Publication

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Ideas for Reaching Fair Working Conditions in the Arts

By Katja Praznik, Bojana Kunst and Hans Abbing
Introduction by Delphine Hesters

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Bojana Kunst is a philosopher, dramaturg and performance theoretician. She works as a professor at the Institute for Applied Theater Studies in Justus Liebig University Giessen, where she is leading the international master programme 'Choreography and Performance'. She lectured and organised seminars, workshops and laboratories in different academic institutions, theatres, artistic organisations across Europe, and worked continuously with the independent artistic initiatives. Her research interest is contemporary performance and dance, arts theory and philosophy of contemporary art. She published *Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism*, Zero Books, *Winchester*, London, 2015, and *The Life of Art. Transversal Lines of Care*, Ljubljana, 2021 (published in Slovenian).

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Introduction

Delphine Hesters

Fair practices and work conditions: an IETM agenda for 2022

However diverse the arts institutions or funding schemes across national borders, and however different the role assigned to the arts in our societies, there is something that artists share across the borders: on average they work in precarious labour conditions, characterised by uncertainty and an overall low income derived from their artistic activities.

IETM wants to take a leading role in advancing the fair and green transition of the performing arts sector and in rethinking its international existence. From 2022 to 2024, we will focus on one topic a year to further the network's agenda and solution-based thinking. In 2022, fairness and working conditions in the performing arts were on top of the agenda. How can we envision the systemic change that is needed to make the arts sector a more fair and sustainable environment to work in?

The precarious position of artists can be considered a '*wicked problem*': a complex and layered issue that is closely intertwined with other complex societal issues - which in turn makes it even more difficult to delineate where the problem begins and where it ends. Consequently, it is equally impossible to immediately define '*the*' solutions. It is also important to realise that complex systems cannot change as a whole and at once, based on a master plan with clear and delineated steps from point A to point B. It requires a messy - but determined - process, with diagnoses made from diverse perspectives and experiments with new models - boots on the ground -, multiple, well-directed interventions for partial problems, networks and collaborations to share insights and to scale up successful interventions[1]. Through meetings, publications, advocacy, learning and sharing programmes, IETM wants to mobilise its members to unleash their capacities as change-makers, individually and collectively, no matter what role within the sector we play. IETM wants to impact the performing arts sector at large and play a leading role in the systemic change we need to achieve, in order to reach that fair and sustainable future.

In April 2022, 173 IETM members and guests gathered in Brussels for a Focus Meeting on fairness and working conditions, discussing case studies and prototyping models for more sustainable, fair, equitable and inclusive models for the future. Up front in the written report of the meeting '*Fair Enough*[2]' is the following insight: "*We have to unlearn many of the old ways if we want to introduce new and fair practices into our ecosystem. The 'social contract' that keeps our societies running needs to change radically towards slowing down, allowing time for reflection, recreation, human relationships and sharing resources, instead of competing for them. This gives more value to sustainability and caring, and less praise for growth and productivity.*"

This publication is the next building block in IETM's 2022 trajectory, and has the purpose to contribute both to the diagnosis of this wicked problem and to imagining concrete alternatives to the current system defining the modalities of artistic labour. We engaged three authors, who all in their own ways combine their roles as researcher and academic with a concrete engagement in the arts practice. They are well positioned to share their analysis on the roots of the consistent precarity in the arts and to point to guiding principles or concrete ideas towards a more sustainable future for artists.

A guide to this publication

"*If lack of funding was the only obstacle in achieving fairness in the arts, our task would be easy. However, in many cases, additional funding does not lead to fairer practices.*"[3] Indeed; history shows that neither adding more money into the system, nor good intentions, are sufficient for creating fair pay and decent working conditions in the arts. There are other, systemic issues to be debunked and dismantled, both within the operations of the field and on the level of public policies. The essays in this publication help us understand the belief systems and prevailing mechanisms that keep us from reaching fundamental change.

