ARE ARTISTS RICH?

The value of artistic work

Working Conditions, Rights and Demands of Visual Artists in Europe

internationale gesellschaft der bildenden künste e.V.
.IGBK

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INTRODUCTION

Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (IGBK)

Since the mid-90s, the framework conditions for art and culture have been increasingly stipulated at the European level, be it financial support for artists or questions regarding tax law, social law, copyright law, or mobility. In the course of this, new pan-European associations and networks have been founded that enable productive collaboration and make sure art-political concerns are taken into account.

As one of the institutions within this discourse, the IGBK is involved in the European section of the IAA and the European Council of Artists (ECA), is an active member of Culture Action Europe (CAE), and is engaged in regular exchange of information with partner organizations in many European countries.

In addition, the IGBK itself in recent years organized several workshops focused on these topics. In December 2009 in Linz the focus was on the mobility of visual artists in Europe. The discussion revolved around existing barriers to mobility and the question of how cross-border work can be simplified for visual artists. In November 2010 an IGBK workshop in Berlin was devoted to the question of social security for visual artists in Europe and the coordination of existing European legislation and social security systems.

The current project 'ARE ARTISTS RICH?' focuses on the value of artistic work in Europe. Modern societies need art as a field for experimentation, to 'test' and reflect on new, relevant questions and approaches away from current political logic and scientific discourses.
But what role does art play in a society of shareholders, 'users', and occupy movements? Should art subordinate itself to the economic system as a 'commodity'? What kind of art does society want and what is it willing to invest for the freedom and diversity of art?

Also, in the context of new forms of presentation and dissemination of visual art (interventionist practices, collaborative projects, alternative art spaces, non product-oriented work), the question of contemporary and sustainable art and cultural funding arises.
What can cultural funding and legislation (copyright law) look like that take into account new contemporary art forms? Does the support of these artistic freedoms require new models?

The 'unusual economy' and the production conditions to which the artists are subject will be presented for discussion in relation to the necessary freedoms and opportunities offered by art.

Why is the income of the majority of artists below average, even in countries where the conditions with respect to artist funding, social security, copyright, etc. are comparatively good? What structural particularities apply to the field of art? And what is the reason for the symbolic overvaluation with simultaneous economic undervaluation? What makes being an artist so attractive and prestigious, despite the objectively poor income prospects?

This handout is a collection of papers on current topics of major importance related to contemporary working conditions of visual artists in Europe. Furthermore it provides a platform for different guest contributions from European artists' associations, groups and initiatives as well as from the Dutch artist, sociologist, and economist Hans Abbing.

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Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (IGBK)

Wilhelmstr. 50, D 10117 Berlin
Tel: +49 (0)30 23 45 76 66 , Fax: +49 (0)30 28 09 93 05
E-mail: art@igbk.de, www.igbk.de

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MOBILITY OF ARTISTS

Providing information: one step forward to overcome mobility obstacles

Artists have been mobile for decades. For different reasons trans-national cooperation of artists and cultural professionals became a particular important issue also for policy makers in the last years. This is likewise true for the EU level: cross-border mobility of artists and cultural professionals has been a priority of the Culture Programme since the year 2000 and is a top priority of the European Agenda for Culture. The Council of the European Union's conclusions confirm the importance of the mobility of artists. In this respect it is underlined that one of the main obstacles of those seeking to be mobile within the EU is the lack of comprehensive and accurate information and advice on mobility related issues.

The current state of information provision is fragmented: a number of national organisations within the EU offer elaborated information on administrative and legal issues relevant for the artists. But this information is seldom targeted on cross-border mobility: administrative and legal issues in a specific country are explained for own nationals, seldom they are explained for artists from abroad and are available in national languages only.

Following the conclusions of the Council, and as foreseen in the Work Plan for Culture 2011 to 2014 (adopted by the Council in November 2010) the European Commission set up an expert group in the year 2011 that conducted information standards for the mobility of artists and cultural professionals.

Main target group of the presented document are policy makers in the EU Member States. Those are provided with practical guidance for setting up new information services or for strengthening those that already exist.

As a consequence, in Germany — as one example — the online information tool Touring Artists will be published in spring 2013. The service is supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, who is aware of the importance of the issue and of the benefits that the EU gains from a vivid and mobile cultural scene.
Touring Artists is a joined project of the International Theatre Institut ITI in Germany and the Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (IGBK).
The core information will cover regulatory and administrative issues relevant for the two sectors performing and visual arts: description of legislation and administrative procedures, necessary documents, directory of institutions and administration, case studies as answer to specific problems (illustrated topics are: entry and residence, taxes, social legislation, transport of art works and equipment, insurances, copyright). Target groups are artists in Germany who present their work internationally, artists and organisers in Germany who cooperate with international artists as well as artists from abroad coming to Germany.
The information will be provided in two languages, German and English.

National information services, offering tailor-made information on cross-border mobility, proofed to be helpful for outgoing artists and cultural professionals, as well as for those coming from abroad (EU and beyond). And ideally a network of closely linked organisations in Europe that provide that kind of information would serve the artists needs best. To establish a strong network is therefore very much appreciated by those working within the field.

On-the-Move (www.on-the-move.org), the cultural mobility information network, is one efficient approach to link existing institutions, to share experiences and competences and to discuss common goals and joint actions.

Also **PRACTICS** (www.practics.org), one of the EU supported pilot projects for cultural mobility, 'tested' a model which came close to the model as outlined in the feasibility study for a European wide system of information on the different legal, regulatory, procedural and financial aspects to mobility in the cultural sector (the study was carried out for the European Commission in 2009). It is obvious that PRACTICS opened up the dialogue to numerous cultural organisations in Europe, encouraging networking and fostering coordination to ease mobility. Unfortunately efforts of the partners to continue the project have not been successful so far: PRACTICS 2 will not be supported under the EU's Culture Programme for the time being.

The establishment of a strong network of information providers will not be possible without support at European level. Capacities and resources of national cultural institutions and the national governments are limited, even if a will to establish efficient structures is clearly stated. The importance of mobility of artists and cultural professionals, as confirmed in the Council's conclusions, has to be underlined again by the EU political bodies, also by financial means. To elaborated documents, such as the information standards, is not sufficient to fulfil the objectives. Don't stop moving at this stage!

CREATIVE EUROPE

Position Papers and Discussions

The draft programme "Creative Europe" by the EU commission of 23 November 2011 for the successor to the programmes MEDIA and Culture, which are expiring at the end of 2013, has triggered intense discussions among cultural organizations and other players in the field of European cultural politics.
The Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (IGBK), a member of the European Council of Artist (ECA) as well as the European network Culture Action Europe, has been particularly involved in this process, together with its partner organizations, in the campaign "we are more — act for culture in Europe."
The results of these discussions and the assessment of the planned changes — radical changes, at least in part — to the structures of European cultural subsidies within the framework of the draft programme by the EU commission are reflected in a series of statements. In what follows, we have summarized the central positions of the European artists' associations expressed in those documents:

We welcome that in its drafts for the new programmes, which will come into effect as of 2014, the EU Commission has clearly taken the support for the culture sector and the cultural and creative industries into consideration.
A strong EU culture programme, which promotes artistic and cultural exchange in Europe, is at a time of the Euro-Crisis and increasing Euro-scepticism an important tool for the positive strengthening of the European integration process, European solidarity and the public perception of Europe.[1]

The new programme budget frame is proposed to amount € 1.8 billion for the whole 2014 – 2020 period, which is a 37 per cent increase over the budgets for the existing three programmes. Especially in the above mentioned context we welcome the increase as an acknowledgement of the importance of sphere and its ability to contribute to European citizenry in times of crisis, although the sum represents a minimum part of the total EU budget. We call on the European Parliament, the Members States, the European Council and the European Commission **to confirm the proposed budget increase** for the Creative Europe programme. [2+4]

However, we are deeply concerned about the planned merging of the programmes "Culture" and "MEDIA" under the label "Creative Europe." The all-incompasing 'Creative Europe' umbrella must preferably show a clear division of the programme proposal in three areas of action in order to accommodate the specifics of each area.

