

Research paper

Artists' work in 2012

An analysis and commentary on artists' work and opportunities in
2012

Introduction

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 a-n.co.uk/jobs, we can provide sectoral intelligence on the variables in the patterns of employment in relationship to changing arts and cultural policies and economic contexts.

We've used this data collection method since 1989 to track the changing face of artists' employment in particular to identify the trends and issues arising from the various offers and circumstances 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 unique insights into employment and career development opportunities for visual and applied artists. We feed this research back – to artists themselves as they pursue their careers, to arts and cultural policy consultations, and into the art and design courses that seek to prepare the next generation of artists.

Key facts

- In 2012, the overall value of work on offer to artists was £5m (20%) less than in the pre-recession year of 2007.
- Only 39% of jobs and opportunities in 2012 offered to pay anything to artists, in comparison with 57% stating this in the recession year of 2008.
- In 2012, commissions provided 17% of the value of all work, with an average budget of £58,800: In comparison in 2007 (pre-recession), the figure was 62% and commission budgets averaged £100K.
- The value of residencies dropped to an all-time low – just over 1% of the value of all work offered in 2012. Residencies paid an average fee of £2,600 – this in contrast with £7,354 paid in 2011 and £6,342 in the pre-recession year of 2007.
- 9% of the value of all work in 2012 came through local authorities, a similar level to 2010 and 2011.

- A new data set reveals that 32% of awards, prizes and exhibitions charged a submission fee to artists.
- The implementation of Universal Credits will have a detrimental affect on low paid artists. They will be assumed to be earning the minimum wage of £873 each month even if they don't.

Artists' livelihoods and portfolio working

The ecology of the arts encourages portfolio working, with many artists tending to rely for their livelihoods on a combination of projects and other income sources to maintain their practice. This is borne out by [a-n's own research](#) as well as by the 2008 study [Creative Graduates – Creative Futures](#).

Fees to and income for artists is the subject of the [Paying Artists](#) research programme that commenced in 2013, that is led by AIR and delivered with a-n. Early evidence from the initial research commissioned from DHA Communications reveals that 72% of artists surveyed earned less than £10,000 a year from their practice. The 2011 survey to artists indicated an average income of £9,000. Whilst holding exhibitions is of great importance to artists in terms of progressing their careers, nearly half of those who had held an exhibition in a publicly-funded gallery in the last three years reported that exhibiting their work is prohibitively expensive.

The 2013 Paying artists research summary demonstrates that whilst most artists recognise that holding exhibitions is an important way to gain critical status and develop their visibility, exhibitions don't make much of a contribution to artists' annual income levels. Few publicly-funded galleries openly or privately offer fees or production budgets. Artists often report using income gained from undertaking commissions, residencies and arts workshops to support their exhibition practice. However as opportunities and levels of reward in these 'arts service' areas are also in decline through cutbacks in the public and private sector, many artists are reporting great hardship in maintaining their practice.

Looking in detail at the 2012 data reveals that the volume of exhibition opportunities on offer in 2012 (at 13%) represents a reduction of thirteen percentage points over the pre-

recession year of 2007. This drop may in part be due to an increase to 18% (from 5% in 2007) in the volume of competitions or prizes. Some galleries during 2012 seemed to have moved to make exhibition submissions more thematic or manageable and alongside, to introduce entry charges. It is notable however that the average value of a competition opportunity in 2007 (at £7,126) more than halved in 2012, to £3,226.

Commission opportunities have always been highly prized by artists. Because historically they have commanded larger budgets, they provide scope for research and development, including opportunity to use of new techniques, materials or collaborative processes. Whilst in 2007 the average commission budget of £100,000 supported this, by 2012 the average budget had dropped to £58,800. Thus Devon County Council's major participatory arts commission with £300,000 budget over three years is an exception amongst commission opportunities that generally ranged from £5,000 to £12,000.