Real labour

In her contribution, Katja Praznik claims that as long as art work is not truly and fundamentally considered to be *real labour*, artists and their allies will not be able to claim a decent, legitimate income for the work they do (including writing funding applications and reports, doing research, meeting people, reading, procrastinating, answering emails, taking time off, being ill…). The socially dominant attitude remains that what artists do is not labour, but rather creation, as a result of artistic talent or genius. This belief renders the labour involved to be invisible, and consequently brings economic and social devaluation of the work, making non-sufficient payments socially acceptable. After all, is it not performed out of love, or the need for self-expression? Additionally, artists nowadays can be seen as the prototype of the '*atypical worker*', '*the freelancer*' or gig worker, illustrative of the post-fordist transformation of work. It sells the ideas of freedom, flexibility and autonomy - but what artists find on the other side of the same coin are fragmented employment relations and everyday experiences of uncertainty and competition.

Both the freelance condition and the privatisation of the daily work done by the artists atomises individual artists and their economic struggles. In order to secure labour standards and decent payment for art work, Praznik claims we need to organise collectively, which brings her to labour and union organising practices. "*I believe we need a mass union of organised solidary art workers who with the sheer mass of their bodies and voices are able to make your theatre stages empty, your museum and gallery walls and rooms void, your radios and speakers silent, your cinemas dark, your book shelves empty and your streets boring and uneventful.*" And for that, she presents a concrete methodology.

Beyond the project

Bojana Kunst has equally written extensively on the fragmentation of labour, and how it is related to the precarious working conditions in the performing arts. In her contribution, she delves deeper into the problems with the '*project*' reality we are living in. Most of us working in the arts experience work as an endless string of projects, often working on several at the same time and always preparing for others to (possibly) come. We can hardly imagine the alternative. A '*project*', however, is a specific temporal form of work. It projects value into the future: at the end, the result should be something more valuable than the very now of our work. It requires us to believe that what lies ahead is progress, development and growth.

1 See also Hesters D. (2019). *D.I.T. (Do It Together). The position of the artist in today's art world. Brussels: Flanders Arts Institute* and Birney, A. (2014). *Cultivating System Change. A Practitioner's Companion*. Oxford: Do Sustainability.

2 Shishkova, V. (September 2022) "*IETM Report Fair Enough?*". Brussels: IETM, www.ietm.org/en/reports

3 Shishkova, V. (September 2022) "IETM Report Fair Enough?". Brussels: IETM, www.ietm.org/en/reports

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As this erases the value of repetition, insistence and incompleteness, and drives on the fitness of the collaborators, the project-work mode constantly instigates the rhythm of the work, causes exhaustion and anxiety, and tends to be exclusive rather than inclusive.

How can we break the normality of project-based thinking and tap into a different imagination? Kunst draws inspiration from Mierle Laderman when she introduces a distinction between two principles of art: '*development*' and '*maintenance*'. If the first is aimed at individual creation, the new and change, the latter keeps the dust off the pure individual creation, preserves the new and sustains the change. "*It shows how everything is created from dependencies, existing only through a relation of care, how any change must also be sustained, how always there is new from which the dust should be continuously cleaned.*" The art practice of performance - as a practice transcending the individual, experimenting with rearrangements of time, bodies, spaces and relations - can be especially helpful in practising, amplifying and making visible the acts of maintenance which are usually kept backstage.

Kunst invites to organise cultural politics no longer around singular works or projects, but to support the creation of sustainable and durational infrastructure; to rather focus on the temporal kinships of the present than on the future yet to come. This is very much in tune with what the participants of the IETM Focus Meeting put forward[4], namely the need to call a halt to the continuous demand for new productions, enhanced productivity and growth.

Hybrid art practices by conviction

The third contribution in this publication by Hans Abbing offers another invitation to reconsider what we deem normal - coming from a more unexpected angle. It challenges an implicit ideal that underlies the previous texts: that artists should be able to dedicate all their work time to their artistic practice and should be able to build long careers in the arts. The profession of the artist remains attractive in the eyes of many, even though we know that artists are on average poor and need to sustain other jobs or non-art related sources of income. Abbing sees a new kind of artist emerging nowadays, the '*new bohemians*', who accept the risk of the artistic endeavour, enjoy belonging to a group of like-minded people and celebrate a '*DIY culture*'. They lead unsustainable careers in the arts, but they do not necessarily care, as they do not necessarily aim for a life-long or full-time artistic practice. Also, many young artists today develop a '*hybrid art practice*': they take up second jobs in which they cooperate with non-artists, while providing artistic inputs in a non-art product. These trends can be understood in the context of a persistent blurring of boundaries in the arts. Between art and non art, between art and creative practices, between who is to be considered a professional and who is an amateur, and between recognised art institutions and other (online) platforms which allow for the valorisation of creative work and reaching audiences. With the recipes we currently have available, there are no ways to raise the average income of all artists. "*What if we accept that many careers in the arts are not sustainable, and that this is not the end of the world?*" Abbing states. It is an invitation to open up to the diverse aspirations and needs of different kinds of artists, practices and careers, and to explore what kind of support they may need, in education, from the practice field and from policy makers.

I would add that, also from within the professional art field, the boundaries between art and non-art, and between the professional and the amateur, are questioned and more and more considered irrelevant. Nowadays, many artists in the performing arts develop artistic practices that reach far beyond the blackbox, that indeed surpass '*the project*' and testify a strong social engagement, weaving long-standing relations with non-professionals, anchoring in schools, youth clubs, social housing blocks, etc. They use artistic strategies to have a broad impact, rather than to create '*artworks*'. And even the artists who remain within the sphere of the arts often take up different roles and capacities, and have an incredible set of knowledge, skills and sensitivity. How can we make sure that they are recognised and valued outside of the professional art world as well? More than ever, our societies need imagination, well-developed empathy, an inquisitive attitude, expertise in visual culture, the ability to connect diverse perspectives when working in collectives and the ability to marry a process with a result-oriented focus, physical intelligence, functioning in unpredictable environments and dealing with uncertainty and unclarity. Even more than any other art discipline, the performing arts is populated with workers with so-called '*transferable skills*', engaging in practices with value far beyond the aesthetic realm.

In recent years, the calls for fair practice and more sustainable working conditions have led to important initiatives for fair pay and experiments with artist wages or universal income schemes, driven by both players in the arts field and policy makers. However, what this publication makes clear is that even if they are necessary, they will not suffice. We indeed need to join forces and dig deeper, by challenging some of the basic pillars of how the system operates. We need to find novel ways to counteract the fragmentation and the short-term horizon and to validate the *full labour* of the core players of the art field, i.e. the artists. However, to strengthen the position of artists, we must not only focus on getting our '*internal kitchen*' in order, but we equally have to keep looking outward, joining forces with the many allies in the larger society who aim for a more fair, diverse and green world. Not only are our wicked problems interconnected, but so are our contributions and joys.

4 Shishkova, V. (September 2022) IETM Report Fair Enough?". Brussels: IETM, www.ietm.org/en/reports

SECTION 1

“Which side are you on?”

On Understanding Art as Labour and the Potential of Collective Organising of Art Workers

Katja Praznik

"Which side are you on?"[5]

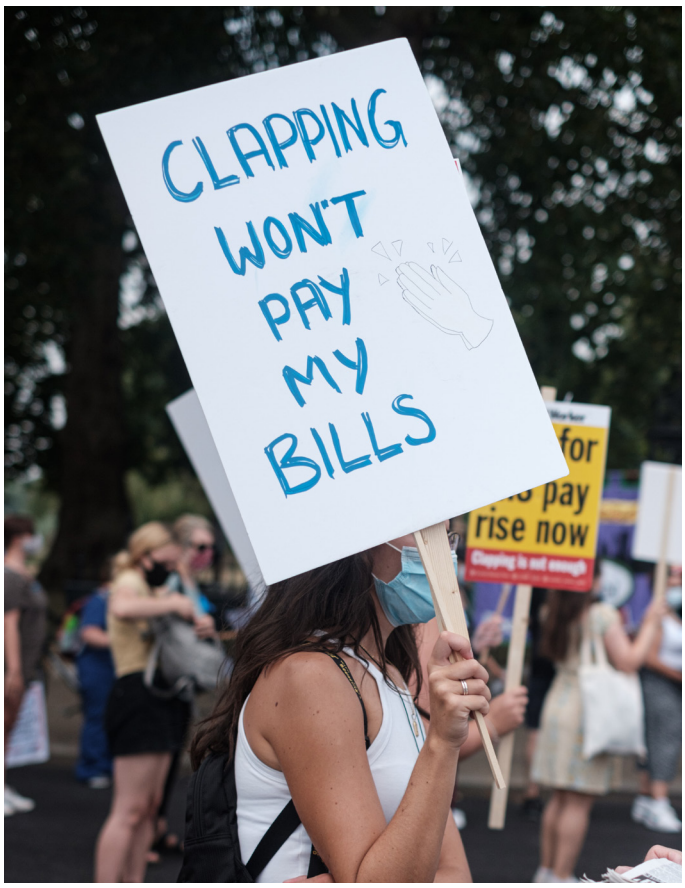
On Understanding Art as Labour and the Potential of Collective Organising of Art Workers

Katja Praznik

> *The concept of freedom, which the French Revolution made the highest good and the basis of the bourgeoisie, had already changed in the 19th century into a concept of freedom as the essence of a certain economic order, along with its institutional framework. First it gave its identity to a class, namely the bourgeoisie, and then to capital – the subaltern classes waved the banner of solidarity instead.* - Sergio Bologna[6]

We have seen numerous artist protests as mavericks against the system of subpar remuneration and labour standards in the arts. The most recent widely reported case in point being the controversy related to Jens Haaning and his ad hoc artwork *Take the Money and Run* (2021), which was a response to the derisory working conditions and remuneration offered to the artist by the Kunsten Museum of Modern Art in Alborg, Denmark. The museum wanted to exhibit Haaning's *An Average Danish Annual Income* (2010) and *An Average Austrian Annual Income* (2007) as part of the exhibition about the future of work in contemporary capitalism titled "*Work It Out.*" The two artworks were just that: two large frames with the currency banknotes in the specific amount of an annual income. The museum agreed to secure the actual amount of both currency bills in the amount of 534,000 DKK or 74,000 € that were to be framed in an updated version of the two artworks. The artist was to advance the money for the production cost and the labour involved. Since the museum was late with securing the cash for the artworks and also refused to pay for the labour and agreed to only partially reimburse the actual production cost, the artist decided to send the museum a new work of art *Take the Money and Run*. He kept the money and exhibited two empty frames. Moreover, Haaning suggested that other people who find themselves in similarly '*miserable working conditions*', where they are asked to "*give money to go to work*" should resort to this tactic[7]. If you failed to notice the ensuing media frenzy, a simple google search will quickly demonstrate the enormous global media reaction to an artist supposedly stealing the money from an art institution. A journalist remarked that people love to talk about money but I shall add they don't like to talk about untenable working conditions in the arts. A more pertinent question to pose in this situation might be "*who is robbing who*" but no mainstream media bothered to ask.

As appealing and brave as such protestations might be from a PR point of view because they accumulate symbolic capital for the museum and perhaps for the artist, an individual artist's protest against abysmal labour standards and remuneration in the arts didn't and don't generate any #metoo avalanche leading to a collective action against exploitation of artist's labour. The dogs bark but the caravan goes on. Despite several other individual attempts by other art workers to challenge the normalised practice of exploitation and low or no payment for the actual labour involved in making art, collective action in the arts is rarely seen and practised[8]. In the example I mention, the artist got no public or collective support from fellow art workers, intellectuals or governments for his protest. I even conducted a brief experiment regarding the Haaning's case. When the exhibition was still on view, I asked all the participating artists of the exhibition "*Work It Out*" if they plan to publicly support the fellow artist.



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I received two mellow responses. None showed much solidarity or desire for a collective action or public statement of support. I have to note that this was not some no-name-artist exhibition. Quite the contrary, among them were artists who are well known personalities speaking against the art system, such as Hito Styerl, and to boot, an artist Marie Thams, who is currently a president of the largest Danish artists' association Billedkunstnernes Forbund (BFK or Danish Visual Artists), along with several other artists who are members of the BFK. The association's central aim as we can read in the English description on their webpage is "*to influence current policies in a way that enhances economic and social security for visual artists.*"[9] They definitely are not putting the money where their mouth is.

Finally, I should note that I also conducted a lengthy interview with Haaning about the problem of labour exploitation and offered it to several news outlets but they did not bite. Who wants to talk about exploited art workers when it is much more appealing to reproduce the starving mischievous artist epitome and fire up the public attention by the trope of an artists who breaks rules and steals from a poor helpless art institution? Marx forbids, we should follow art workers in to the "*hidden abode of production*" – *because as he notes there's a sign on the entrance that "stares us in the face 'No admittance except on business,'*"[10] – and, I shall add, that we should dare to open the issues of class struggle in the arts. Why is that the case?

