

Research

paper:

Artists' work in

2013

**a-n The Artists
Information Company**

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Key facts

Our analysis shows that the value of openly offered work to visual artists during 2013 has not recovered since the recession, budgets for commissions and residencies are in decline, an increasing number of opportunities provide artists with no cash income, exhibitions offer low or no payment and the trend to levy submission charges to applicants is growing.

Related research indicates that artists' incomes and livelihoods are not a talking point within publicly-funded galleries.

- **The value of openly offered work for artists in decline.** In 2013 the overall value of work on offer to artists was £7.5m less (29%) than the pre-recession year of 2007, and £2m less than was offered in 2012.
- **Over a quarter (26%) of advertised opens, competitions, exhibitions and prizes are charging artists to submit,** in comparison with 32% in 2012.
- **Less than half of opportunities (40%) in 2013 offered to pay anything to artists,** in comparison with 57% stating this in the recession year of 2008.
- **Commission budgets have declined considerably.** In 2013, commissions provided 11% of the value of all work, with an average budget of £19,444. In comparison in 2007 (pre-recession), the figure was 62% and commission budgets averaged £100K.
- **Exhibitions return little income to artists.** Exhibitions accounted for 20% of all the jobs and opportunities advertised in 2013, but were only 0.35% of the value of all opportunities. Exhibitions paid an average of £232 per opportunity.

- **Residencies paid an average fee of £2,946**, this in contrast with £7,354 paid in 2011 and £6,342 in the 2007 pre-recession year.
- **At around 10%, the value of all work from local authorities had been steady since 2010 but fell in 2013 to 3%.**

Context

This research paper is the latest in an ongoing series that looks specifically at the nature and value of openly-advertised work and opportunities for visual and applied artists. Using data drawn from www.a-n.co.uk Jobs and Opportunities service, it provides the visual arts sector with unique insights into variations in the patterns of employment for artists, referenced within arts, cultural and economic contexts.

We've used this data collection method since 1989 to track the changing face of artists' employment and in particular, to identify the trends and issues within the specific opportunity types of awards and fellowships, academic posts, art vacancies, commissions, exhibitions, residencies, competitions and prizes.

When set within contextual evidence and analysis from other related sources, our research provides valuable insights into employment and career development opportunity for visual and applied artists, that is fed back both to artists themselves as they pursue their careers as well as made available to arts and cultural policy and consultations and to the art and design courses that seek to preparing the next generation of artists.

Artists' livelihoods and portfolio working

The ecology of the arts positively encourages portfolio working, with artists increasingly relying on income from multiple sources to maintain their practice. [Creative Choices](#) – the information and careers resource for Creative and Cultural Skills – confirms that: "Many of those working in the creative and cultural industries adopt portfolio work styles for flexibility,

creative freedom or to enable them to develop and use a range of different skills. Individuals, particularly in the visual arts, where money is scarce, may develop portfolio careers in order to receive an income from different sources to reduce financial risk.”

The [Paying artists research Phase 1](#) (2013) findings revealed that for 71% of artists, turnover from their practice is less than £10,000 a year. 17% were earning up to £20,000 and just 7% up to £30,000. The 2013 [Scottish Artists Union survey](#) (2013) similarly reveals 71% earning up to £10,000, 23% between £10,000 and £25,000 and 1% earning over £50,000.

Income levels might seem better in the applied arts with the Crafts Council’s major study [Craft in an Age of Change](#) (2012) stating “Average craft-related income per year of £19,827, derived as £16,572 from sales of contemporary craft objects and £3,255 from other craft-related activities.” The largest source of craft-related income was from teaching. Whilst the Paying Artists survey revealed that just over 71% of artists generated less than three-quarters of their income from their arts practice, only 30% of respondents to the Craft in an Age of Change survey reported having a non-craft related income of some kind.

Looking more broadly at the employment of arts practitioners, the [Artworks Survey of Artists](#), across art form, of those working in participatory arts settings shows that almost half of respondents earn more than 50% of their income from their artistic practice across all activities; 41% earn half or less of their income from their artistic practice. Only a quarter of respondents make more than £20,000 a year from their artistic practice, and almost half make less than £10,000.

Overall however, it seems that visual artists’ incomes are on the decline when compared with prior periods. A study from [Cambridge and Bournemouth universities in 2009](#) found that fine artists earned an average of £19,987 from their artistic activities, while illustrators made £21,280. [A survey for Artquest](#) by Claire Antrobus Consulting in the same

year indicated that 68% of artists were earning £16,000 a year from their practice.