Artists' residencies amounted to 6% of all opportunities on offer in 2012, a figure similar to 2007 and the years between. However, whilst the average income from a residency in 2007 stood at £4,860, by 2012 it amounted to just £2,607. As successful artists must often travel to and take up temporary accommodation with a host whilst undertaking highly personalised community consultation and engagement, it could be argued that some residencies such as Paintings in Hospital's animation residency in a hospital which combines face-to-face engagement with production of new work require higher fees. 84% of artists surveyed by ArtworksScotland in 2013 confirmed that gaining paid work was a main reason for undertaking work such as residencies.

Notions of what constitutes good practice for artists working in participatory settings, including remuneration, is integral within the overall Artworks initiative, with research by Artworks London identifying that 'fair pay' rated higher in measuring what would raise the status of artists'.

Salaried posts in academic settings – such as lecturing or research posts are highly sought-after, with 23% of all work and opportunities in 2012 coming from this sector. A 2011 AIR survey indicated that "51% of members had worked in some capacity in HE in the past five years: 64% as a freelance or occasional lecturer, 39% part-time and 9% full-

time. Over half (56%) received up to 25% of their income from work in HE, whilst 16% received 25-50% from this area. A further 29% earned 50% or more of their income from HE work.

Charges to artists

Notable in 2012 is a new trend within residencies that are offering no fee to a successful artist but may instead to provide free or cheaper studio space whilst charging all applicants for the residency a submission fee of £5-£15. Because of this growing trend to charge artists to submit applications for these and other listed opportunities, we have incorporated this area of data collection into the 2012 study to enable comparators in future years.

In 2012, we know that 32% of opportunities including opens, competitions, prizes and exhibition opportunities cited an entry fee. Whilst some are modest at £3-£5 per work, and £25-£30 is the average per works submitted, examples can be found of much higher charges such as “£200 for 4-8 works”. In an interview, Ludlow Open organiser Jo King said: “The artists’ entry fee (at £16) covers a small part of our admin costs, setting up the selection day, and contributing toward the cost of artwork transport.”

Some artists have adopted the principle of not entering competitions which charge whilst others report they cannot afford to engage with such opportunities because the fees are a barrier. As one artist commented: “The submission fee model is exploited more than often as a way of raising money [for the host venue] which exploits the vanity, hopes or desperation of many artists.” Whilst it might be argued that submission fees are a necessary overhead costs to be born by artists, the diminishing levels of income for artists on offer against the increase in such fees suggest that this proposition is untenable for many artists. Interviewed for a new publication for new graduates one artist reported a 1:8.75 rate of getting accepted following an open submission and a 80/20 split between time spent on generating and pitching for work and making the work itself.

Other funding sources for artists

Because data on grants awarded is not available from the arts councils in a format we can readily make use of, the following research-based evidence from a report published in 2009/10 is provided for illustrative purposes. This was commissioned by a-n from Dany Louise and published as [A fair share: direct funding to individual artists from UK arts councils.](#)

- In 2009/10, Arts Council of Wales' rolling funding scheme gave out £182,789 in individual grants to artists (average of £2,373 each).
- In Northern Ireland, the small grants scheme awarded £207,900 in 2009/10 in sums of £1,300-£1,700.
- In England in 2009/10, 485 artists were successful in gaining £2.836m from the overall £54m Grants for the Arts (GFTA) allocation (average of £5,848 each). Informally gained information for 2012/13 suggests this ratio did not substantially change.
- In Scotland in 2009/10, the Scottish Arts Council (forerunner to Creative Scotland) awarded £386,500 in grants to seventy-six artists (average of £5,085 each).

It has been suggested in our discussions with Arts Council England that visual artists fare well in the success rates for GFTA against other artforms. However, it is unclear whether in making that assessment whether the ratio of practitioner groups is taken into account. 2011 census data suggests that artists and photographers together accounted for 39% of all artform practitioners, with writers at 25%, musicians at 15%, actors and entertainers at 15%, dancers and choreographers at 6%.

Impact of Universal Credits on low-paid artists

Artists on low pay – whether employed or self-employed – have in past years been eligible to claim Tax Credits that have helped to cushion the impact of low pay, variable work patterns of employment and cash-flow difficulties.