5 This is the title of a 1931 song written by activist Florence Reece, during the Harlan County War. Reece, who was also the wife of Sam Reece a union organiser for United Mine Workers, wrote this song as a response to the terror she and others endured during the corporate attacks on union organisers and miners who were striking for better working conditions and higher wages.

6 Sergio Bologna, "We Can't Leave the Idea of Freedom to the Far Right!" Angryworkers.org, Dec 10, 2021, https://www.angryworkers.org/2021/12/10/we-cant-leave-the-idea-of-freedom-to-the-far-right-sergio-bologna-on-the-green-pass/ (Aug 12, 2022)

7 Jens Haaning cited after Taylor Dafoe, "A Danish Museum Lent an Artist $84,000 to Reproduce an Old Work About labour. Instead, He Pocketed It and Called It Conceptual Art," Artnet News, Sept 27, 2021

8 One such attempt was a call for an international strike of artists in 1979 by Goran Đorđević that I analysed elsewhere. See, Praznik, Art Work: Invisible Labour and the Legacy of Yugoslav Socialism (University of Toronto Press, 2021), 76–91.

9 BFK in English. BFK. https://bkf.dk/bkf-in-english/

10 Karl Marx, *Capital Vol 1*, 279–280.

Understanding the Artist's labour

A spectre is haunting the world of the arts and creative sector – the spectre of an art workers union. Its nemesis is a phobia that exists in the context of Western art since the eighteenth century about employing labour or union discourse or collective action. The troubling condition is fuelled by cultural attitudes toward the arts that suffer from individualism, a historical understanding of modern art as a universal global phenomenon as well as a lack of critical considerations about the class provenance of the modern western system of the arts and the idea of culture. While the visual arts context might offer the most straightforward examples to point out the issue, poor working conditions and paltry remuneration and lack of payment for the actual labour of an artist is impressive in all the sectors of the arts and manifest to the present day[11]. Nonetheless, I often get the retort that the situation is not as grave as I paint it, that some artists do get paid and, in some countries, even have unions. Yes, they do, but they are rather an exception to the rule of the normalised practice of non- or underpayment for the labour of an artist. So, I'll simply rejoin with an adage: the most generous subsidy to the arts comes from the artists themselves, in the form of unpaid labour. As I have written elsewhere, this state of affairs results from art not being understood as work, which turns *artwork*[12] into a form of invisible labour[13] and is at the heart of what feminist scholar Maria Mies defined as housewifisation of labour[14]. A term that Mies uses to describe flexible, atypical, devalued and unprotected forms of work[15]. Why is that the case? Let's look at the history.

Impacted by the shift from the patronage to the market system along with the rise of the capitalist mode of production, the historical emergence of modern western understanding of the arts effected an important separation between an artist and an artisan or craftsperson.[16] As Larry Shiner explains, "*the modern concept of the artist as independent creator was itself part of the establishment of the fine art – versus – craft polarity in the eighteenth century.*"[17] The artist was relegated to the separate sphere of autonomous art that is ostensibly also separated from economic concerns, while the crafts person was slowly subsumed in the realm of capitalist production or demoted to the applied arts. The artist became an exceptional individual, an artist-genius separated from the idea of craft, facility and skilled labour.[18]

The separation of arts and craft is significant on two levels if we wish to discuss the position of art workers in the class struggle in the present-day arts and cultural sectors. It contextualises the invisibility of art work and its economic devaluation on the one hand. On the other, the transformation explains the proletarisation of artisans and the inscription of artists into the idioms of bourgeois culture. Artisans have skills, they reproduce and imitate and do it for the money, artists are original, they create freely and they don't do it for the money[19]. While artisan and artist were previously interchangeable terms, in the eighteenth century "*all the nobler aspects of the older image of the artisan/artist, such as grace, invention, and imagination, were ascribed solely to the artist, whereas the artisan or craftsperson was said to possess only skill, to work by rule, and to care primarily for money.*"[20] What this meant was that the "*freedom of the craftsperson to work at their own pace, to conceive of their work as a whole … was gone"* and that most of those who used to be the artist/artisan were *"forced either to become an artisan executing orders and designs or to venture the precarious independence of the artist.*"[21] Such ideological elevation of artist and the arts is not merely conceptual, that is to say abstract, or a matter of theory but it holds very concrete, practical and material effects for those making art and working in the arts and creative sector.

