



26 March 2020

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
HM Treasury  
1 Horseguards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

Dear Mr Sunak

### **Support for visual artists that are self-employed and freelancers in the creative industries**

On Tuesday 24 March 2020, a-n The Artists Information Company attended a meeting convened Justine Simons, Deputy Mayor for Culture, Greater London Authority and Centre for London. The digital round table was attended by self-employed freelancers in the creative industries, trade unions, creative organisations and others, to discuss the plight facing creative freelancers across the country, and in London.

a-n The Artists Information Company, is the largest artists membership organisation in the UK with over 25,000 members. We support artists in practical ways, acting on behalf of our membership and the visual arts sector to improve artists livelihoods. Founded in 1980 we have a reputation for providing compelling insights and playing a catalytic role in influencing and informing cultural policy.

The creative industries are the fastest growing part of the UK economy contributing £101bn GVA (gross added value). In 2019 the UK regained its position as the second largest art market in the world with \$14bn sales (Art Basel UBS Global Market Report in 2019). We play an important part ensuring our members are market ready, properly insured, and have the necessary tools and skills to mediate the art market and other creative opportunities. In 2018 we enabled our members to travel to all corners of the globe to engage in professional development and showcase their creative practice, distributing over £200k in bursaries. The majority of our members are self-employed, operating as sole traders or through their own limited companies, and are working across the public and commercial sectors.

We conducted a survey of our members between the dates of 19-24 March to quickly assess the impact of COVID-19 on their livelihoods and opportunities, and our members reported the following:

- **93% of respondents reported that they or their practice/career has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.**
- **96% of respondents are experiencing an immediate impact on income**, the majority indicate an impact on the **key mechanisms through which artists earn a living** such as exhibitions, selling work and employment (often supplementary to their practice).
- **82% of respondents have had upcoming work cancelled**, including events, performances and public activities.
- **59% of respondents have cancelled their own upcoming work**, events, performances or public activities.
- **69% of respondents reported other immediate impacts**, which include having to close their studio, not being able to travel to their studio to make work and moving their teaching to online.

Also, COVID-19 is having an immediate and significant effect on **grants and awards** for 65% of respondents. We welcome the announcement made by Arts Council England on Tuesday 26 March to invest £20m in supporting individual creative practitioners.



For our members working in the cultural and creative sector, the devastation caused by the COVID-19 crisis will be deep and it will last a long time. Cultural and creative organisations rely on significant forward planning, convening audiences and a seasonality that is being devastated by the cancellation of exhibitions, art fairs, residencies, festivals, public commissions, education and community art programmes. Support for the many self-employed and freelance visual artists working in this sector must last a long time or many will leave the sector entirely once the crisis is over, and our-world-leading cultural and creative industries may never recover.

I understand that your team are working on solutions for self-employed people and will announce measures on Thursday 26 March. I urge you to ensure that the support gets to those in most need immediately so that there is a safety net.

Along with the GLA, Centre for London and our partners we have identified three things that the Government can do to support visual artists who are self-employed workers in the creative sectors. They are:

- **Equal Rights:** Guarantee self-employed freelancers and precariously employed people in the sector equal rights as those offered to employees under the Job Retention Scheme, and ensure that no-one falls through the cracks. We fully endorse the proposal of a Temporary Income Protection Fund to support self-employed through the Coronavirus crisis put forward by IPSE and the Creative Industries Federation.
- **Urgency:** Ensure that systems get money to freelancers and the self-employed immediately and as a matter of urgency, and remain for as long as the effects of this crisis continue.
- **Long Term Reform:** Work with the industry to identify long-term solutions that address the systemic inequalities and insecurities faced by freelancers and the self-employed that this crisis has exposed.

Visual artists are ready and willing to step up to the challenges faced by the whole country. Many have already begun identifying how they can continue to support the creative economy, through digital platforms and other mediums. This will not replace lost income.

Jayne Knight, Chair of a·n and the Board stand ready to do whatever we can to support our members, through our programmes and advice, but they need financial help immediately to ensure they can pay the bills.

Yours sincerely

Julie Lomax  
CEO, a·n The Artists Information Company

cc The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport