



**KEY FACTS**

**FUNDING CONTEXTS**

**ARTISTS' LIVELIHOODS**

**EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS**

**VALUE OF WORK**

## **Changing face of artists' employment**

When 2008's economic recession hit, it impacted on everything. But how in particular did it affect the livelihoods of artists in terms of access to employment and career opportunities, and what is the longer-term impact?

This Research paper provides a short analysis and by raising concerns about how artists' practice is likely to fare in this period of arts austerity, hopes to be of value to all those involved in arts policy and programming.

Much more than a disseminator of opportunities and professional development to visual arts practitioners, a-n The Artists Information Company has come to be known across the sector for its research and commentary on matters to do with artists and their working environment. The richness of the data and evidence systematically collected over the years plays a key role in mapping the changing face of, and support for, visual arts practice.

A key area for our on-going research is employment for artists. Through regular review and analysis, we are able to highlight the changing landscape and impact of government and arts policies. We provide a useful commentary on the issues and matters arising, and seek to place our findings in front of policy makers, those who lead art education and to the many others who seek to foster a thriving environment for contemporary visual arts and creative practices.

As we face harsh cuts across the arts, public and education sectors, a-n's analysis of openly offered jobs and paid opportunities for artists in 2010 and comparison with preceding periods provides timely background.

## Key facts

- The impact of the recession on artists' jobs and opportunities on offer was greatest in 2008, when the total value of openly-offered work to artists dropped by 60% on the previous year.
- In 2009, there was some recovery, with the overall value down only 15% on 2007 (pre-recession) figures.
- However in 2010, the value of work and opportunities on offer to visual artists was 33% down on 2009 figures and only 12% better than the 2008 low point.
- Jobs in Higher and Further Education including lecturing, research and technical salaried posts amounted to 34% of all paid work on offer in 2010 (23% in 2009). With cuts in HE and particularly in art and design forecast, this is a worrying trend that is likely to severely affect the livelihoods of the artists' community.
- The key change in 2010 was in commissions that provided only 18% of the value of all work, with an average budget of £21,440, this in comparison with 29% and £62,823 respectively in 2009. The total value of commissions in 2010 was only 16% of that in 2007 (pre-recession year).
- The value of paid opportunities and jobs offered through arts organisations including galleries and studios was 13% less than 2009.
- 10% of the value of all work in 2010 came through local authorities, that are now facing substantial cuts in the very arts and community budgets that provide this important contributions to artists' portfolio working.
- In 2010, 56% of all work openly offered to visual and applied artists came from the public sector arts and higher or further education, all areas set to shrink considerably from 2011.

## **Funding contexts**

In response to the Government's agenda, Arts Council England's (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) funding for 2012-15 has prioritised resources to "front-line organisations". This has resulted in harsh cuts or complete withdrawal of funding to specialist agencies for public art, artist-run galleries and many other organisations that provide artists with project and professional development support and production facilities.

Whilst ACE says the increase in funding and the introduction of new organisations to a national portfolio will entail detailed discussions with each of the key galleries and organisations to explore how they can support emerging artists and professional development, it is as yet unknown the extent to which this will compensate for the range of paid for or unpaid opportunity currently delivered through the artist-led galleries and production organisations due to be cut.

Local authorities anticipate cuts of 7.1% each year for the next four years, with the arts often earmarked as dispensable or to become outsourced functions in future. Cuts arising from rationalisation in Wales following last year's strategic view similarly to England made cuts public art commissioning agency Safle and other 'service' providers. In Northern Ireland arts budgets are on standstill.

In its first Corporate Plan, the new Creative Scotland states that: "Artists and creative practitioners will be at the heart of our thinking" citing as an example a major residency-based initiative – Creative Futures – within steps set out to achieve this. However, some long-standing artists' resources such as Edinburgh's Print and Sculpture Studios will receive cuts as Creative Scotland dispenses with the Flexibly funded organisations portfolio to create funds for their own commissioning.