Artists' fees eroded

The [a-n sample artists day rates](#), that are referenced to clients and funding applicants by Arts Council England and cover artists' freelance work such as residencies, commissions, consultancy and community projects, would provide a day rate (before overheads) of £154 for artists with three years' experience and £180 for artists with five years' experience. Assuming reasonable overheads of £5,000 a year, these day rates would rise to £192 and £207 respectively.

The Scottish Artists Union (SAU) [Updated Rates of Pay guidance 2012-13](#) recommended rates of pay for freelance and short contract employment including consultancy work, project planning and development and workshop delivery are £150 a day for a new graduate artist, £200 a day for artists with three years' experience and £250 a day for artists with five or more years' experience. The SAU 2013 survey shows however that a third of respondents had received less than £150 a day to undertake a workshop and over half of the union's membership were being paid less than recommended rates.

Scope of opportunities

Commission opportunities that command larger budgets and offer scope for research and development are much welcomed by artists, in part for their contribution to the income mix within a portfolio career. But whilst in 2007 the average commission budget of £100,000 supported this, by 2013 the average budget on offer had dropped to £19,444.

Artists' residencies were less than 2% in value of all opportunities on offer in 2013. And whilst the average income from a residency in 2007 stood at £4,860, by 2013 it amounted to only £2,946. The result is that the degree of off-site preparation and pre-planning required of an artist is often not reflected the project brief, time allocation or the fee level.

The report [Navigating art in participatory settings: issues for artists and employers](#) (2013) points out that: "Commissioners are expecting a lot more from the contact time – including [working with] more people, having a very polished product – all of which require more unpaid prep work. Things like induction, meetings and training are most often unpaid". It also proposes in terms of achieving good practice that: "The budget needs to match the ambition of a project and be costed realistically".

[The Lead Artist at St Oswald's Arts Project](#) offered by Helix Arts was amongst residencies offered in 2013 that seemed to suitably address such matters. The open call for applicants stated: "The successful candidate will be a skilled participatory arts practitioner with experience of working with people with profound physical and learning disabilities and/or life limiting conditions. The artist will be working with children (aged 0 – 18) and young adults (aged 18 – 25) with life limiting conditions, all of who have physical and/or learning disabilities, to engage them in 12 two-hour creative workshops. The Lead Artist fee is £2,070 plus a materials budget of £1,000. Following the deadline for applications, a number of candidates will be invited to deliver two taster workshops and will be paid £345 for their participation in this final stage of the recruitment process."

Over a third (36%) of opportunities in 2013 were openly-offered exhibitions, competitions and prizes, up five percentage points on 2012 data. The trend towards pay-to-enter opportunities creates heated debate amongst many artists. Of the exhibitions, competitions and prizes listed in 2013, 26% made a charge to applicants (against 32% the prior year). Whilst many entry fees remain within the £5-£10 range, an increasing number are £25 or more.

Artists during 2013 also reported an emerging payment trend, with some organisations making a charge to applicants for public art and residency opportunities. Whilst such submission fees could be assimilated by artists into their annual overhead costs and thus passed on through their freelance day rates, as this report has already highlighted, artists are

experiencing resistance from some publicly-funded arts organisations to paying the level of fees that properly reflect both artists' experience level and their actual overheads needs.

Some organisers like [Kate Phillimore](#) – curator at the Whitstable Biennial - feel that the publicly-funded sector could be more transparent about their charges: "If artists are giving you money to apply to your exhibition they need to know what it's going towards. Don't just say 'administration fee': that's what estate agents say when they charge you £200 to do a rental credit check. Fair enough if the fee helps pay for your time organising the exhibition, for technicians or publication materials, but this should be made clear from the beginning".

Employer trends

Since 2009, we have made an analysis of the types of organisation employing artists through salaried posts and paid-for opportunities. Patterns have remained fairly steady over the last five years, with academic work remaining the key provider of at least 20% of all work annually since 2009. However, it is notable that whilst local authority work represents 9-10% of work in the years 2010-12, in 2013 it dropped to just 3%. This is of concern because local authority arts managers are generally keen both to contribute to artists' development through offering arts projects and to uphold good payment practices alongside.

It is perhaps notable that Arts Council England (ACE) in February 2014 strengthened its expectations of fair and proper payment to artists within guidance for arts organisations seeking National Portfolio Organisation status for 2015-18. Whilst the Paying Artists Research Phase 1 Report as mentioned above highlighted poor practices in artists' fees levels and terms for exhibitions, the [Phase 2 report](#) analysing interviews with selected curators and directors of UK publicly-funded galleries worryingly revealed: "In terms of the pay and conditions which artists receive, improving fees for exhibitions was not particularly considered a priority by participating venues; nor were the pay and conditions of artists more

generally considered a particular talking point in the sector at the moment.”

Furthermore, whilst ACE’s published Grants for the Arts advice states that applicants should [provide proper and fair payments to artists they will be working with when considering their budget](#), it is of concern that some organisers of such projects whom a-n has communicated with privately claim neither to know about industry standard frameworks and ACE’s advice to applicants to use up-to-date rates nor be concerned about artists’ livelihoods issues in general.

Matters arising

[ACE’s economic impact report produced by CEBR](#) which was published in May 2013 showed that whilst full-time earnings in the arts had risen by 6.8% in the last five years, part-time earnings – one might expect these to include freelancers and artists - had decreased by 5.3%.

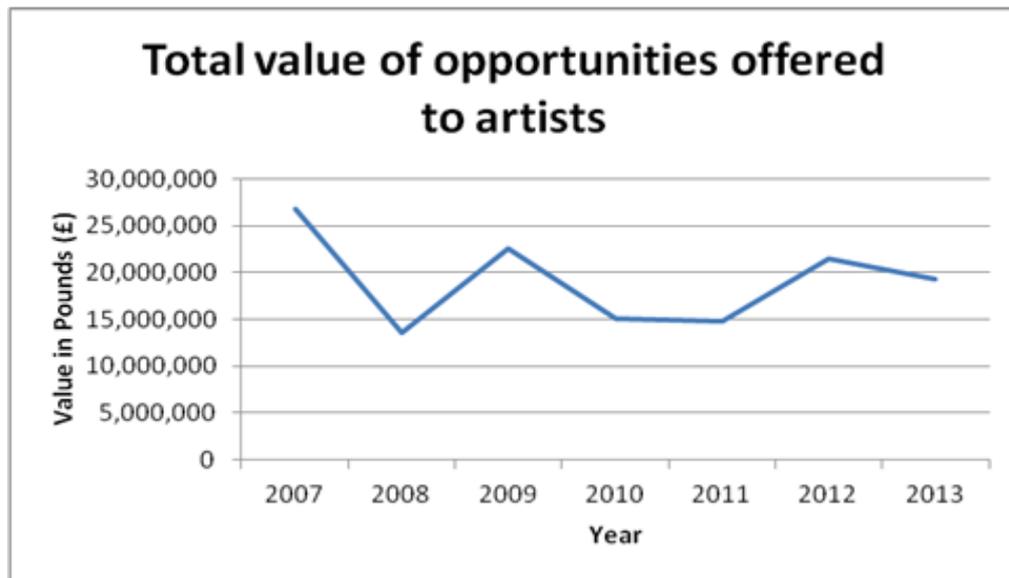
This a-n Research paper which shows smaller budgets for residencies and commissions, less paid work from local authority employers and increased costs for artists seeking work would seem to reference this. Unlike freelance artists, salaried arts managers in arts organisations automatically benefit from statutory paid holidays, sick pay and parental leave, and often also from access to on-the-job training and professional development. They may also within a contract of employment receive length of service increments and cost of living increases. Many may benefit from employer contributions into a pension scheme.

In contrast, a survey commissioned by ACE in 2005/6 as part of the Artists Insights programme indicated that 70% of artists did not have a pension, this in comparison with 44% of the population as a whole who do not have a pension. There is no indication that there has been any improvement in pension and savings opportunity for artists over the years since.

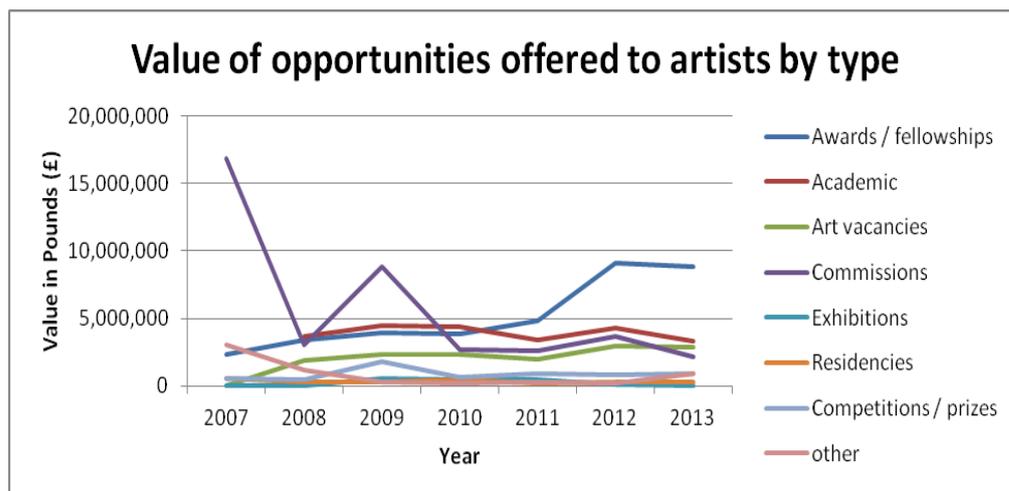
The declining income for artists and associated lack of opportunity to invest in their own R&D and save for old age should therefore be of great concern equally to the publicly-funded visual arts world and to art education, whilst both unequivocally state commitment to achieving equality and diversity within their sectors.

OPPORTUNITIES CHARTS

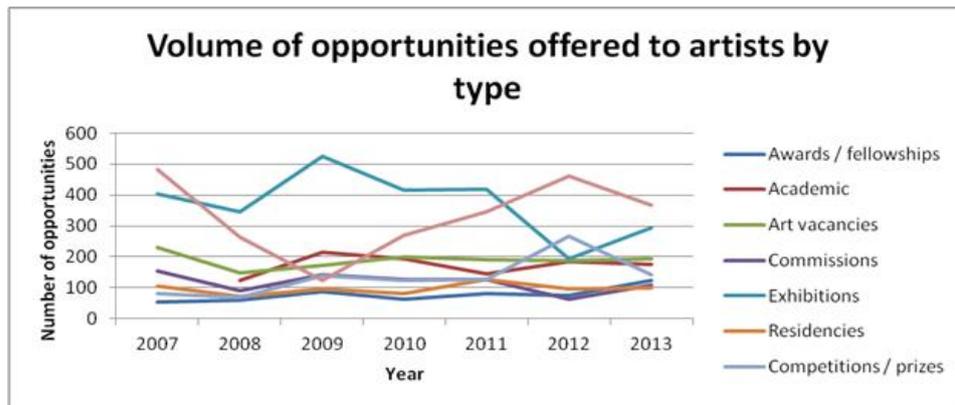
1. Total value of opportunities offered to artists



2. Value (£) of opportunities by type 2007-2013



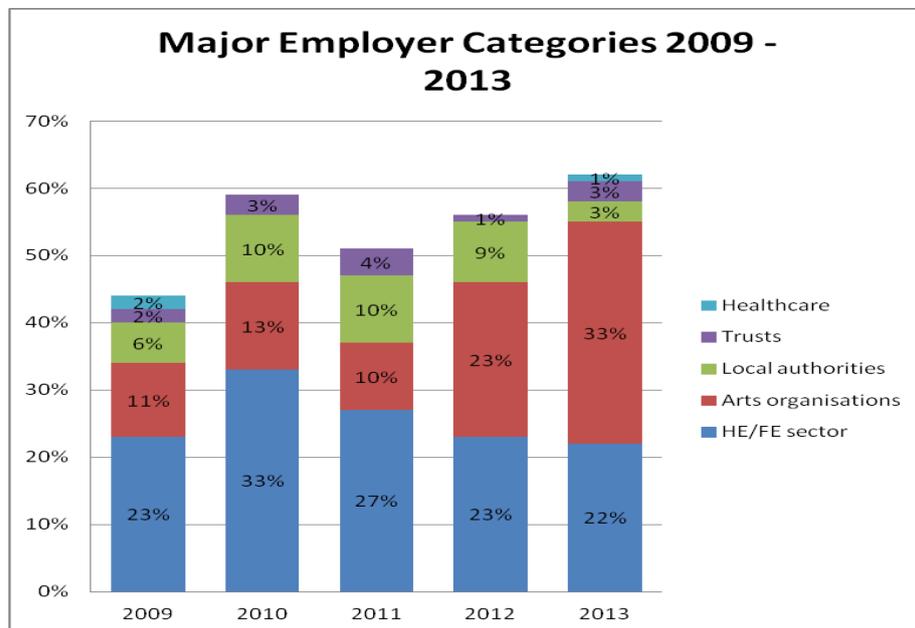
3. Volume of opportunities by type 2007-2013



4. Volume of opportunities with money attached 2007-2013

year	%
2013	40%
2012	42%
2011	36%
2010	37%
2009	42%
2008	57%
2007	43%

5. Major employer categories 2009-2013



References and resources

Art work: Artist's jobs and opportunities 1989-2003

www.a-n.co.uk/p/200221

Art work analysed: Artists' jobs and opportunities 2003 – 2005

www.a-n.co.uk/p/278654

Art work in 2007

www.a-n.co.uk/resource/art-work-in-2007-2009

Changing face of artists employment

www.a-n.co.uk/p/1243438

Artists work in 2011

www.a-n.co.uk/resource/artists-work-in-2011-2014

Artists work in 2012

www.a-n.co.uk/resource/artists-work-in-2012

Credits

Susan Jones is Director a-n The Artists Information Company and a researcher and published writer on visual arts matters. Data collection and analysis for this report was undertaken by Annie Padwick.

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