With implementation of Universal Credits they and other low-paid groups in society will be worse off. Under Universal Credit, the self-employed will be deemed to be “gainfully self-employed”, and therefore earning at least the national minimum wage for 35 hours per week. Even if a self-employed person incurs a loss in a [monthly] assessment period, they will still be deemed to earn £873. Furthermore, any loss incurred cannot be carried forward to offset against income of future assessment periods as there will be no provision for averaging.

This has the potential to have a huge impact on artists' livelihoods. If they have a profitable month, their actual earnings will need to be declared. However, if their profit for a month is less than £873, they will still be deemed to earn that much for Universal Credit purposes.

Matters arising

In Artists rates of pay 1989-2004, the earliest report in this series, we noted the growing disparity between levels of remuneration for practitioners and those of arts organisers. Advertisements carried by a-n showed that rate for an artist's fellowship in 1989 was broadly similar to that of an artform officer in a (then) regional arts association. Between 1989 and 2004, when index linked, salaries for arts funding officers had risen by 41%.

An example now shows that whilst London-based Stanley Picker Fellowships in Design & Fine Art 2013 are offered at £12,000, the salary on offer for a London-based Arts Council Manager is £31,623.

When mapping the new cultural landscape for the visual arts, we look forward to helping to make the case for sustaining the arts, and as part of this ensuring that the relationship between artists and visual arts professionals is more equitable in terms of remuneration and good working practices.

Opportunities Compared 1

Volume and value of opportunities offered to artists 2007-2009:

Type	No 2007	Value 2007 (£)	No 2008	Value 2008 (£)	No 2009	Value 2009 (£)
Awards / fellowship	53	2,309,050	59	3,430,460	87	3,944,650
Academic			125	3,653,024	214	4,434,053
Art vacancies	230	3,502,097	147	1,859,818	173	2,355,696
Commissions	153	16,822,612	90	3,089,335	141	8,858,106
Exhibitions	403	2,150	346	39,238	524	530,445
Residencies	107	520,109	73	256,694	96	279,987
Competitions / prizes	82	584,400	68	458,762	140	1,808,595
Other	484	3,090,784	265	1,164,407	125	312,157
Total	1,512	26,831,202	1,173	13,521,278	1,500	22,523,689

Volume and value of opportunities offered to artists 2010-2012:

Type	No 2010	Value 2010 (£)	No 2011	Value 2011 (£)	No 2012	Value 2012 (£)
Awards / fellowship	64	3,889,794	82	4,808,495	76	9,147,740
Academic	193	4,386,461	144	3,405,366	185	4,276,012
Art vacancies	201	2,354,192	190	1,954,602	189	2,926,510
Commissions	127	2,722,843	126	2,641,063	63	3,708,063
Exhibitions	417	476,500	418	455,996	194	130,939
Residencies	81	461,250	127	232,836	96	250,273
Competitions / prizes	123	628,801	127	933,983	268	864,583
Other	271	207,572	345	303,162	460	191,880
Total	1,477	15,127,413	1,559	14,735,503	1,531	21,496,000

Opportunities Compared 2

Expressed as % of overall volume of opportunities offered to artists 2007-2012:

Type	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Residencies	7%	6%	6%	5%	8%	6%
Commissions	10%	8%	9%	9%	8%	4%
Exhibitions	27%	29%	35%	28%	27%	13%
Awards / fellowships	4%	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%
Competitions / prizes	5%	6%	9%	8%	8%	18%

Volume of opportunities with money attached

Comparing 2007-2012:

Year	%
2012	39%
2011	36%
2010	37%
2009	42%
2008	57%
2007	43%

Major employer categories

Comparing 2009 – 2012:

Type	2009	2010	2011	2012
HE/FE sector	23%	33%	27%	23%
Arts organisations	11%	13%	10%	23%
Local authorities	6%	10%	10%	9%
Trusts	2%	3%	4%	1%
Healthcare	2%	0%	0%	0%

References and resources

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

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

Art work in 2007

Changing face of artists employment

Artists work in 2011

Credits

Written and researched by Susan Jones. Data collection undertaken by Annie Padwick.

© writers, artists and a-n The Artists Information Company 2012.