— The Culture and MEDIA areas of action should be dealt with separately, particularly also the allocated budgetlines. This division should also be reflected in the responsibilities at EU member level as well as working level of the EU: The Programme committee for 'Creative Europe' should accommodate for this.

— In Germany there are highly competent information points (Media desk, CCP) for the current

MEDIA and Culture programmes. This existing capacity should be preserved so that each action area of Creative Europe will continue to be explained by specialized staff in the national information points.

— It should be made clear which parties are eligible to submit applications to which area of action. In the 'culture' area of action, it should be observed that projects can only be supported if they do not seek the realization of profit.[1]

We particularly welcome Creative Europe's goal of protecting and promoting Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity, and recognize the potential of the cultural and creative sector for economic growth and employment. Alongside the 'stenghtening of competitveness' it is important that the criteria for support and the evaluation mechanisms for the programme should firstly be justified along cultural lines, and not purely economic and those relating to labour market policy. Through its support for the 'UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression' and the 'EU Agenda for Culture' (2007) the EU has the responsibility to actively pursue the promotion of cultural diversity in all programmes.[1]

We note that the administration of the existing culture programme by EACEA (the Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisuals and Culture) is not in accordance with principles of transparency, openness and justification of decisions reached. Therefore we feel obliged to call on the EU Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission to revise the process and change accordingly. [3]

We regret the abolition of operating grants for European networks, however welcome that support for European networks is planned within the culture area of action. We believe that European networks are of great significance for the further development of cultural life in Europe and welcome that these will also be supported. One such form of support should accommodate the demands of European networks (e.g. the relinquishment of further partners in submitting applications, the possibility of an EU grant of up to 80%, permission to increase staff costs to a higher percentage, and the possibility to also subsidise meetings. Furthermore networks should also be allowed to coordinate cooperation projects, as long as the double financing of the same costs is excluded.[1]

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[1] cf. Comments of the German members of CAE on the establishment of the Creative Europe Programme 2014 – 2020
[2] cf. ECA Comments to the European Commision proposal on the establishment of the Creative Europe Programme 2014 – 2020
[3] cf. CAE Comments European Commision proposal on the establishment of the Creative Europe Programme 2014 – 2020 and ECA Comments to the European Commision proposal on the establishment of the Creative Europe Programme 2014 – 2020
[4] cf. Culture Action Europe reaction to Ms Costa's report on Creative Europe: Statement 8 November 2012

EU VAT DIRECTIVE

Artists' and art trade associations call for inclusion of the visual arts in Annex III of the EU VAT Directive

So far, the current reduced VAT rate of 7% applies to the sale of works of art in Germany. At the end of February 2012, the Federal Republic of Germany was asked by the European Commission to initiate a change to the German regulations and to implement the EU VAT Directive, i.e. to tax the sale of works of art by art dealers at 19%.

The EU VAT Directive

While the EU Directive on VAT stipulates minimum tax rates for the member states (with regard to the full and reduced rate), the upper limit is up to the respective national regulations.
What the EU does stipulate in Annex III of the EU VAT Directive are the areas in which the member states may apply a reduced rate. In contrast to books, theater tickets and hotel stays (!), for example, visual art is not included in this annex - obviously an oversight.
The Directive only allows exceptions, i.e. a reduced VAT rate, when the sale or import of works of art is directly carried out by the artist, his/her legal successor, or a casual seller.

The position of German artists' associations and cultural politicians

The call of the European Commission to tax objects of art in Germany at 19% was met with harsh criticism. Artists' associations, the German Cultural Council, art trade associations, and major cultural politicians unanimously rejected this requirement and pointed out that the reduced VAT rate is an important instrument for the indirect promotion of culture.

The German Cultural Council also pointed out that the EU merely plays a subsidiary function regarding questions of cultural policy: "In this respect, questions of VAT, particularly VAT reductions, should also remain in the hands of the member states, so as to be able to take cultural policy measures. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions grants the signatory countries, including Germany, the express right to take cultural policy measures to safeguard cultural diversity."

The situation in other countries of the European Union

In most EU member states, the import and sale of art works by creators and so-called casual sellers is subject to the reduced VAT rate. Unlike Germany, these countries usually differentiate between these types of sales and sales through art dealers, to which the full VAT rate applies. Doris Pack (MEP), Chairwoman of the Culture and Education Committee of the European Parliament, pointed out that the national law also had to be changed or is currently being changed in other countries, following complaints from the EU Commission because the reduced VAT rate was/is applied to the sale of fine art without differentiation.

Conditions for artistic creation

Meanwhile, a compensation solution was found for Germany. Adjustments in legislation and adjudication of the European Union have been adopted in the 2013 Annual Tax Act, particularly with regard to the taxation of "art objects." At the same time, however, and thanks to the intense efforts of the German State Minister of Culture, the VAT rate for direct sales by artists, e.g., in the studio, will remain at 7%. Starting in 2014, a so-called flat margin tax of 30% will be introduced for art dealers – similar to the current practice in France. During the transitional period in 2013, the reduced VAT rate of 7% will also continue to apply to the art dealers.

Regardless of this solution, the common goal of artists' and art trade associations in Europe remains the inclusion of visual arts in Annex III of the VAT Directive.

SOCIAL SECURITY OF VISUAL ARTISTS IN EUROPE

Need for a Learning Community

National concepts and solutions for the social security of visual artists in the EU Member States go hand in hand with special characteristics of artists' labour markets. A visual artist's career is often more unpredictable than those of other workers: a lack of continuity and radical, short-term changes are given facts; the need to find strategies to minimize economic and social risks not only at national level, but also internationally is also a reality.

Some Members States took care of these characteristics and established concepts to improve social security for artists. The spectrum ranges from integration of artists into the existing systems to special arrangements outside regular social security schemes. Germany offers with the Social Security Insurance for Artists Act (KSVG) the most comprehensive scheme for self-employed artists in Europe. In France and Croatia self-employed artists and employees are treated equally as regards the social security legislation. Austria sets up a fund that provides artists subsidies for their social security — the Artists' Social Security Fund (KSVFG). Though subject of constant discussion these schemes proved helpful to minimize social risks.

The European Commission (EC) reacted to the ever growing mobility of workers within the EU amongst others with the removal of legal and administrative obstacles for the coordination of social security systems. The national systems differ significantly but collective regulations — to coordinate national legislation — aim at simplifying work stays in other EU countries. Also artists can benefit from this policy: since the year 2000 the 'posting of the self-employed' approach applies also to self-employed artists. According to the regulation, posted and self-employed workers can work in other European countries for up to 24 months but remain subject to the social security law of their country of origin. In May 2010 a modernized system of coordination came into force.

The procedure of 'posting of the self-employed' seems to be relatively simple. The EC provided visual artists with a tool that allows them to work abroad with little bureaucratic effort while maintaining their social security status. As assumed, reality is more complicated. A workshop on 'Social Security of Visual Artists in Europe', organised by the Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (igbk, www.igbk.de) in November 2010 showed a certain discrepancy between theory and practice, between current legal provision and their lack of implementation. For the invited representatives of the EC, artists' organisations, ministries and social security institutions from 8 European countries the transparency and practicality of the EU provision were of interest. How is the flow of information organised? Does an effective information policy exist? Are the current EU regulations and recent changes sufficiently known and do they meet the requirements of the artists at all?

It became clear that the biggest obstacle for visual artists working internationally regarding social security questions is still a lack of information. This fact comes along with the absence of a network which links the different involved parties: the European Commission (EC), ministries, social security institutions, artists' organisations.

— Artists are often not familiar with existing regulations and the impact on their work. Although a lot of information is available in the internet, the information websites are often to general and therefore for the daily practice, for single cases and questions not helpful.

— A lack of information is also a fact for the artists' organisations. This is accompanied by a missing awareness of the issue. In this respect artists' organisations often do not act properly as mediators between legislative bodies and the artists.

— A missing information policy of the European and national authorities is also true: social security institutions must be supplied with reliable information that they forward to the artistic and cultural field.

— The expertise of specialised information providers such as e.g. trESS (network for training and reporting on European Social Security, www.tress-network.org) is more or less unknown to the artistic sector.

Considering these items it is obvious that for all parties involved – the insured artists, the bodies concerned with the implementation of the regulations, the information providers – the implementation of EU regulations is still a learning process. It shall be understood that only a community of the named will be able to identify things that work out well, things that are missing, obstacles etc. Feedback from the artistic sector in this respect is needed that allows for secure data. Regular discussions and exchange is crucial to match the different demands in order to optimise procedures.
From the artists' organisation's perspective a learning community regarding social security of artists in Europe and beyond is yet to come.

THE IAA EUROPE

International Association of Art Europe

The International Association of Art (IAA) Europe is a network of about 40 national member organizations within Europe, representing professional visual artists. It is one of the five cultural regions (Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe) of the International Association of Art (IAA), the largest international non-governmental association of visual artists, with more than 100 member organizations worldwide. The IAA supports the international co-operation and exchange of artists, free from any aesthetic, political or other bias and aims to improve the economic and social position of artists on national and international level.
The non-governmental organization IAA Europe works as a Partner of UNESCO in relation to visual art.

How IAA Europe works

Delegates of the National Committees of IAA Europe meet annually at a General Assembly, which usually comes along with a symposium or a conferences: in 2010 'Art after Crisis' (in Slovakia, Bratislava), in 2011 'Artists in Transit' (in Germany, Berlin), in 2012 'Art in the Service of Freedom/Professional Artists NOW' (in Turkey, Istanbul).
Members of the Executive Committee of IAA Europe used to meet twice a year; since April 2012 they have been 'meeting' online once a month (Skype conferences) which turned out very effective.

Current activities and aims

Social and legal status - status of artist

The improvement of social and legal rights of artists is one of the most important tasks of IAA Europe. There are positive examples: Germany (good funding structures and social security for visual artists), France (The White Book, Manifesto), Austria (offer to cooperate with Slovakia within Central Europe), Sweden (MU agreement) and Slovakia (Council for Arts, the counseling body of the Minister of Culture, preparation of analytical and conceptual report called 'The Strategy of Cultural Development in Slovakia in 2012-2016', Governmental Council for non-profit Organizations, Governmental Council for Culture, working group 'Status of Artist').
At the IAA Europe General Assembly in Istanbul the working group 'Status of Artists' was founded to deal with these issues.

IAA card promotion

The IAA card is not only about allowing free entrance to museums and galleries, but also about the right for professional artist to do necessary research and to practice their profession. IAA Europe published a brochure (PDF and hard copy) how to produce the card and how to proceed in improving acceptance of the card by museums and galleries in the different countries. It contains a list of institutions within Europe that are accepting the IAA card. The increase of the number of IAA card friendly institutions is a challenge and the working group 'IAA Card' was established to deal with this issue.

Financing culture – international activities and international resources

The IAA is dependent on fees paid by membership countries. Therefore it is searching for funding for international cultural organization. Answering the basic question What is the value of an artist in Europe?: the IAA considers international cultural organizations important. Therefore the issue of sustainable financing from international resources is a key challenge.

World Art Day

In 2012 the World Art Day (April 15) successfully started in some countries: Turkey, Slovakia, Sweden, Cyprus, Mexico. For the year 2013 it is planned to cooperate with schools to organize joined projects on that day.

Exchange exhibitions

As IAA Europe is a network of artists' organizations within Europe, member organizations can offer to their members a unique opportunity for exchange exhibitions. Those were already organized in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway etc.

International Biennial of Drawing Pilsen

The IAA Europe is one of the founders of the International Biennial of Drawing Pilsen. IAA Europe is part of the international jury and annually awards a special price.

Information share

The newsletter of IAA Europe was launched in 2012 and is sent out to artists in the member countries. The website collects important materials from IAA events as well as news of the member organizations.

Letters of support

The organization provides also moral support and shows its solidarity to member countries via letters of support in case of urgent situations.

The working group 'Associated Members'

was established in Istanbul to open the IAA Europe for new organizations interested to join.

Future challenges

Topics that need to be tackled: copyright, social security for artists, especially mobile artists, artists and visa (concerning e.g. GB and its new visa system or probable new solutions), art and censorship (as discussed in Berlin in 2010, we have to face a lot in Europe, especially in Russia), as well as to help and advice artists how to develop national representations in their home countries in order to join international organizations like the IAA.

ECA – THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF ARTISTS

ECA — The European Council of Artists was officially established in Denmark in May 1995. ECA is a cooperation between artists' professional bodies in 28 European countries.

ECA's aim is to gather national interdisciplinary artists' councils and organisations in Europe and to promote the interests of professional artists in political, economic, judicial and social contexts. From the start ECA's intention has been to facilitate dialogue among artists in Europe, to increase convergence, to instigate collaboration across borders and to create an active presence of European artists in European platforms, actions and networks.

ECA is built according to "the Nordic model", including national umbrella organisations. One of the basic ideas behind the cultural policies in the Nordic countries is democratic co-determination, where the views expressed by professional artists and their organisations are important factors.

The purpose of the ECA is:

— To help professional artists influence European strategies, in particular regarding the social and economic situation of artists.

— To communicate with and influence European policies of concern to artists, and to secure close relations with the political institutions of Europe, such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other relevant organisations.

— To cooperate with political decision makers in Europe and with organisations representing professional artists.

— To organise conferences, seminars and round-table discussions on issues crucial to the future cultural development in Europe, to the position of the artists and to other matters related to creative work.

— To ensure the cooperation of European artists through mutual exchange of relevant information on matters of policy concerning artists in the European countries.

— To contribute to a greater political and public recognition of professional artists and their role within the future development of Europe, thereby strengthening the official position of the artists in Europe.

ECA has been based in Copenhagen for many years. In 2010, the Spanish member organisation proposed to take over the office and funding for this was secured. But the accelerated financial crisis in Spain made it impossible to sustain and in 2011 Copenhagen became ECA's base again. Since 2011, ECA's president is the Icelandic stage director Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir and the proximity between Reykjavík and Copenhagen is an advantage.

Several issues ECA addresses:

UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity
— ECA and some of its members took part from the very beginning in developing this international instrument: initiating discussions during the first years of the millennium with ministers of culture in INCP, bringing forward the proposal to the UNESCO in 2003, drafting of the text, lobbying to our national representatives before the adoption of the Convention by the UNESCO General meeting in 2005 and participating in the ratification and implementation processes.

Defending artistic freedom and freedom of speech
— The defence of artistic freedom is one of the core values of ECA.

Authors' Rights
— To secure that artists are remunerated for the use of their works is essential for the members of ECA as well as the "droit moral", which gives the author of a work the right to decide when and how his/her work is used. Intellectual Property Rights are also essential in the context of the EU digital agenda for 2020, and there are a growing number of initiatives on EU-level at present.

Multilingualism
— ECA is member of the Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism. ECA is an organisation where 40 official European languages are spoken, including many immigrant languages. Among the members are small countries with small languages to maintain - such as the Icelandic, Maltese, Faroese and Sami languages. The general scope of the platform is within the sphere of interest for our members.

