending.

## Canada

In Canada, artists have a legislatively-enshrined right to compensation for the use of their works in public exhibitions.

## Norway

In Norway, artists are paid for exhibition of their work, based on the number of artworks shown and the duration of the exhibition.

## Sweden

The Swedish government and Swedish Artists National Organisation have agreed standard rates of payment for exhibitions and exhibition-related costs, such as technical expenses.

## Poland

In Poland, museums and galleries pay a minimum fee to exhibiting artists related to the Polish average monthly wage. Fees cannot be waived or lowered, but can be increased through negotiation.



In the UK, there are neither standard fee structures nor benchmarking systems for publicly-funded galleries to reference. These are two examples of clear policies and terms.

## Fabrica - Brighton

The value of the commissioning programme is around £30,000 per commission. Fees to the artist are £2000 - £6000 plus expenses, with full technical support, installation, promotion, marketing and accompanying education programme provided. Liz Whitehead, co-director of Fabrica, Brighton says: *“Some of the most powerful things we do are concerned with connecting the mind of the artist to the imagination of the visitor, and creating a climate of mutual respect in the gallery based on genuine curiosity and openness.”*

## Baltic 39 - Newcastle

FIGURE ONE lasted for five weeks in 2013 and consisted of 10 projects by 10 artists, each lasting 5 days. Artists were assigned one of the two gallery spaces at BALTIC 39. Exhibiting artists received £400 fee and £400 for expenses, and were encouraged to programme events during their exhibitions. BALTIC also commissioned a writer to blog about each exhibition as it opened and write an essay to document the entire project.

# SECURING A FUTURE FOR VISUAL ARTS IN THE UK

While the visual arts in the UK are under threat, the success of UK and international galleries that are paying artists fees for their exhibitions shows that we are not powerless.

In fact we can do better than just stopping a decline. By 2020, the visual arts can deliver even greater value for the UK:

- Economic equality will ensure that the artist profession will more fully represent the diversity of the UK's population and, through enabling more rigorous research and experimentation, ensure the world-class visual arts the UK is known for is sustained in the future.
- Because the art presented by galleries and by artists within communities will be culturally rich, it will attract the wider audiences they are seeking who will be drawn from all sections of society, supporting sustainability and employment within the arts as a whole.
- School students will see a wider range of artist role models to aspire to as they study and enjoy the contemporary visual arts in local galleries and venues, which will inform their choices about future careers and employment.

To do this means paying artists for their work. This doesn't need new money: the resources already exist within public funding, and it is known that every £1 of investment in the arts and culture industries brings £2 of benefit to the wider economy<sup>10</sup>.

Paying artists is not only the right thing to do, but makes good business and economic sense.

What is needed now is the desire to make it happen – from the government, funders, galleries and public. Our starting point should be to ensure that the public money invested in our galleries and exhibitions provides artists with adequate pay for the great work that they produce and which contributes to public well-being.

Five actions are needed to build momentum. Taken together they will protect the long-term future of the visual arts, bringing economic and cultural benefit across the country.

## 1. Transparency on artists' pay

Galleries should develop transparent policies that value artists and demonstrate how they are recognising artists' roles in their own success.

If funders support galleries to introduce transparent policies on paying artists, they will ensure public investment delivers maximum value by supporting diversity in the art that is exhibited in those venues – so enabling the public to access the broadest possible pool of creative talent.

## 2. National policy and guidance

Government and strategic agencies should issue guidance to provide clarity and minimum standards in artists' pay.

The government's ambition to ensure the UK arts sector continues to lead the world will only be realised if our galleries can access a diverse pool of visual artists, and if the £2 billion committed to the arts through Arts Council England is used to foster our artistic talent.

## 3. Pay policy in funding agreements

The Arts Councils and other public bodies should write pay policy requirements into funding agreements.

This will directly support Arts Council England's strategic goals by fostering excellence and increasing resilience in the arts; ensuring diversity in the arts workforce; and supporting accessibility of the arts for all.

## 4. Research into payment of visual artists

Government should initiate a national review of the contribution of visual arts to the UK economy and communities, the role artists play and assets they create and the extent and impact of no or low pay on artists' livelihoods and well-being.

As there are differences across regions and institutions in the way artists are remunerated, expert research is needed to understand how artists' pay is reflected across the sector and to recommend future frameworks and policy.

## 5. Artists empowered to make the case for payment

Visual artists themselves need to be supported to negotiate for fair rates of pay within contracts and terms. This not only applies to emerging artists but also to those who are not represented by a commercial gallery, who often lack the experience of what is reasonable and the confidence to make equitable professional arrangements.

Achieving this will require active engagement with galleries, funders and policy-makers and adoption of commonly-used Codes that encapsulate understanding and objectives.

# REFERENCES

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

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<sup>9</sup> a-n The Artists Information Company: Fees to artists for exhibiting - models of practice  
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<sup>10</sup> Arts Council: The Contribution of the Arts and Culture to the National Economy  
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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Artist members form a-n's largest stakeholder group, contributing in 2012/13 £471,116 (55%) of all income, with National Portfolio Organisation funding of 25% from Arts Council England.

Every year, our art galleries welcome millions of us from this country and visitors from abroad, attracted by our world-class exhibitions.

Yet the future of visual arts in the UK is under threat. Artists are frequently not paid for creating work that appears in publicly-funded galleries – meaning that many talented artists have to set aside their practice and find alternative careers to survive.

This report explains the threat to the visual arts, and our wider culture and economy, that this poses, and what we can do to ensure we continue to have art in the UK that inspires and challenges us, and brings benefits across the country.

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