

March 2005

CMS Inquiry into DCMS sponsorship of the Arts Market

Additional submission material

1. a-n The Artists Information Company is pleased to have an opportunity to present our intimate knowledge of artists' working practices, gained over a 25-year period, to this inquiry.
2. We are in effect the professional body for visual artists, representing the practices and interests of thousands of artists across the UK. These encompass fine artists, applied artists, photographers, new media and performance or time-based artists, at all stages of development and public recognition, and including current art and design students and their tutors. An estimated 32,000 artists and arts professionals¹ read a-n Magazine a month. We advertise over £7m of opportunities and work for artists annually.
3. We are also recognised as a trusted mediator between artists and employers. We provide seminars, briefings and publications with guidance for public sector employers including *The Code of Practice for the Visual Arts*², *Good practice in paying artists*³ and *Good exhibition practice* (forthcoming).
4. Through our publications and events, we expose and analyse the diversity of what contemporary visual artists make and do, ranging from paintings and art objects for sale, works made to commission for public and private settings, community and educational workshops and residencies that engage with social inclusion and regeneration agendas, and artists' consultancy and expert services for cultural and business development.
5. As Conrad Atkinson commented⁴: "Not all of us make corporate art, not all of us think art should shock the English middle classes, not all of us are more

¹ Subscribers + retail sales, based on two readers per copy

² *The Code of Practice for the Visual Arts* – with versions for artists and arts organisations commissioned by Arts Council England from a-n The Artists Information Company published 2003 is freely available on www.a-n.co.uk

³ Part of the 'Fees and payments' portfolio of material grant-aided by Arts Council England, published on www.a-n.co.uk and in print

⁴ *a-n Magazine* December 2002

interested in our own blood than the blood of those dying in [other parts of the world]. Perhaps art can't really make a difference but it can highlight alternative ways of seeing and living.”

6. “We don't know if art, which nowadays is so quickly appropriated by advertising and entertainment can change things, but we never know when we might need it, where it is going to come from next, what it might look like.”
7. This inquiry is addressing how best to support living artists in the production of new work. History shows that a large, vibrant visual arts sector is a prerequisite for artistic quality and for ‘cultural capital’⁵ to emerge, from which immediate and longer-term benefits for the profession and society ensue. We are thus proposing some solutions as a framework designed to impact on the many, not the few, and that understands the diversity of approaches, products and creative services that make up the profession of ‘visual artist’ nowadays.
8. Our suggestions are designed to support newcomers as they join our profession burdened by student debt, as well as artists who find themselves – for whatever reason – at a point of transition in their professional lives. They also respect the contribution that artists make in a lifetime, by suggesting an approach to creating an artists’ pension scheme.
9. The recommendations we have made, on behalf of many artists who consider themselves to be professional and of value to society, suggest tangible ways to assist artists whether:
 1. Makers of unique works of value to be sold
 2. Animateurs encouraging others in creative expression
 3. Public servants making work to commission
 4. Economic units - micro businesses
 5. Social workers – empowering others
 6. Educators
 7. Self-determining creators – setting up their own gallery, studio, etc

⁵ ‘Cultural capital’ – the product that arises when a strong sense of artistic vision, ambitious approaches to creation and presentation of work and the willingness to be experimental are combined with a passion for self-development and creative success, *Roles and reasons*, Susan Jones, 1997

8. Visionaries with 'social conscience'⁶

- 8 Or, as is more likely to be the case, a combination of these. The majority of artists nowadays operate in a 'mixed economy' in which sales of artwork sit alongside sales of skills and services to various clients, and fees and grants for research and consultancy. Although public exhibitions are vital to an artist's standing in the artworld and provide routes to the commercial galleries, artists' income from them in terms of public exhibition fees has diminished over the years⁷.

Good practice - valuing artists

9. Our own research⁸ shows that compared with other professions with similar levels of skills and training, artists are on the whole a poorly-paid and misunderstood profession. The joint advocacy campaign being undertaken with Arts Council England aims to redress this. It provides strategic and practical advice to artists and arts employers. This relates remuneration levels to artists to that of teachers and to the skills and abilities required by artists to undertake residencies and public commissions. It also articulates the specific costs of self-employment within the calculation of suitable rates of pay.
10. The Code of Practice for the Visual Arts provides a user-friendly framework for artists and employers. It is supported by practical advice in the form of interactive, legally-sound Visual Arts Contracts that enable artists to learn about contractual processes and better negotiate agreement terms, and Fees and Payments guidance that links payments to artists with similar professions seeks to improve professional arrangements. These tools are intended to make a difference, both to the quality of artists' lives and the quality of the art experience for others.
11. DCMS could play a pivotal and highly-influential role in advocating for wider adoption by local government, healthcare trusts and other public and grant-distributing agencies of the Code of Practice for the Visual Arts and its associated legal and financial guidance, for the benefit of working artists now and in the future. Promotion by DCMS of the requirement that measurement of good practice should include evidence of valuing artists financially and demonstrably supporting their professional development would also be welcomed.

⁶ *The Business of being an artist*, City University London 1995

⁷ *Artwork – artists' jobs and opportunities* 1989-2004, www.a-n.co.uk, 2004

⁸ *Artists' fees and payments*, University of Newcastle, 2004

12. As self-employment is a characteristic of the profession⁹, we are seeking recognition of, and tangible incentives for, artists to participate in and afford to undertake Continuing Professional Development (including research and development) comparable to that expected of other professionals. This would enable artists to maintain quality and innovation in their practice and provide 'evidence' of their professionalism and adherence to the Code of Practice, to commissioners of public or commercial projects¹⁰.

Culture in its own terms

13. Tessa Jowell¹¹ has cited the advantage of valuing and supporting artists in their own terms. It could be argued that there are two modes of engaging with culture:
- as a tool – a top-down instrumental process where outputs are determined by those in control of resourcing
 - as a process – shifting power and trusting artists to take responsibility and control over their projects and professional development.
14. This bottom-up realisation of possibility and potential is where art is at its most transformative and where we believe support should cluster.
15. Social networks are capable of enhancing professional, personal and community well-being¹². In the environment for artists, they provide an essential ingredient by reducing isolation and providing points for professionals to exchange information, knowledge and skills. Some 78% of artists¹³ would welcome more support and encouragement for networking in this respect. This offers a challenge to existing support structures that grant-aid a very small percentage of individual artists. But by investing in the grassroots of artists' networks and learning to understand their

⁹ *Artists' fees and payments*, University of Newcastle, 2004 suggests that visual artists are around three times as likely as the working population in general to be self-employed. Surveys since 1991 locate self-employment amongst artists as between 42-48%

¹⁰ Work by CDP expert Lee Corner has, amongst other things, considered a CPD 'kitemark' that artists could include on CVs, applications and proposals, to impact on payment levels

¹¹ Too often politicians have been forced to debate culture in terms only of its instrumental benefits to other agendas...we have avoided the more difficult approach of investigating, questioning and celebrating what culture actually does in and of itself...not as a piece of top-down social engineering, but a bottom-up realisation of possibility and potential, *Government & the Value of Culture*, May 2004

¹² A profoundly disruptive shift has occurred in our societies, making networks the most important organisational form of our time and reshaping the activities of families, governments and businesses, *Network logic*, Demos, 2004

¹³ Cited in *Networking Networks*, a-n The Artists' Information Company, 2002 and *Strengthening the infrastructure for visual artists*, Arts Council England, 2002

patterns and impacts, the potential for organisation and decision-making emerges, suggesting possible new forms of coordination, collective action and public benefit.

16. Our UK wide action-research into Networking artists' networks recognises the importance of creating 'confidential conversations' and peer review amongst artists, in support of-risk taking and experiment, towards heightened artistic development and creative 'edge'. Such artist-led initiatives are 'value for money' because they create 'cultural capital' and economic benefit in a location, as funds to artists are largely spent locally.¹⁴.
17. Such programmes offer valuable insights into new approaches to measuring the impact of artists and their activities, that extend traditional economic imperatives. This includes evaluation of the impact a project had on the artist themselves, the broad social and environmental context and on the cultural identity of a place, in the short and longer term.

Lifestyle approach

18. By being primarily concerned with self-development, self-sufficiency and creative independence, artists may be described as having a lifestyle approach¹⁵. This approach is significant to government and society because creative individuals who don't see the economic model as the only measure of success offer society opportunities to see or live differently¹⁶.
19. It could be argued that supporting what artists *are* rather than the specifics of their products and services is where public sponsorship most effectively sits. It is also important that public (and private) patrons don't seek to exploit a relationship with an artist whom they view as 'not businesslike'. DCMS endorsement would ensure that 'fair dealing', and its monitoring as regards professional arrangements with artists, is measured as a requirement of public funding.

¹⁴ *Measuring the experience: the scope and value of artist-led organisations*, Susan Jones, 1996. See also *The economics of artists' labour markets*, Ruth Towse, Arts Council of England, 1996

¹⁵ Artists run their practice less as a business and more as a statement about who they are and what they value: creating meaningful work that parallels all that is important in their lives. *Running a one-person business*, Whitmyer, Raspberry and Phillips, 1989

¹⁶ See New Economic Foundation's well-being manifesto, 2005

20. Whilst government is concerned overall with the 'pensions gap', we recommend that consideration is given to supporting initiatives aimed specifically at visual artists – where incomes are lower – with money from opportunities such as implementation in the UK of droit de suite a potential pump-primer.

Valuing specialism

21. In the spirit of the newly defined Arts Council's ambition for "*a new grown-up relationship with arts organisations; one that is based on trust, not dependency...*"¹⁷ we propose greater tangible support for the 'artist-led approach' that embraces emerging and challenging practice and contributes to the development of a more equitable relationship between artists and those with a stake in their work.

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¹⁷ Peter Hewitt, 2003