Intercultural Dialogue and Cultural Diversity
— ECA is member of the Platform for Intercultural Europe and took part in other events in the last years, which provide us with knowledge on experiences and practices.

Artists' Mobility
— The mobility of artists and their works is another core interest of ECA.
During the past years, ECA has also been working to facilitating the transport of instruments on airplanes.

The Status of the Artist
— Several national ECA members are working to improve the status of the artist — a legal instrument that provides social rights, education etc. for artists. There are huge differences among European countries. Only a few countries have specific laws, while other countries have elements included in other legislation.

ECA's annual conferences are important events. Artists and their organisations, cultural operators, cultural politicians and other representatives for cultural life in Europe meet and reflect on issues of common interest and relevance. To name the last three:
2010 in Zagreb, **Arts Funding — Artistic Freedom**
2011 in Madrid, **Back to Business — the Need for Industrious Artists**
2012 in Vilnius, **Art as a Bridge Builder — Cultural Diversity in European Communities**

As stated above, ECA is built according to the Nordic model. Current statistics show that the people of the Nordic countries spend more of their time and more of their own money on culture and they are certainly enabled by the cultural politics adapted by their governments. Even in the financial collapse in Iceland from 2008 an onwards, the cultural industry continued to contribute to the Icelandic economy, even more than many other industries and managed to archive what other industries were not able to: the creation of new jobs. Eurostat figures indicate that the job market in the creative industries has been far more resilient in the Nordic countries than across the EU as a whole (particularly for 16 to 25 year olds, the age group with the highest unemployment rate). In comparison, the inhabitants of Norway and Iceland spend more on culture than Denmark, Finland and Sweden (all of them members of the EU).

An important project on ECA's agenda (apart from the issues mentioned above) is a methodic mapping of the creative industries in our member countries with umbrella organisations (22 countries).

BÍL, our Icelandic member organisation, was part of such a survey and the Icelandic researchers, the ministries and public offices involved have all agreed to cooperate with ECA and share their experience, best practice in action. The mapping of the Icelandic creative industries (Sigurdardottir & Young 2011) is based on the statistical framework, which the UNESCO put forward in defining both, cultural and creative industries. The definition built around core functions surrounding the arts, as well as support functions (UNESCO, 2009). This framework was translated to the industrial codes the Icelandic statistical bureau uses for economic figures. To figure out how to deal with the different importance of core and support functions, the DCMS (2009) framework was used to weigh down those industrial codes, which rather fills the support function within the cultural creative functions. This gives a comprehensive overview of the creative industries and a methodology, which can easily be translated into other countries, given that there is access to economic data.

Another project ECA is planning is to develop a framework agreement and implementation strategy to suit ECA member countries with regard to visual artists' exhibition and project payment rights. Such an agreement exists in Sweden (the MU contract, artists' contribution and remuneration in an exhibition), which will be the initial reference model of practice. The agreement applies to state-funded and public art spaces in Sweden, aimed at living artistic practitioners in Sweden, regardless of nationality or organisational affiliation.

The 212.000 individual members of ECA think of themselves as culture workers, culture carriers, and culture builders.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Based on the observation in the theses 8-17

Hans Abbing

1. Support of artists' initiatives which develop schemes of certification of art institutions that treat artists decently is called for.

On a practical level certification of art institutions which treat artists properly and shaming of those who do not, can be very effective. (This already shows in New York where presently a system of certification is developed and applied by the artists' initiative W.A.G.E..) Gradually certification could be extended to commercial galleries. (Certification works better than formal government regulation, because regulation is experienced as just another legal obligation and right, while in the case of certification both parties willingly and actively take part.)

2. In cultural policies there should be less emphasis on "excellence" in the arts.

There is sufficient interest in art, which is supposed to be of very high quality. Government policies (and money) promoting excellence among a small group of usually already successful artists primarily serve international cultural competition. Because it puts art for which there is little demand on a footstall, it encourages artists to make also such art and this is not in the interest of the average visual artist.

3. In cultural policies there should be less emphasis on autonomy in the arts. Instead artists should be encouraged to make art which serves multiple goals.

The justification of art subsidies in parliament and in cultural policy documents is still primarily sought in the importance of art being autonomous. Much more emphasis could be put on heteronomous art; that is art which serves more goals at the same time, like appreciation by larger groups, income, social contributions, social criticism, recognition of peers, and so forth. Heteronomy is not the same as making compromises! **Having multiple goals can promote creativity and lead to higher quality art than in case artists only want to maximize autonomy.**

4. Support of institutions and initiatives that guide artists in their attempts to broaden their field of activities is called for.

As long as formal art education drags behind other supported institutions can encourage artists to extend their field of activities or help artists in doing so. In this context it is important that the status of activities in the sphere of community art, activities with amateurs, in prisons, in public space, therapy and so forth becomes higher and comparable with art as it is traditionally provided.
There are not necessarily too many artists, when the definition of art and art work becomes wider and artists are prepared to offer their labour in markets, which were traditionally not regardedas art markets.

5. Nevertheless, at present a temporary decrease in the number of students of art academies and the number of art academies may be needed to improve the bad situation of artists

6. Support of initiatives or extra training to vest a new mind set among existing teachers at art academies is crucial.

The main cause of the continuation of the bad situation of artists rests in art education. Here the detrimental "everything for art" mentality of artists is (re)produced. In order to change this situation the mind set of teachers has to change fundamentally. Less emphasis on autonomy and more on heteronomy is essential. (At present new curricula for the instruction in cultural entrepreneurship primarily enable other teachers to carry on in the old way.)

OBSERVATIONS

7. Visual artists are poor

There is much talk about rich visual artists and high prices of artworks, but the large majority of visual artists is poor. In Europe in between 40 to 60% of artists has an income from all work, i.e. including second jobs, which is below the poverty line.[1]

8. Many artists feel they failed as artists and feel ashamed of this. They blame themselves

Sometimes people believe that artists are compensated for their low incomes, for instance in the form of status and enjoyment in their work. The latter can matter, but most of the time it does not compensate for hardship. Many artists feel ashamed of their poverty and lack of success, even though they will not admit this openly. Hardship is real. In other professions this is altogether different. The average teacher or lawyer earns a good income and is not unsuccessful. He does not see himself as a failed professional. The large majority of artists however, are poor, regard themselves as unsuccessful and are regarded by others as unsuccessful. This does not worry starting artists, but over time many artists start to feel they are failures and blame themselves for not being good enough.

9. Poor artists have reason to blame others rather than themselves

Artists should blame others rather than themselves for their lack of success and poverty, not because others are insufficiently interested in art, spend too little

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[1] Around 40% of the visual artists cannot cover their cost. And, in for instance the Netherlands almost 80% has an income below the Dutch minimum wage. In Europe the average artist earns circa 40% less than the average worker. And the percentage he earns less than professionals with a similar level of previous training is much higher. (Given the available data it is probable that, if artists would work full time in the arts, around 60% would earn less than corresponds with the poverty line, i.e. 60% could not at all make a living from art.)

money on art or keep governments from giving more subsidy to artists, but because artists are part of a system of exploitation that keeps them down. Politicians and people in the administration responsible for art policies generally contribute to the maintenance of this system of exploitation.

10. A separation of art and entertainment was in the interest of the bourgeois, but it worsened the situation of many artists.

The roots of the system of exploitation lie in the 19th century. Whereas up to the middle of that century a majority of artists had normal incomes, this changed when the bourgeois and later higher middle classes succeeded in separating art and entertainment. This way they secured the distinction which their association with art brought them. Commerce in the arts became suspicious and had to be covered up. Artists started to reject commerce, which contributed to their poverty.