The division between artists and artisan stimulated the process through which art work became invisible; it brought on the hegemonic attitude that what artists do is not labour, rather it is creation, a result of artistic talent or genius. Artist labour became essentialised just like the labour of a house worker and relegated to a separate (private) sphere of work, where her work is no longer seen as such but interpreted as her natural calling or her female physique.[22] Marxist feminist theorist and activists, such as Silvia Federici, Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa made a groundbreaking analysis during the 1970s, which uncovered that the separation of the realm of social reproduction, including housework or domestic labour, into the private sphere made a large area of exploitation and unpaid labour invisible.[23] The invisibility of housework as a form of work, Marxist feminists demonstrated, is perpetuated by two operations. The mechanism of essentialisation, which defines this work as the essence of a female physique, and by a construction of the (fictional) private sphere. These two operations are also central in the context of the arts and have enduring implications for cultural attitudes towards artist's labour and its invisibility as a form of work.

Artists experience a similar kind of invisibility of their labour after the arts and crafts division. The invisibility of labour means economic and social devaluation of particular kinds of work (art work and housework) and marks the fact that it is socially acceptable that the labour is not paid because it is performed out of love, aspiration, or need for self-expression. However, the essentialising of art work is positive in one sense (related to exceptional creativity genius) but in other sense it reinforces the notion that art work needs no payment since it is not real labour. Unlike domestic labour, the essentialization in the case of artwork has a positive aspect, namely maintaining the uniqueness or exceptional nature of each individual artist. The downside is that this makes it harder to rebel or strive for reform and easier to accept the lack of payment and labour standards.[24]

For organising art workers these attitudes have not only theoretical but also practical consequences. Despite what sometimes seems a challenging gap between art theory and labour discourse, the art sector would certainly benefit if its members joined voices with scholars who study non-standard employment, for example in the gig-economy. In fact it would most definitely benefit the workers in this sector to make it a top priority and to start advocating that art work gets fully recognised as labour like any other work[25] rather than categorising and building the case for more art funding by claiming it an exceptional, special or in the neoliberal jargon atypical work.

The issue in the arts and in general with the so-called "*atypical work*" is the post-fordist transformation of work and the legal character of employment that we see in the fragmentation of labour and employment, which is a mechanism that structurally weakens the position of workers. As labour activists concur, fragmented employment relations have in fact two facets. On the one hand they are the effect of enhanced neoliberal competition on the other they are a central capitalist strategy in the current mode of class

11 See for example, Orian Brook and Dave O'Brien, "'There's No Way That You Get Paid to Do the Arts': Unpaid Labour Across the Cultural and Creative Life Course," *Sociological Research Online 25*, no. 4 (2020): 571–588; Annelies Van Assche, l*abour and Aesthetics in European Contemporary Dance: Dancing Precarity* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillian, 2020);

12 By *art work* I refer to the process, that is labour or work being performed, and not the result, that is the object artwork.

13 Katja Praznik, "Invisibilised labour" in *Paths to Autonomy*, edited by Noah Bremer and Vaida Stepanovaite (New York and Vilnius: Minor Compositions and Lost Property Press, 2022) 56–59

14 Maria Mies, "Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour," SS Occasional Papers, No.85, (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies: 1981); Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (London: Zed Books: 1999).

15 Maria Mies, "Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour," ISS *Occasional Papers*, no. 85 (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1981); Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*.

16 Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 5.

17 Shiner, 12.

18 Shiner, 115–123.

19 Shiner, 115

20 Shiner, 13.

21 Shiner, 118

22 Interestingly also the concept of a housewife and house worker was established in approximately the same period but the scope of this essay doesn't allow me to elaborate on this history. See Silvia Federici, "The Construction of Domestic Work in Nineteenth-Century England and the Patriarchy of the Wage" in *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2021)

23 Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The power of women and the subversion of the community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1972), Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1974).

24 See also, Katja Praznik, *Art Work: Invisible Labour and the Legacy of Yugoslav Socialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 35–46.

25 Valerio DeStefano, The Rise of the "just-in-time workforce": On-demand work, crowdwork and labour protection in the "gig-economy" (Geneva: Inclusive Labour Market, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch (Conditions of Work and Employment Series, no. 71) – International Labour Office), 21.

struggle.[26] The sweeping power of neoliberal rationality about the panacea of market regulation and its central motor competition bank on selling the idea of freedom and autonomy of a worker – two quintessential traits of the modern (western) ideal of an artist. They contribute to the mystification of class struggle and to an erosion of working-class solidarity in the arts and creative sector.