Whilst it is not unreasonable in the public sector at a time of austerity to require arts organisations and arts departments to 'tighten their belts' and streamline in areas such as overheads and staffing, this advice is less pertinent to artists whose incomes are lower in comparison with other professionals. As *Creative Graduates – Creative Futures* reports: "One third of respondents earn £15,000 or under a year, less than the average starting salary for a new graduate across disciplines." Artists often already subsidise or co-fund their own projects and maintain overheads at basic level in the first place.

## **Artists' livelihoods**

The arts environment positively encourages portfolio working, with artists relying on a combination of projects and income sources to maintain their practice. Surveys of artists undertaken for AIR Artists Interaction and Representation reveal higher levels of self-employment amongst artists (72%) than in the creative industries as a whole (41%).

With Higher Education a major employer of artists – providing 34% of all paid work on offer in 2010 – forecast of cuts in art and design departments and increases in fees to new students add to the concern about the strategies will artists need to employ to negotiate this harsh economic environment without compromising quality and aspiration in their work.

The 2011 AIR survey into the impact of cuts in HE published in March 2011 demonstrates that “51% of AIR members had worked in some capacity in HE in the past five years. 64% had contributed as a freelance or occasional lecturer. 39% had been employed on a part-time basis and 9% full-time.”

“Over half (56%) got up to 25% of their income from work in HE, whilst 16% got between 25-50% from this area. A further 29% earned 50% or more of their income from HE work, that included lecturing and technical positions. Significantly, half believed that their HE income was likely to reduce in the future.”

New graduates in particular are likely to suffer most from the scarcity of arts work. According to *Creative Graduates – Creative Futures*: “48% of graduates in work were engaged in multiple activities or portfolio working typically combining paid employment with self-employment... 30% combined two activities, 13% had three, and 5% of graduates combined four different types of work. This pattern does not change significantly over time, even when graduates are four, five or six years into their careers.”

## **Employment prospects diminish**

The loss of commission opportunities within artists' portfolios is of grave concern as it is this area that strategically supports experimentation in the form of new materials, techniques and relationships and has budgets to support this. Commissions are often part of regeneration and new architecture and buildings drawing on public and commercial financing.

In 2007, Wales based public art agency Safle with commission budgets £1.24m for artists' commissions and residencies was awarded a-n's 'Top employer' status. In 2010 however, the total budget for commissions dropped to £2.7m – as opposed to £16.8m in 2007 and £8.8m in 2009 – and Safle itself was wound down, one of the casualties of Arts Council of Wales' disinvestment.

From 2012, ACE's NPO will no longer include public art agencies such as Artpoint, Commissions East and Beam from which artists might benefit from openly-advertised commission or residency opportunities.

In 2010 in general, arts organisations and galleries seemed rarely to offer commission fees to artists for exhibitions, new installations or even to pay expenses. A suggestion by this writer that galleries might set up voluntary collection boxes to encourage gallery-goers to contribute to fees to artists elicited the riposte (from an ex ACE officer now arts consultant) that "galleries already used such collections to contribute to overheads" – revealing perhaps that artists fees aren't considered to be an essential running cost.

2010's arts campaigns to 'save the arts' in the run-up to the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review were largely aimed at preserving funds for buildings that provide direct audience participation and for the arts salaries to run them rather than, or as well as, investing in the practitioners whose creativity enables such programmes. It was perhaps taken for granted that the route for artists' livelihoods is through funding to arts institutions.

However a-n's data seems to prove otherwise – with arts organisations contributing only 13% of all income in 2010. The DACS (Design and Artists Copyright Society) Payback that distributed £3m back to visual artists for use of their work in publications and terrestrial television in that year once again makes a vital contribution to an otherwise small amount of 'no strings' funding in the awards and fellowships category. The contribution of small charitable trusts to funds on offer to artists in 2010 was just 3%.