11. Poverty in the arts and many passionate unsuccessful artists was in the interest of the bourgeois and higher middle classes

Artists being poor and willing to work for low incomes started to symbolize the specialness if not sacredness of art. The bourgeoisie and the later members of the higher middle classes, who associate themselves with art, had and have an interest in the presence of many poor artists.

12. The strife for autonomy and the assumed superiority of autonomous art works is not in the interests of the majority of artists.

In the course of the twentieth century the autonomy of art became ever more important. An ethos among artists became vested that work must be made which is as autonomous as possible. The sacredness of art calls for the rejection of any compromise and especially commerce. For a small group of very successful artists this is no problem. Their work anyway fetches high prices. But it is not in the interest of the majority of artists. Artists feel obliged to make art for which there is little demand. The number of costumers interested is small. And although art institutions buy their work, only few artists can sell their work to these institutions.

13. There is considerable inner art world exploitation. Art establishments have an interest in artists who are poor and willing to work for very low incomes.

Also art establishments have an interest in poverty in the arts because it raises the symbolic value of art and their distinction. Moreover, on a day to day level the willingness of artists to work for very low incomes helps to keep costs down.

14. An "everything for art" mentality has led to a wild west economy in the arts

Art establishments and institutions like art spaces have an interest in artists who believe in an "everything for art" and are thus willing to work for low incomes. It reduces the bargaining power of artists and it enables a wild west economy in the arts. "Everything for art" leads to "anything goes", or in other words: "everything is allowed for the sake of art".

15. An "everything for art" mentality and low incomes promote severe competition among artists and prevent larger scale solidarity.

In order to survive artists must believe in the importance of their work for art. But when there are many unsuccessful artists they can only prove this by becoming successful among many competitors who also try to become successful. It is a matter of everybody on its own, while only the "fittest" survive. This prevents powerful collective action. Artists unions tend to be weak, because the number of artists which actively support their actions is relatively small.

16. Non-profit art institutions misuse the "everything for art" mentality of artists.

Because non-profit art institutions keep up the slogan

of "everything for art" as well, this makes it easy for them to exploit artists on a day to day level. (Usually they are not aware of it.) For instance, many non-profits do not pay artists fees or they pay very small fees. Sometimes they do not even pay for artists' expenses. And partly because of the competition, but even more because it is "for art", artists do not protest or they willingly cooperate. Often for profits behave somewhat better, because they stick to minimum business standards of proper behaviour and shame those among them who do not.

17. At present in established (contemporary) art circles there is a tendency to narrow the definition of (good) art and governments cooperate. This is not in the interest of most artists.

In the post war society which is becoming more democratic, part of the arts is also tempted to become more democratic. Art which is attractive for larger social groups sometimes gets more chances. This is not in the interest of art establishments. They de facto attempt to narrow the definition of art. They do so, among others, by declaring that "difficult" art, for which there is little demand and for which consumers must make an effort to appreciate it, is true or superior art. Government money enables this. (In practice governments are double minded. Most of the time they de facto promote exclusion, but at times they also encourage art institutions to become attractive for more people.)

18. The causes of the precarity in the arts differ from those in other areas of post-Fordist capitalist production. Exploitation in the arts calls for (partly) other forms of resistance and other remedies.

The exploitation of artists is foremost an inner art world affair. There is an overlap with the exploitation of other knowledge workers, but it is limited. (The overlap is largest in the performing arts.) Therefore the exploitation in the art calls for (partly) other forms of resistance and remedies. See theses 1 to 6.

Hans Abbing, is visual artist and economist, professor emeritus in art sociology at the University of Amsterdam
To see pictures or read texts by Hans Abbing: www.hansabbing.nl

HABEN UND BRAUCHEN manifesto reading, Jan. 2012, Salon Populaire Berlin, photo: Julia Lazarus

TO HAVE AND TO NEED (HABEN UND BRAUCHEN)

Was braucht die Kunst in Berlin?
www.habenundbrauchen.de

Excerpts from the HABEN UND BRAUCHEN manifesto

Illustrations by Erik Göngrich

Preamble

Up until the last few years, the special historical situation in Berlin created special working and living conditions in the city. In contrast to other big cities, Berlin was devoid of any exceptional pressure on the housing market, and the range of available spaces enabled diverse and often self-organized art practices. Now this situation is beginning to change dramatically. Rents are on the rise, and pressure on the conditions of production and living is increasing without any increase in money making opportunities. Most people engaged in cultural production still earn most of their money outside of Berlin.
The bustling art scene in Berlin evolved less through the specific support of the city and more through its historical situation. Nevertheless, at the very moment when the conditions for people engaged in cultural production are worsening dramatically, the city prides itself on its artists; and the attention is welcome in principle. The view of how art should be fostered, however, stands in stark contrast to what culture-makers consider necessary. In our opinion, participants in cultural production today need, first and foremost, a safeguarding of their conditions of production and not necessarily a new art museum and other such solutions as have been proposed.[1]

Formed in response to these issues, Haben und Brauchen seek to be advocates in the field of art as well as in art's neighboring occupational fields with a platform for discussion and action. In our opinion, with regard to its social and economic structure, Berlin is still an exception among other cities worldwide.

Within the city's historically determined heterogeneity and intermixture of social diversity lies a potential for the future, not a phased-out model from the past. With that said, it is imperative to establish a consciousness and self-concept concerning what distinguishes the forms of artistic production and articulation that have unfolded in Berlin during recent decades and how these forms can be preserved and further developed. Therefore, it is of importance to avoid limiting our demands to the attainment of open urban spaces and affordable studios, to the augmentation and reorientation of public art funding; instead, it is crucial to make a connection with current discussions on urban development and planning, on property and rental policy, and to take up a position with respect to concepts and realities of work, productivity, and the Commons.

This manifesto, composed collectively by more than forty people, was developed within this context. This act of collective writing is an experiment and an attempt to convey the diverse perspectives on the situation of the contemporary Berlin art scene and to put those perspectives forward for discussion and action. We understand the text as a first step offering it to a broader public for discussion.

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[1] The open letter from January 25, 2011, addressing plans for the "Leistungsschau junger Kunst aus Berlin" (Competitive Exhibition of Young Art from Berlin) sparked a widespread debate on cultural policy and played a part in activating an examination of the present and the future of the conditions for the production and presentation of contemporary art in Berlin. See www.habenundbrauchen.kuenstler-petition.de

Opposed to the Dispossession of the Commons

Art is a central arena for local communities. It is a relational event: through the production, viewing, and discussion of art, people's relations to one another are continuously negotiated, studied, and formed anew. Art doesn't keep to itself. By producing relationships between people and their horizons of experience, it constantly opens itself up to a wide range of societal fields and creates an exchange between those fields. Whatever takes shape as art is, consequently, a collective societal process that involves everyone. Such a definition of art challenges those who would relegate art to the sector of private consumption or treat it like an economic venture. Art must remain a subject that is devoted to pan-societal concerns. Thus, all parts of society the citizenry and culture-makers, and the political and economic systems alike have a responsibility to the Commons that art and culture yields.

Today the existence of this Commons is seriously threatened: the subjugation of the cultural public to a wide-ranging economic imperative means nothing less than that public's dispossession! In accordance with the wishful thinking of neoliberalism, urban life and cultural memory, i.e. societal subjectivity in general, is being privatized and put up for sale in the form of a commodity in the same breath with the privatization of art. Only those who are able to pay are barely granted access by private security, to the ruins of the Commons.