When an artist ceased to also be defined as a worker that is once the idea of crafts and art as separate was in place, out went the ideas of labour standards, collective organising or action and a living wage that would be sufficient for the reproduction of an art worker (since s/he was no longer a worker but an artist). It is highly ironic that the shift from patronage to the market was understood as a liberation by a number of newly defined creative free artists who thought they were elevated above (and beyond) the drudgery of work. The historical division between an artist and an artisan influenced the attitudes regarding the power and meaning of collective action and structures, such as guilds, through which artisans were able to secure and protect their economic and professional standards. These attitudes certainly impact the possibility that artists would struggle for a living wage and labour standards or that they should do so collectively. How could they, if their entire self-definition omits the fact that what they do is work and is built on the romantic idea of exceptional individuality? And that holds true despite all the protestations of Yvonne Rainers, Marcel Duchamps and John Cages of this world. Yet, labour history teaches us, an individual (worker or an art worker) has the weakest position in a market, be it labour or art or any other kind of market. In the astute words of Sergio Bologna:

> *"Individuals who think of themselves as independent beings, who don't need anyone, who base their existence not on relationships with others but on individualism, are precisely those who lose their freedom to a large extent, especially in employment relationships: they negate solidarity, community and mutual help and find themselves the objects of the most unbridled exploitation because, as individuals, they have the weakest position in the market."*[27]

In short, the history of Western Euro-American conception of the arts greatly affects the economic problems that an art worker confronts today, from ideas about creativity (and not work), freedom and autonomy (not rules and dependence) that are hardwired into the formation, education of artists and creative workers and the whole culture of appreciating art and creativity. This history makes the labour invisible and it also depoliticises such work because it turns it into a private matter rather than a political question. Even more, "*a central belief of the modern system of the art has always been that money and class are irrelevant to the creation and appreciation of art.*"[28] Thus, class struggle in the arts is not a term that one would see often. This terminology is used as marginally as the idea of organising art workers in a union – however "*times, they are a-changin'…*"[29]

The Class Approach: Yesterday and Today

An analysis of class relations within the arts and creative sector helps us understand what the position of an art worker in the context of contemporary class struggle in the arts is. Put differently, it helps us understand how the mechanisms of invisibility are relevant to capitalist exploitation and why it is so detrimental to divorce labour from art and why it matters that we also call artists workers. If we consider our art worker defined as an "*atypical*" worker which is in fact a code word for a self-employed, or a gig worker if you wish, what might be her position in the class relation? Where does the fact that her work is a service outsourced by art institutions and organisations situate her?

Marx taught us that workers have nothing to lose but their chains when it comes to the struggle against capitalist exploitation. Why? Because he unpacked the *structural sense* of the concept of class under capitalism, in which the owners of money and means of production stand in opposition to the workers who are "*free*" in double sense (they are legally free to enter into contractual relations and free to sell their capacity to work, that is labour power).[30] Translated to the arts, we have managers of art institutions, who we could categorise as the professional managerial class (closely connected to the funding bodies or actual wealthy donors), and who unscrupulously exploit art workers as the outsourced labour by not recognising their labour. Or, if we wish to be more euphemistic, they are merely profiting from the effects of the invisibility of art work.[31] But you might protest that some artists, especially those self-employed in fact own some means of production, they are not workers, they are "*creative*" entrepreneurs.

In the structural sense "*classes are determined by their position in the social process of production,*" which also means that "*somebody can belong to a particular social class without necessarily being aware of it.*"[32] So while art workers might indeed own some means of production, they nevertheless largely depend on art institutions (such as theatres, publishing houses, art galleries or museums, etc.) to present or disseminate the results of their work. Or, we could also say that the institutions depend on this outsourced labour for the program. Consider for a moment what would the institutions present to their audiences if art workers stop providing these services for which in the majority of cases, they receive insufficient to no remuneration? Michael Heinrich explains that "*many formally self-employed people … are still proletarians, who live de facto from the sale of their labour-power, except that this occurs under potentially worse conditions than under a formal wage relationship.*"[33] Indeed, this is relatable to art workers in the arts and creative sector where most of them operate under the legal/formal status of self-employed and represent the outsourced labour for numerous art organisations and institutions. However, the issue with artwork(ers) is that invisibility of (their) labour is not seen as a form of oppression nor as a convenient mechanism for exploitation. But as I already indicated, there's a whole swath of work that is not recognised as such. Moreover, artists themselves have a hard time identifying as workers and the managers of art institutions along with government representatives and most policy-makers expediently reproduce the meritocratic logic based in social and cultural capital in order to take advantage of the cheap labour.

