

Paying artists:

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Introduction

In parallel with the publication of research reports commissioned from DHA for the Paying artists research and advocacy campaign that provide analysis of the contexts for and experiences around payment to artists when exhibiting in publicly-funded venues, a plethora of vital discussion and commentary has been bubbling up through other channels and networks, within and beyond the visual arts.

We asked arts researcher and writer Dany Louise to review the range of material being widely shared across social media and peer networks – and make her own additions. The result is a collation of the valuable ‘grey literature’¹ that provides fascinating insights around the broad topic of payment of and working conditions for freelance arts professionals, complementing the more traditional [Literature review](#) that has been produced by DHA.

Following is a selection of some sixty items from the UK and beyond – classified into four sections and annotated for use of access. Thanks are due to all contributors and especially to [Artsadmin](#) and [Third Ear Music](#) whose existing listings on the topic fed into this publication.

Susan Jones

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¹ Grey literature is informally published written material that may be difficult to trace via conventional channels such as published journals because it is not published commercially or is not widely accessible. It may nonetheless be an important source of information for researchers, because it tends to be original and recent. Significantly perhaps, certain internet-based materials because they are widely shared through social media may nowadays be more accessible than traditionally published ones.

Index

- 1. Thoughts from practitioners in the theatre, music and visual arts sectors** p. 4
- 2. Information, resources, movements and activism** p. 9
- 3. Editorial and comment** p.14
- 4. Essays** p.16

1. Thoughts from practitioners in the theatre, music and visual arts sectors

[*You Show me Yours*](#), blog by Bryony Kimmings, November 2013

Honest discussion of real-life earnings and expenses in “the false economy” of touring theatre, the difficulties of negotiating with venues, and earning a living as an artist, despite being established and award winning, and working 14 hour days, six days a week. Particularly good on how venues are asking artists to “devalue” their arts production in order to meet their available funding. “The artist is always the one squeezed. I am sure venues will say that they are squeezed too... so stop with the false economy, be realistic with your funders about what their investment gets them, stop bowing down.” Influential post that had 10,500 views in the week after publishing.

[*I'll Show you Mine: Re-addressing the Balance*](#), blog by Emily Coleman, November 2013

Response to Bryony Kimmings’ blog, expanding on the financial issues that independent producers face. Makes very clear point that operational business practice is very different for venues and producers, but that the system is weighted in favour of venues. Advocates for active conversation between the two, along with collective advocacy by independent producers.

[*Two Ideas Towards Transparency*](#), blog by Andy Field, November 2013

Contributing to the discussions above, Field advocates for greater transparency between venues, festivals, producers and artists. Specifically, (1) that venues, festivals etc should publish as a percentage how much of their annual income goes directly to artists and (2) the creation of an online space where artists can declare how much they have been able to charge for their work, venue by venue, in the UK and internationally.

[*Can you Afford to be an Artist?*](#) blog by Filskit Theatre, November 2013

Written in support of Kimmings’ blog, this also gives first hand experience of the financial realities and difficulties of working in the small-scale touring theatre sector. “Isn’t it time that there was more visibility about how the industry is actually working?”

[*Cash Money*](#), blog by Matt Adams of Blast Theory, November 2013

Also responding to the above blogs, Adams reveals his and Blast Theory’s strategies for “making it work”, by diversifying income streams and clients. At the same time, he acknowledges: “We also realised that touring on the small scale theatre/live-art circuit was a mug’s game financially.” Delivers the rallying cry: “When we collectively refuse poverty conditions we will all make a difference”.

[*On Money, Hagglng and Beaches*](#), blog by Dan Eastmond, November 2013

As director of a venue, Eastmond gives the venue's business perspective on booking touring works. Discusses the constraints of capacity and likelihood of ticket sales, and the financial realities they juggle to remain a viable, if low-paying, business. Takes the position that the most important thing is to safeguard cultural provision into the future.

[*Growing Up. An Offer*](#), by Leo Burtin, November 2013

Generous post stressing the importance of taking practical action collectively and collaboratively: "I'll find a way to help. Big or small. And I'm sure I know other people who can help, so let's work together and please let's not bring the whole emerging vs. established thing up again, we're in this together, let's do this together."

[*I'll Show you Mine*](#), by Anna Beecher, guest blog on A Younger Theatre, November 2013

"I was eighteen and I didn't have a clue how to speak to venues, what kind of funding was available and how to define the value of what we were making." Is having a full and frank conversation about payment and costs "taboo" for too many artists? Also acknowledges the advantages being middle-class and relatively financially privileged -and the lack of equality of opportunity and diversity this can lead to in small scale theatre.

[*A Life in Theatre*](#), blog by Paul Meshejian, November 2013

American theatre practitioner Meshejian asserts that to go into a life in art is to take a vow of poverty. Why are creative people surprised that it is so hard to earn a living? "Where did you get the idea that choosing a life in art was going to lead you to a bourgeois, middle-class existence?"

[*Money and Time and Time and Money*](#), by Maddy Costa, November 2013

Reflecting and commenting on the range of blogs that Kimming's post provoked, Costa rounds up the immediate formal events within the theatre sector that intend to take the discussion of working terms and conditions for makers and producers further. "Imagine how differently we might feel about the National Theatre's disproportionate subsidy allocation if we knew how much was spent on developing work in the NT Studio that feeds out across the industry."

[*I'll Show you Mine*](#) by Amelia Bird, guest blog on A Younger Theatre, November 2013

Helpful discussion of three real-life budget scenarios for a new venue. Only budget number three offers artists and producers a good deal. Scenario number two is the common compromise model, offering Equity minimum for a show employing 2.8 people. But Bird acknowledges that this makes theatre "poorer, less diverse, more hurriedly made and just generally not as good as it could be". The difference in budget between scenarios one and three is £39,000. Part two includes a provocative and challenging critique of artist professional development schemes led by theatre venues. A must read.

[*Massive and Mighty!!*](#) blog by Bryony Kimmings, November 2013

Inspiring follow up to her original post that sparked so much discussion and response. She proposes areas that need addressing, such as (1) improved ways of assessing quality, possibly through greater peer review (2) a system whereby ACE is not the major funder of both artist and venue, which encourages over-reliance on a single source of finance (3) a UK wide fee sheet (4) requirement for a business qualification for venue directors (5) a new stock phrase the sector should use when asked to work for free without in-kind benefits.

[*A List of Things I have Worked Out Recently*](#), blog by Marcus Romer, November 2013

A list of core principles hugely experienced theatre producer and playwright Romer believes in, on the whole suggesting that art must be relevant and useful to society. Deceptively simple and occasionally profound.

[*After Blood and Chocolate, What's Next?*](#) blog by Alan Lane, January 2014

Slung Low Theatre company director Alan Lane explores a new identity as a community theatre company, and what this means to him, after the life changing experience of working with 180 volunteers on the show "Blood and Chocolate". Moving testimony that shows how small scale theatre can evolve at a natural pace and with its own internal logic, led by strong artistic instincts and separately from arts policy. "Ticket prices are too high and separating us from important parts of the cities we work in."

[*Who feeds the Artist? By Xenia Pestova*](#), in I Care if You Listen, August 2013

Discussing the advantages and disadvantages of unpaid opportunities for young concert musicians. Is the experience, the platform, and the possibility of exposure to influential specialists worth low pay or the lack of even minimum wage pay?

[Why Mention Money when we're Looking at Art?](#) by Elly Clarke, in Allotment, mac Birmingham, 2013

The dilemmas of making money out of visual arts practice, as an artist and gallery owner. "Certainly in art school, we weren't taught any skills that would enable us to get any kind of job, let alone how to try to live from what we studied so hard to do."

[Getting Paid](#), by Emily Speed, a-n project blog, June 2013

Notes the ubiquity of non-refundable entrance fees for visual artists to apply for competitive exhibition opportunities at which the probability of success may well be quite low. "The many fund the very few" who may be chosen. Also notes that there is unlikely to be expenses available for the costs of transporting work to the location should the application be successful. For this artist, it adds up to a "no entrance fee" rule.