The irony of it all is that the elimination of the Commons is driven forward today by invoking the ideal of the artistically "creative" loner (who comes with an inbuilt economic ability to organize him or herself). The wishful thinking of neoliberalism depicts art and culture as if they were primarily a matter of a form of capital known as "creativity" and therefore a matter of individual success stories filled with unbridled entrepreneurial initiative and so-called innovation. Any such story is a fiction! It distorts the reality in an absurd way: art is presented before the cameras as a showpiece a motor for the future and a location factor

and is thereby expelled from its place at the heart of the Commons. The vibrant activities of artists and other culture-makers are reframed as evidence of the potential for the economic development of a city, and in the process, the obvious is ignored: often enough producers of art are just so active due to sheer survival pressure, and the concomitant anxieties: she who does a ton of things does so, for sure, because she wants to, but also, just as often, because she has no other choice. Based on the justification that the exposure to a public should be compensation enough, artistic work and public relations as well as curatorial work in the art field are, as a general rule, badly paid or not paid at all. Few can live from the sale of work.

Furthermore, many today produce a kind of art which doesn't relate to sales in any way because the work takes the form of projects in which the thing at stake is communication, research, and documentation or, quite simply, pointed gestures. However, precisely this kind of art which seeks a public in society is now often compensated solely by that publicness such that, ironically, the least is earned by the very artists who the city's public perceives as most active. In some sectors of the economy the rule of thumb is "activity creates income." But not in art. In art, a high degree of activity doesn't necessarily produce income. Instead it often simply stands for a poverty that prolongs itself ungrudgingly. [...]

The dispossession of the Commons can happen quickly and the damage can be irreversible. The example that Reagan and Thatcher made was repeated this year by the Dutch right-wing government from one day to the other and with practically no comment: a total clear cutting in the culture and health sectors. Being short on funds is no explanation; after all, enough money is left over for other things. Instead, the main reason is that the society's grounds for maintaining its own Commons are eroded. Society eliminates itself due to a lack of imagination regarding what it could be but it doesn't become fatigued from doing so. It can still swarm around in high-pitched innovation and creativity in order to gloss over the destruction of the Commons which gave meaning to these concepts in the first place.

Haben und Brauchen say [2]: Society must assume responsibility for the preservation of the Commons. Society shall not, dare not, eliminate itself! Especially not in our name!

What do we mean by"work" here?

Since art's place lies at the heart of the Commons and since it seeks debate about fundamental societal problems, it is often exposed to and unprotected from the contradictions that a society carries within itself. The public's eulogization of creativity and innovation (in the name of art) as backup music for the privatization of the Commons is only one example here.

The situation is similar with the unsolved question of society's understanding of the meaning of work. Today, when it is increasingly clear there is hardly enough work to go around , we throw ourselves into our work even more in order to hold on to our belief that work is the foundation for self-worth and societal morality. We keep our eyes on the promise of flexible, creative work, ignoring the potential for burnout. Here the activities of culture-makers are strong-armed into becoming the force behind glamorization of the freelancer all sectors where work bears features of the artistic-creative and elements of communication, but is also deregulated.[3]

The fact that artists are now being merchandised as figureheads of a new work culture — the creative industry — leads some to believe that artists possess the same money making opportunities as other "creative professionals." That, however, is seldom the case. Artists deliver an image for an entire industry, but it is simply not the case that they are paid well (or paid at all) for their activities. As evidenced by current studies (see statistics in sub-section "Economy"), the old, undignified tradition has largely remained unchanged: the majority of culture makers continue to lead lives at or under the poverty line.
Hence artistic work stands in the hot spot of a pan-societal contradiction: a new work culture advertises itself as flexible, artistic, and creative; at the same time, survival anxiety and the pressure to perform in this culture increase along with the gap between the rich and the poor.

Haben und Brauchen speak out resolutely against this construction of the success story "Art in Berlin," a narrative which glosses over contradictions that are felt everywhere in this city where culture makers stay poor even though they work nonstop.

Everyone is talking about work. But even if we work ceaselessly, only some work is paid. Some is not. When all is said and done, payment is an expression of societal recognition. Today this form of recognition is primarily given, however, to work that can be measured by its productivity, that is, by the products it manufactures. Yet the commodity form is not necessarily the result art strives for. [...]

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[2] The use of the plural verb here is grounded in a proposal made by a small group who were looking for a way to represent the form that our collaboration takes: Haben und Brauchen do not speak with one voice backed by many other voices, but with many, sometimes disagreeing voices. The collectively written manifesto is an attempt at combining these different stances on central points so as to generate collective statements.

[3] Our examination of the term "work" refers above all to the discourse that has formed around the ideas of the "work-based society" (Arbeitsgesellschaft) and the "multi-activity-based society" (Tätigkeitsgesellschaft).

Art creates spaces where societal actions can be experienced as worth. Hence it poses a challenge and a contradiction to the neoliberal agenda as it strives to privatize the Commons and peddle collective rights (fundamental rights and land law rights) to the highest bidder.

Neoliberal populists' relationship to art is schizophrenic: on the one hand, artists are celebrated as "creative," and on the other, art's role in the creation of the Commons (and its dependency therein) is denied while public support for culture makers, and the conditions that make work possible, are denied or withdrawn. This logic of denial and withdrawal must be opposed! Cultural activities must receive adequate recognition as work. Here "recognition" means the right to demand fair payment and participation in societal decision making processes.

The non-recognition of this form of occupation serves at the present moment as a model for the non-recognition of occupations in other societal fields where engagement is presupposed, demanded, and not honored — such as specific areas of the creative industries (the term "intern's destitution" (Elend der Praktikantinnen) is already well-known), but also in areas of science and education, in nursing and social-service work. So an expansion or redefinition of the term "work" hardly applies only to art; it pertains to all areas where people work and don't get paid.

Much of the time, the excuse is that funds are tight. Sometimes this may be the real reason. Far more often, however, it is a spurious argument vis-à-vis those whose work an employer can escape paying for because she reckons the employee works out of passion — and therefore, would do so for free. In other positions and in other occupations, there is nothing to discuss. The money is there. This form of two-faced budgeting appears in larger institutions or projects quite explicitly in the method and manner through which paid work is separated from unpaid work. Once established, such patterns are quick to spread to the macro-level:

Spurred on by a figment of wishful thinking, namely that cultural "flagship projects" contribute to the creation of an entrepreneurial city, a readiness emerges to invest enormous sums of money. Resources of all kinds are mobilized for inflated, supersized productions. For the most part, though, hardly any of these supplies of money reach the city's culture-producers themselves. For, the megaprojects' additional expenses (like transportation, insurance, customs, airfare, hotel, etc.) are more willingly paid than fees for freelance workers! So while resources are flowing in select places, cultural workers are exploited beyond all measure:

Predominantly, artists still do not receive exhibition fees. The same goes for publicity work in the art field: often higher rates are paid for the graphic design and translation of publications than for the making of the articles themselves. "Content" artistic and intellectual subject matter is increasingly treated as a disposable resource. Just the fact that something was seen by the eyes of a public should be compensation enough, the argument goes. People working in construction and art transport of exhibitions, curatorial assistents and young curators are fobbed off with scandalously low compensations grossly disproportionate to their qualifications and professional experience. The fact that volunteers and interns are paid badly or not at all and that basically a cheap work force is recruited under the pretext of further education and increased chances of future employment is often a matter of course in entrepreneurial strategy.

Haben und Brauchen demand a minimum wage for cultural workers! Hourly wages of 4 Euro are unacceptable.

Haben und Brauchen appeal to those responsible to implement directives for art funding: at long last, fees for artists and other culture makers must be permitted as legitimate items in funding applications and budget settlements.

Haben und Brauchen appeal also to those responsible in the institutions: it cannot be that a project's additional expenses are paid as a matter of course while fees for freelance workers who deliver the art, the content, the curatorial and technical competence for the production of an exhibition are denied.