## OPPORTUNITIES COMPARED 1

Volume and value of opportunities offered to artists, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010:

Type	No 2007	Value 2007 (£)	No 2008	Value 2008 (£)	No 2009	Value 2009 (£)	No 2010	Value 2010 (£)
<b>Awards / fellowships</b>	53	2,309,050	59	3,430,460	87	3,944,650	64	3,889,794
<b>Academic</b>			125	3,653,024	214	4,434,053	193	4,386,461
<b>Art vacancies</b>	230	3,502,097	147	1,859,818	173	2,355,696	201	2,354,192
<b>Commissions</b>	153	16,822,612	90	3,089,335	141	8,858,106	127	2,722,843
<b>Exhibitions</b>	403	2,150	346	39,238	524	530,445	417	476,500
<b>Residencies</b>	107	520,109	73	256,694	96	279,987	81	461,250
<b>Competitions / prizes</b>	82	584,400	68	458,762	140	1,808,595	123	628,801
<b>other</b>	484	3,090,784	265	1,164,407	125	312,157	271	207,572
<b>Total</b>	1512	26,831,202	1173	13,521,278	1500	22,523,689	1477	15,127,413

## OPPORTUNITIES COMPARED 2

Expressed as % of overall volume of opportunities offered to artists in, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010:

Type	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Residencies</b>	7%	6%	6%	5%
<b>Commissions</b>	10%	8%	9%	9%
<b>Exhibitions</b>	27%	29%	35%	28%
<b>Awards / fellowships</b>	4%	5%	6%	4%
<b>Competitions / prizes</b>	5%	6%	9%	8%

## MAJOR EMPLOYER CATEGORIES

Comparing 2007 and 2010

Type	2009	2010
<b>HE/FE sector</b>	23%	33%
<b>Arts organisations</b>	11%	13%
<b>Local authorities</b>	6%	10%
<b>Trusts</b>	2%	3%
<b>Healthcare</b>	2%	0%

## TOP EMPLOYERS AND VALUE OF WORK

2007

Organisation	type	Location	Annual £ on offer to applicants
Working parts (Landmark Wales projects)	arts org	Wales	£8.5m
Essex County Council	LA	Essex	£2.14m
Safle	arts org	Cardiff	£1.2m
Omagh District Council	LA	Omagh	£340,000
Goldsmiths University	HE	London	£166,411
University of Wales	HE	Wales	£152,000
Central St Martins, University of the Arts London	HE	London	£151,245
Glasgow School of Art	HE	Glasgow	£146,172
University of Wolverhampton	HE	Wolverhampton	£141,443
University of Huddersfield	HE	Huddersfield	£115,709

2010

Organisation	type	Location	Annual £ on offer to applicants
Mall Galleries	arts org	London	£357,000
Caerphilly County Borough Council	LA	Wales	£275,000
NTU	HE	Nottingham	£228,538
London Thames Gateway Development Corporation.	LA	London	£223,000
Slade School of Art	HE	London	£216,000
Staffordshire University	HE	Staffordshire	£198,000
Moyle District Council	LA	Ireland	£195,000
Burnley Borough Council	LA	Lancashire	£142,000
Centro Cultural Montehermoso Kulturnea	arts org	Spain	£118,500
The Making	arts org	Hampshire	£92,000



## References and resources

*Creative Graduates – Creative Futures*, Linda Ball, CHEAD 2008.

AIR survey of artists' employment status, 2009.

[www.a-n.co.uk/air/article/559459/469395](http://www.a-n.co.uk/air/article/559459/469395)

AIR survey of artists and impact of HE cuts. [www.a-n.co.uk/air/document/1169000](http://www.a-n.co.uk/air/document/1169000)

Creative Scotland Corporate Plan. [www.creativescotland.com/corporate-plan](http://www.creativescotland.com/corporate-plan)

Arts Council England NPO settlements and data.

[www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/national-portfolio-funding/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/national-portfolio-funding/)

## Credits

Susan Jones is Programme Director, a-n The Artists Information Company and a researcher and published writer on arts matters.

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