[Fair Art](#), by Market Project, June 2013

Open letter explaining why asking artists to work for free is unacceptable. Also worth exploring the archives of this two year project exploring the commercial interactions between artists and the world, and vagaries thereof.

[Artist Opportunities](#), blog by Alistair Gentry, May 2013

Two angry satires of common types of advertisement for unpaid work in journalism and the visual arts. They draw attention to the processes whereby the applicant is expected to make a lengthy and professional application, in a mode that suits the "employer", at considerable effort to themselves and for an opportunity that is unpaid, but may provide income for the advertiser, who may well also be in receipt of public funds. These satires make it clear how little – if any- benefit there is to the artist or writer who responds to these types of "opportunities".

[Whitey responds to a request to use his music for free](#), NJ White, November 2013

Musician NJ White responds to a request from a commercial company to use his music for free. Angry articulate letter that deconstructs the attitudes that lie behind many such requests – the low status of the musician. Tweeted 2000 times, with considerable response from other musicians.

[Seven Models of the Artist](#), by Harry Giles, February 2013

Gives seven popular perceptions of the artist, including that of "entrepreneur", a notion that is being encouraged by current UK cultural policy.

[The Pay's the Thing](#), by Louis Barabbas, on Cultural Value Initiative, November 2012

"Just because the motives behind my craft are not money-based doesn't mean I'll play a gig for nothing." Barabbas explains his motivations for making music, which are primarily about quality of life rather than cash, but he ensures he sticks to one guideline: "Don't be exploited".

[Unsound](#), by Count, on Indigogo

Looking for cash to edit a documentary film about the collapse of the music industry, this article explains the impact of the internet and free access, and how illegal sharing has degraded the value of creative products, weakened the enforcement of copyright law and made it harder for producers of creative content to earn a living. "As it turns out, free comes at an enormous cost."

[Restart](#), by Simon Fell, on a-n Artists talking, January 2014

Personal experience of physically and psychologically juggling making work as an artist with a necessary PAYE job to pay the bills and support a family.

2. Information, resources, movements and activism

[*a-n Infographic on Artist Earnings*](#)

A pictorial summary of statistics relating to artist's exhibiting practice and earnings, from information gathered from artists by a-n and AIR in 2012/2013.

[*Our Artistic Policy*](#), Donald Jubb, Battersea Art Centre

Pdf document on Battersea Art Centre's website that sets out in some detail how BAC apportions money to programming and producing work. Is it possible that where BAC leads, other institutions will follow?

[*What to say when you're asked to work for free*](#), Rhonda Abrams, The Star, Toronto, Canada

If you own a small business or are self-employed, sooner or later you will be asked to work for free. The more successful you become, the more requests you'll get. The writer suggests that with the right response, you can turn these freeloaders into something positive.

[*Advocacy Toolkit*](#), Arts Council England, November 2013

Range of information and resources on Arts Council England website, designed to help the individual arts organisation clearly demonstrate the value of public investment in arts and culture to local MPs, stakeholders, audiences and others. Includes downloadable document on the economic value of culture to the national economy, and a powerpoint presentation.

[*Guidance on Internships in the Arts*](#), Arts Council England, November 2011

Downloadable pdf giving guidance on good practice in offering internships in the arts. Recognising the mutual benefits of a well-planned internship for individuals interested in a career in the arts and for arts organisations themselves, this document clarifies the responsibilities and legal obligations of arts organisations and other employers when offering this kind of position.

[*Quality on a Budget*](#), by Rod McIntosh, a-n Knowledge Bank, May 2005

Part of the a-n archive of resources for artists, this is a practical guide for artists to enable them to work out approaches to finding workable compromises whilst maintaining quality for times when money is tight.

[*Building a Creative Nation*](#), Creative Choices, November 2013

Two minute information video about creative apprentices and training for young people.

[*Joining the Dots*](#)

Joining the Dots is a new support programme for entrepreneurial artists, promoters and others working in independent music in England. Its intention is to support game-changing ideas, share knowledge and connect people. Provides online resources, and will give six grants of £10,000 for six projects.

[*Creative Employment Programme*](#), Creative & Cultural Skills

The Creative Employment Programme is a £15m fund to support the creation of traineeships, formal apprenticeship and paid internship opportunities in England for young unemployed people aged 16-24 wanting to pursue a career in the arts and cultural sector. The website gives details of how to apply for part wage grants to employers who create new apprenticeship and internship job opportunities.

[*In Battalions*](#), by Finn Kennedy in collaboration with Helen Campbell Pickford, February 2013

Online and downloadable report providing a snapshot of new play development in England at the start of 2013. Reveals the impact of arts funding cuts on new theatre writing, showing that it is affecting every area of support and production. Also provides summary arguments of how the commercial theatre sector is dependent on the subsidised sector for nurturing new talents.

[*Message from 'What Next?' Chair*](#), David Lan, April 2013

Introductory message at the start of the What Next? conference held by the arts sector in 2013. "What Next? has a very simple idea: that, by acting together, arts organisations can enhance the national conversation about the value of art and culture, and can make connections between all the different things we do which may seem separate but have the same intent: to enable people to achieve their potential."

[*Work not Play Campaign*](#), Musicians Union

Campaign to support fair pay for all professional musicians. Resource responding to nine frequently asked questions on the subject.

[*Emerging Workers: A Fairer Future for those Entering the Creative Industries*](#), Arts Group

Highlights the difficulty of entering the creative sector for arts graduates and a lack of workplace parity with other sectors. This publication advocates for fairer conditions regarding internships, implementation of the minimum and living wage and other legislation, access and funding. Makes important points by those personally experiencing the difficulties of access to the sector.

[*Fair Access Campaign*](#), The Creative Society (formerly New Deal of the Mind)

Fair Access is a campaign to improve recruitment practices in the creative industries, tackling the issue of unpaid internships which act as a huge barrier to many young people wanting to pursue creative careers. Encourages creative employers to sign their Fair Access Principle, as a public pledge to pay all interns in their organisation, and to recruit transparently, ending the prevailing 'who you know' not 'what you know' culture that exists within the creative industries.

[*Balancing Art with Rent*](#), Creative Choices, October 2011

Guidance on how early career actors can protect themselves from "no pay" work. Gives seven useful tips on what information to ask for and what union support is available.

[*When should you Work for Free?*](#) Creative Choices, December 2013

Article discussing the differences between working for no pay, as a freelancer, but not for nothing. Identifies circumstances when it might prove to be beneficial to work pro-bono if there are other valuable returns.

[*Free Labour Costs too Much*](#), Creative Choices, April 2011

Argues it is no longer acceptable for organisations and funding bodies that claim to value 'equality of opportunity' and 'diversity' to not back – in principle and in practice – paid internships as a right and as an expectation, since the lack of payment disadvantages those with least support.

[*Art Party Provocation: A Feast for Sore Eyes*](#), by Susan Jones, November 2013

In her provocation for the Art Party Conference in Scarborough, a-n Director Susan Jones argues that while it's widely stated that artists are the main menu in the gallery and exhibition process, new approaches are needed to provide the financial support they need. "Just imagine, if every salaried visual arts professional 'donated' two hours of their weekly salary to – say – a grant fund for artists in their communities, to help artists sustain their practice."

[Wage for Work takes dOCUMENTA \(13\) curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev to task](#)

Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.) is a New York-based activist group that focuses on regulating the payment of artist fees by nonprofit art institutions, and establishing a sustainable model for best practices between cultural producers and the institutions that contract their labor. This short film comments on the non-payment of artists exhibiting in Documenta 13.

[Wage for Work Reading List](#), W.A.G.E

Comprehensive reading list of books, some academic, critiquing neo-liberalism, the history of labour relations, capitalism and addressing artists' activism, amongst other related topics. Collectively demonstrates that the (creative) economy is a constructed entity built on free market ideology.

[Working Together](#), by Rachel Rayns

Clearly sets out the artist's very sensible contractual work terms and conditions. Generously gives permission for others to use them.