We need to come to an agreement with regard to the necessity of working toward that which should be self-evident: within the framework of an exhibition project, the artistic, content-related, and organizational significance of each person's work output for the project should at long last stand in adequate proportion, rather than in inverse , to its payment.

Economy: Partaking rather than Being Cheated

Art is being used as an advertising medium for the potential of an entire city. But culture-makers stay poor nevertheless, because they are made to pay for the dream of the culturalization of the economy. Rather, artists ought to be witnesses for the prosecution in a trial where the charges recount the consequences of that dream. The concept of culture is employed to promote the promise of a new creative economy, while all around the structures that would sustainably enable producers of this culture to work and survive are being dismantled in silence, or are collapsing.

Haben und Brauchen say: We refuse to generate the stardust needed to lend the culturalization of the economy its false charm. We refuse to thereby assist in the culturalization of the economy, whose first victim is the artistic itself. [...]

We provide some statistics: According to a study by the German Institute for Economic Research (Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung), the monthly income of artists can be broken down as follows:

6% no income
16% up to 250 Euros
24% up to 500 Euros
31% up to 1,000 Euros
13% up to 1,500 Euros
4% up to 2,000 Euros
3% up to 2,500 Euros
3% up to 2,500 Euros

In 2011 a study by the IFSE (Institute for Strategy Development / Institut für Strategieentwicklung) reached the following results concerning artists' sources of income:

12,3% receive welfare, unemployment benefits, social welfare
13,4% receive financial support from family and friends
18,9% have a permanent position / side job with no relation to artistic activity
13,0% live from the sale of artworks
6,8% have a side job in the art field
6,4% live from commissional / freelance work
5,7% benefit from funding programs or stipends
5,5% teach in the visual arts field
2,9% live from being employed in individual art projects

The same study shows that it is absolutely unrealistic to believe that the art market would provide any relief here, for the following reasons:

Certain forms of work that are key to the life of contemporary art conceptual, discursive, documentary, site-specific installation, and performance practices are almost never viable candidates for representation and dealing through a gallery, because in these areas hardly any artifacts exist which could be sold. According to the IFSE study from 2010, average gallery turnover, broken down by category of artwork, amounts to 60% painting, ca. 20% photography, and ca. 12% sculpture.

Conceptual, discursive, documentary, site-specific installation, and performance practices account for less than 10% of turnover. That being the case, commercial galleries' turnovers do not display those very tendencies that provide meaning and movement in the contemporary visual arts.

In view of this data, it stands to reason that the key role in the artistic life of this city is accorded to venues where art is shown publicly, but usually with no fee to compensate artists for their contributions: the IFSE study shows (here it was possible for those surveyed to give more than one answer) that 48.7% of artists have, in the last three years, shown their works in art spaces, off-spaces or project spaces, 19.7% in municipal galleries, 17.5% in art clubs or societies, and 17.1% in museums and large-scale art venues.

Haben und Brauchen draw the following conclusion from this data: the art market alone does not provide a sufficient economic basis for the future life of contemporary art in Berlin. If the city now advertises itself with the special role of Berlin's art arena, then the city must join in taking responsibility for that arena's economic requisites.

In other words – if contributions made by art in recent decades have increased the attractiveness of Berlin (and if Berlin is not shy to use art to advertise itself), then the city should ask itself how it can protect the producers of this art with a fair share of the real proceeds it draws from the upward revaluation it has undergone.

In other words if the city profits from artistic flair, it is perfectly logical and valid to stop talking in terms of funding and start talking in terms of partaking! What the city should give to artists is simply a portion of what art has given and continues to give to the city. It is urgently necessary to initialize a return flow of resources now toward those who have effected the rising attractiveness of this city. Not only are artists mostly cut off from the benefits of the upward revaluation they have brought about for the city; much more, it is a well-known fact that they are also among those who suffer under that revaluation's negative consequences. If the real-estate branch begins hiking up prices through the roof in quarters where art provides a good ambience, then artists are among the first who must leave because they can no longer afford to live and work in that part of the city. In view of this fact, artists' funding means fairness in district funding and not only for artists, but also for everyone who would be able to stay in certain districts were the city to rethink its policies, assume responsibility for urban life, and protect inhabitants who contribute to urban life from the effects of real-estate speculation, which destroys urban life.

While on this topic, it is crucial to reaffirm a major difference. While in the real estate sector capital is, self-evidently, absorbed, creating private prosperity, this is not the case in the art field. In comparison, the number of people who get rich from art that is, excluding the few who were rich to begin with is entirely negligible. Instead, for the most part, whatever flows into art flows back into the city: be it in the form of money spent on materials and fees when productions are realized on location in Berlin, or money for smaller expenses (when artists pay for their infrastructure themselves, from canvas and paint to computer, camera, and editing suites) be it in the form of airplane tickets and hotel stays for speakers, or exhibition construction and preparation for invited artists, or be it ultimately for the money spent through involvement in the city where cultural life happens, for food, drinks, entrance tickets, lending fees, and so on. No third party is siphoning anything off. Money for art stays cyclically in the city's bloodstream to benefit urban life.

Considering nothing more than the fact that as of 2011, approximately 8000 visual artists live here the endowment provided by the city through stipends and project grants remains poor and insufficient. What's more, protecting the increased value and reputation of the city can only be ensured through long-term structural projects concerning artists and art-making.
[...]


MANIFEST
TEILNAHME
PARTIZIPATION
CITY VALUE SHOULD BE SHARED
GEMEIN-SCHAFTLICHES SCHREIBEN
AKTIVIEREN
AN-HÖRUNG
CREATIVE INDUSTRY
RETTET DAS GEMEIN WESEN
SOLIDARITY
BERLIN MANIFEST
MAIN ARGUMENTS
FLIESSTEXT
DEMANDS
ANALYSIS
FACTS
CALL FOR THE AGENCY
ART AND REAL ESTATE
SICH EINE ARBEIT SELBST ERTEILEN
ZWISCHEN-NUTZUNG IST WIE TROCKEN-WOHNEN
HANDELN
15 BERLIN MINUTES GET AN IDEA WHERE WE LIKE TO GO
MORE EXPERIMENT ARTIST WITH THE CITY SHARING OF SPACE
KOMMUNEN
IMMOBILIEN
A TEXT NEVER ENDING
FETISH ARTIST
SCHLAFENDE ÖKONOMIEGRUPPE

WHAT IS WORK WORTH?

Amber Landgraff in Conversation with THE CARROT WORKERS' COLLECTIVE

Presented by the Precarious Workers Brigade, London
Excerpt of an interview published in FUSE-Magazine,
11. January 2012

The Carrotworkers' Collective, based in the UK, organizes around the issue of the unpaid internship—the proverbial carrot dangled in front of emerging cultural workers with the promise that working for free will eventually lead to a paid position. The Carrotworkers' Collective (CWC) attempts to dispense with some common myths about unpaid internships—especially that internships are a necessary pre-requisite to getting a job. Given rising youth unemployment rates, it is difficult to justify a system that demands going more into debt by spending years working for free. The CWC questions the acceptance of this as the status quo, promotes the value of work and provides support to interns who find themselves in this position. [...]

This interview took place over several email exchanges; to protect their anonymity for the purposes of protest, industrial sabotage and whistle blowing, the members of the CWC will remain anonymous.

AL: Can you describe your motivation behind starting the Carrotworkers' Collective? How many members are currently involved in the collective? What experiences are required for membership in the collective?

CWC: We started CWC with a desire to establish a platform that could address the exploitation of free labour across the cultural sector and beyond. Our point of departure (and our point of arrival, transformation and closure as a group) was the production of a counter-guide to internships in the arts. [...]

What do you think stands in the way of interns organizing around issues of free labour? What could be achieved by organization?