[How to Earn a Living as an Artist](#), by Action Hero

17 tips on how to earn a living as an artist, without compromising your principles or your art. "Start with the art, then design a way to make it pay".

[For the Love of it, Keynote Presentations](#), Artquest, May 2013

Soundcloud links to keynote presentations from this one-day conference. Playable and downloadable talks by Professor Lynda Morris Chair of Curation and Art History, Norwich University College of the Arts; artist Sonia Boyce; and artist, activist and administrator, Ellie Harrison.

[Guidelines for Organising Art Commission Competitions](#), Carfac Ontario

Downloadable guide for institutions, agencies and the private sector, relating particularly to new art commissions for buildings or in the public realm. Although written for a Canadian audience in 1994, as a guide to good practice this is still relevant and useful to an international audience.

[An Open Letter to Our Public Galleries](#), CARFAC Maritimes, 2010

Downloadable open letter to Canada's public galleries, reiterating the importance of paying exhibition fees to artists. Demonstrates that this is not just a UK, but an international issue.

[Top 12 Tips for Setting Prices](#), Carfac Ontario

Helpful guide for artists, giving three different approaches towards setting prices for work and services.

[The Code of Practice for Australian Commercial Galleries and the Artists They Represent](#), NAVA, 2003

Comprehensive good practice guide for commercial galleries and the artists they represent, setting out obligations and responsibilities. Written for the Australian National Association for the Visual Arts, this paper is relevant for an international audience. NAVA have also produced a code of practice for the craft and design sector, available for a fee.

[Visual Arts Salaries](#), Web Art Academy, 2010

Misleading US-based article that reads as satire, suggesting that "skills, knowledge and ability are what matters the most" in the visual arts, but with the right ones, a visual artist could earn \$45,000 - \$200,000. It doesn't define the term visual artist but appears to be referring to digital and web design rather than fine art.

[Should I Work for Free?](#), By Jessica Hische, 2011

Direct, informative and amusing flow chart by American graphic designer Jessica Hische. She articulates the myriad contexts in which artists can be asked to work for free, presents the logic for accepting or declining, and suggests appropriate, smart and appropriately rude responses for all eventualities. Inspiring and funny.

3. Editorial and comment

[*The Arts: Beauty and the Bean Counters*](#), The Guardian, 17 November 2012

"Today we live in Mr Cameron's Britain, where the national mentality is more gripped by bean-counting than ever". Editorial from The Guardian in the wake of two local authorities cutting 100% of their arts funding. Worrying that the mixed economy for the arts is at risk, it contrasts the reality of Britain today with that of David Cameron's early rhetoric that measuring wellbeing should be as important as measuring GDP.

[*Art as a Mirror of Society?*](#) The Art Newspaper, 16 October 2013

Referencing the 2013 Frieze Art Fair, this article explores the argument that art fairs find political works difficult and uncommercial, leading to a gap in representation, lack of challenge overall, and ultimately, that art fairs are irrelevant. "Collectors don't have the same relationship with the issues as artists."

[*Equity calls for Crackdown on 'exploitation' of Performers*](#), The Stage, October 2013

Report on Equity's submission to the 2014 Low Pay Commission, in which it has demonstrated that low-paid jobs and performer "exploitation" in the entertainment industry are on the increase. The union has reiterated calls for tougher enforcement measures to be implemented by the government on companies that avoid paying the national minimum wage.

[*What are Artists Really Worth?*](#) by Susan Jones, The Guardian, June 2013

Analysing the worsening pay, status and working conditions for artists "who find themselves at the end of a long [cultural] food chain", Susan Jones reiterates the eight points of an Artists Manifesto for Austerity Britain drawn up by artists and arts workers in a 2011 Symposium.

[*Are there Too Many Artists?*](#) by Susan Jones, guest blog on The Market Project, January 2012

Expanded version of talk given at the event "Too Many Artists" in November 2011. Given there are more art courses per capita in the UK than anywhere else, does this mean there is an over-supply of artists? Analysing what this might mean from both economic and vocational perspectives, and illustrated by statistics on artists' earning and changing employment status, gathered over a range of years by a-n, AIR and other sources, Jones questions the structure and hierarchies of the publicly funded visual arts sector.

[Unpaid Internships](#), by Matt Lacey, December 2013

Satirical film about how unpaid internships favour the children of the wealthy and socially connected, giving them unfair advantages over those with less wealth and no connections. Makes clear point that unpaid internships are not meritocratic but based on social and monetary capital.

[York Strives to Pay Living Wage](#), The Observer, February 2013

Article referencing York City Council as an example, discussing whether paying the living wage is unaffordable, or if it is a moral obligation with valuable social returns on investment. "Is the living wage a compass by which progressive local authorities might steer a fairer way through austerity?"

[Why We Should Lie](#), by Andrew Brighton, Third Ear Symposium, November 2013

Talk deconstructing the instrumentality discourse and obligations, arguing that they are largely incompatible with visual artists' practice. Advocates metaphorically that in writing reports and applications to funders and other bureaucratic stakeholders, those culturally steeped in art should "lie ethically...We should pretend not to know that the discourse of public accountability is valueless, incompetent and antipathetic."

[Frieze Art Fair](#), by Dany Louise, on a-n Interface, October 2009

Referencing Frieze Art Fair, this essay argues that the market dominates discourse around the visual arts, and reflects the dwindling power of the public sector and the cult of entrepreneurialism. Discusses differences in how the market rewards certain artists more than others, regardless of intrinsic or critical value of the work. Longer version of article that first appeared on the New Statesman website.

4. Essays

[*Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy*](#), Hito Steyerl, 2010

Entertainingly written if dense polemic arguing that contemporary art is actively complicit in extant neo-liberal economic development policies and trends on an international basis. "Contemporary art is no unworldly discipline nestled away in some remote ivory tower. On the contrary, it is squarely placed in the neoliberal thick of things."

[*Seeing Value in the Arts*](#), by Andy Horwitz on Culturebots, October 2013

Essay taking a critical look at innovation culture, its assumptions, influences and impact. Questions how appropriate aspects of the business innovation agenda are to the arts, noting for example, that "the frameworks of industrial production are inappropriate to cultural production". Argues that seeing the arts as a product "fundamentally misconstrues the function, social processes and value proposition of the arts".

[*Five Things I Learned while Teaching a Class on Arts and Labour*](#), by Alexis Clements, on Hyperallergic, November 2013

Presents in-depth and up-to-date discussion based on American evidence of more complex working situations of working in the arts, across artforms, and the grey areas this creates in the situation of pay and working terms and condition.

[*How are Artists Getting Paid?*](#) by Alexis Clements, on Hyperallergic, July 2013

"It has become ever more obvious that virtually none of the money that flows into major arts institutions, companies that distribute creative content, and art markets actually reaches the artists who generate the work." Given this situation, how do artists go about changing things? Clements discusses five modes of activism that have changed labour relations in the past.

[*Instrumentality or artistic autonomy? The Pursuit of Cultural Value*](#), by Susan Jones, guest blog on the Cultural Value Initiative, October 2012

a-n director Susan Jones explores the tension between cultural value and the pressure to 'deliver impact' as seen from the artists' perspective, which has so far been largely missing from discussions around cultural policy. The artist's instrumental role "is to create art or use art processes that are predominantly measured by what they "give to others" which constrains art practices.

[Measuring the experience: the scope and value of artist-led organisations](#), by Susan Jones, 1994-1996

Author's independent report into artist-led organisations re-published as a series of posts on her SusanJonesArts blog, referencing seventeen case studies. *Measuring the experience: the scope and value of artist-led organisations*, explored and articulated the phenomena of the artist-led and advocated for its value as a vital research-based ingredient within the visual arts ecology.

[Reclaiming a Creative Scotland?](#) by Johnny Gailey, April 2013

Presentation by the artist on what he would like the future of Creative Scotland to be, in a Creative Scotland organised Open Session. Written from the perspective of a freelancing creative professional, he discusses structural inequality in pay, value for public money, the size of funds allocated to individual artists from overall budgets, "Top down, command and control doesn't work anymore." Contains useful thinking and ideas.