This is a problem we face frequently. The most common rejoinders we hear go something like: "But this is only a middle class issue;" or "This is just a rite of passage everyone has to go through;" or "Doing an internship and getting in debt shows that you are committed!" We need to reiterate how the rise of the rhetoric of the so-called creative industries means that the cultural sector includes more people from different class backgrounds than before (at least for now), and that these class assumptions cannot be made. We need to point out that cultural workers earn less than the median wage in the UK—so economically defined, this is certainly not a middle class issue. [...]

Have your relationships to the value of your own work changed since starting the Carrotworker's Collective?

We often draw attention to the common answer in the cultural sector to the question: "What do you do?" Often, the reply comes: "You mean my real work, or the work I do for money?" What this answer belies is a profound sense of schizophrenia in how cultural workers understand and value their work and their time, and a curious assertion that waged work is somehow unreal. [...] Imagine a recent graduate working for free as an intern in a commercial London gallery. She orders expensive food for her boss for lunch and taxis for the director to go three blocks down the road, and wonders simultaneously why there is money for these expenses but not enough in the budget to pay her a fair wage, and why it is she feels she can say nothing about how angry this makes her. For those working in super-exploitative situations such as the one described above, the group offers support and space through which to connect the battles, negative experiences and affects in the workplace to an analysis that helps make sense of things. We use analysis as a practice of organizing around what would be needed in order to offer less exploitative alternatives for interns. It can give us the confidence to challenge certain policies and behaviours and make us see that exploitation and free labour in the cultural sector is a really common problem. As artists and cultural workers, the work with the collective gives us ways to produce tools, processes, visuals and encounters in new ways that not only address the issues but also point toward another way of working beyond the competitive, individuated and schizophrenic modes to which we are accustomed and are expected to conform.

What qualifies as work? What makes work valuable?

In the world we live in, shaped by patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism, it's mostly wage labour that qualifies as work, not so much the feminized labour of taking care or of reproduction. That division between productive and reproductive work was relatively clear in the industrial era, with its two poles of the factory and the home. Now, with what some call post-Fordist production modes arising—flexible and self-employment, short-term contracts, information economies—what actually counts as work is no longer as clear. Aside from reproduction, so many precarious, flexible and informal labour practices have emerged, across which much working time is unpaid and across which the boundaries between work and life are blurred (just think of the entrepreneur, or the artist, and the way their lives come to be completely tied up in their work).

What makes work valuable economically are hierarchies of skill, provenance, visibility, which are in turn defined by market-driven acts of policy. In the UK, the points-based system for immigration is a good place to start understanding the way work is valued, determining the movements of the actual bodies of workers: the points-based system distinguishes "high-value migrants" from other workers, depending on what the UK economy needs. Generally, what's valued highly is work that requires a lot of training or education, so-called highly skilled labour: creative labour sits on the rim of that. What makes work valuable to us, now that's an entirely different question. There, the answer is about the way we relate to people we work with, the capacity for autonomy and care we have in our work, the freedom of thinking and inventing, and of course the material conditions of our work.

How do you respond to people who see the unpaid internship as a mandatory stepping-stone for working in the arts?

Only in the last decade has the unpaid internship become common. While there's been a lot of talk about the boom in the creative industries, the increasing number of graduates in the field has been matched by a systematic decline in public spending in the arts, resulting in less jobs and pay overall. More generally, the idea of a linear progression from study to internship to paid work is becoming more and more mythical, as we see many people who have done successive internships that result in no reliable paid work.

[...]

But hasn't it always been the case that internships have been required for future paid employment? What has changed?

No! Professions that have historically had internships—such as medicine and law—paid their interns and internships in these sectors are genuinely periods of learning—not dogsbody jobs. Internships appear to be everywhere in every sector now, but this is a recent phenomena. [...] Broadly speaking, the pervasiveness of free labour is surely tied into the mutations in post-Fordist production talked about above and the rampant spread and entrenchment of neo-liberalism that has seen real wages of the middle and bottom earners stay still or shrink over the last thirty years, while income at the top has gone through the roof. [...]

In my own experience, I ended up working several unpaid internships, coupled with a variety of self-motivated projects before I saw a positive affect on my own employment. This experience has made me question the value of my internships. I found myself getting really impatient with the suggestion that I was simply paying the same dues that everyone in the art world had to pay, particularly when I found myself facing debt from student loans and high cost of living. Does the lure of future paid employment lead to people taking on more work and justify interning for longer periods of time?

Unfortunately, your story is one we have heard many times. It is astonishing that what you have experienced is passed off as paying your dues. Some CWC members in our thirties didn't have to do what you and many others are doing. This is a generational issue. And this is compounded by debt, unaffordable housing, rising food, transportation costs and so on. The clear message seems to be that working in culture is for the independently wealthy only. What you call the lure and what we call the carrot are the same thing. But we need to begin by asking what we really want to be doing and learning. If the paid job that comes along involves you in turn being forced to recruit and exploit an army of interns, if it involves endless fundraising or courting wealthy benefactors for an institution, it's not exactly the carrot you were promised. So even if you follow this path, it often leads to disappointment. Through collectively analyzing, supporting and addressing these issues, we can simultaneously begin to build a vision of our own carrot—our own future and collective imagination of what our cultural sector, and by extension, our society—could look like. Then at least we have something to fight for. [...]

Do you think unpaid internships privilege a work force able to afford to spend months working for free?

Undoubtedly. It is part and parcel of the contemporary entrenchment of social immobility, inequality and class division.

Do you think a proliferation of unpaid interns is affecting the stability and number of paid positions in the arts?

Yes. We really try to emphasize this in our work. Not only does this situation affect interns, but it also works its way through the entire workplace. Jobs and positions are constantly being turned into so-called internships. Those with paid jobs in institutions undergoing cuts in funding often find their workloads balloon. Instead of addressing this core issue, they are often told to just "get an intern" to fill in the gaps. As interns are supposed to be in addition to normal staffing and are supposed to receive training and mentoring which there is no time to give, this is an openly disingenuous and likely illegal move to outsource the cost of cuts and labour to individual interns. The solution, however, isn't to pit one group against the other, but to look at how the intern and the worker have more in common than they think—and look at how the situation can be fought collectively.

A lot of small institutions face a discrepancy between the demand for programming and the funding available to put on that programming that encourages a reliance on unpaid work. In some ways

these institutions may have very little other options except to support and continue this kind of precarity because of their own precarious situations. What other options are available for these institutions other than to rely on unpaid labour?

In our work within another broader collective, the Precarious Workers Brigade, we termed the situation you describe here as institutional precarity, and looked at how this played out in some London-based institutions. We think it's important to question the rhetoric of having no other choice. Gallery and Museum Directors can decide not to compete on the level of frenzied over-programming and spectacle-production and decide instead to work sustainably and together on some of these issues. What has been remarkable in the UK in the last six months is how leaders in the universities and the arts, compared to leaders in the health sector for example, have been so weak in opposing the recent round of massive government cutbacks. One official arts campaign slogan reads "Cut us, don't kill us"—hardly a fighting stance.

[...]

The Carrotworkers' Collective are a London-based group of current or former interns, cultural workers and educators primarily from the creative and cultural sectors who regularly meet to think together around the conditions of free labour in contemporary societies. They undertake participatory action research around voluntary work, internships, job placements and compulsory free work in order to understand the impact they have on material conditions of existence, life expectations, subjectivity and the implications of this for education, life long training, exploitation, and class interest. Contact them at carrotworkers AT gmail.com if you would like to get involved.

Amber Landgraff is the director of XPACE Cultural Centre, where she focuses on advocacy for student and emerging artists. She completed her Masters of Fine Arts in Criticism and Curatorial Practices at the Ontario College of Art and Design, and has interned at FUSE Magazine, Toronto Free Gallery, and the Art Gallery of Ontario.