For this situation Marxist feminist insights are vital along with the lessons from the labour movement and organisations. They help us understand the exploitation and class struggle in the arts. Using Marx's argument, feminists taught us that under capitalist mode of production one also needs to recognize something as work to struggle against its exploitation. labour history has taught us that convincing someone they are not workers is the best union busting tactic. This comprehension allows us to employ the discourse of labour organising and a struggle for labour standards and a living wage/salary/payment for art workers. Additionally, we need

26 Andraž Mali and Boštjan Remic, "Delitvena ekonomija, delavska moč in novi načini sindikalnega organiziranja [The Sharing Economy, Workers' Power and the New Ways of Union organising]" in (Ne)dostojno delo: Prekarizacija standardnega in nestandardnega zaposlovanja v Sloveniji [(In)Decent Work: Precarity of Standard and Non-Standard Employment in Slovenia] edited by Miroslav Stanojević and Sašo Furlan (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2018), 239.

27 Sergio Bologna, "We Can't Leave the Idea of Freedom to the Far Right!" *Angryworkers.org*, Dec 10, 2021, https://www.angryworkers.org/2021/12/10/we-cant-leave-the-idea-of-freedom-to-the-far-right-sergio-bologna-on-the-green-pass/ (Aug 12, 2022)

28 Shiner, 7

29 Bob Dylan, *Times They Are a-Changin'*, Columbia Records 1964.

30 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol 1* (New York: Penguin 1990), especially 131–137, 163–177, 270–280, 675–691.

31 See Katja Praznik, *"1% of Artistic labour" in Jaka Babnik, Pygmalion*, edited by Tevž Logar and Julija Hoda (Ljubljana: Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljana, 2019) for another case in point.

32 Michael Heinrich, *Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 192. This structural sense has to be distinguished from *the historical one*, where "social groups that in a particular historical situation understand themselves to be classes as distinct from other classes" via class consciousness. (Heinrich, 192).

33 Heinrich, 193.

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to grapple with the neoliberal transformation of the world of work and important changes in the legal character of employment relations to which I turn in the following section.

The artist has become the model worker in the so-called flexibilisation of the labour market, which theorists explain as one central strategy of contemporary neoliberal version of the class struggle. What does that mean? The capitalist classes have planted the idea that we are free and flexible in terms of our employment and convinced us that our love for the work we do can replace the fact that this work is a source of our subsistence. We have forgotten that a working day lasts eight hours, that we need a living wage that includes the costs of social security, healthcare, and time off, and – very important – that this all has to be paid by the employer or a client who contracts us for our services. We may desire to work from 3am to 10am or in two hours and one hour of break and then for five more, I really couldn't care less how you organise your eight-hour work day, but let's keep it to eight hours or less and also get a living wage that includes the costs of reproduction for the work we do so that we can have some fun during the remaining sixteen hours of a day.[34]

In his important analysis of the post-fordist transformation of the ways we work, Sergio Bologna devised a term to understand a new form of work: *the second-generation of self-employed labour*, which is pivotal to address in terms of labour organising and struggle in the contemporary world of art production.[35] Who is a worker that belongs to the second-generation self-employed labour? They are what are more commonly known as freelancers or freelance workers and the extreme opposite of an employed worker. They emerged in a process that scholars term fragmentation of labour, which is a more precise term than precarious labour and precarity that usually encompassed these processes and have been used widely. So our freelance worker or a member of the second-generation self-employed labour is eloquently described by Bologna:

> *[S]he has no workplace or can work anywhere, she "is not part of a community that meets at the same place (the office) every day, with everyone arriving and leaving at the same time. [S]he is an isolated individual. [Her] employment-contract makes no mention of working times and involves no commitment to being physically present. Nor does it involve a relationship of formal dependence vis-à-vis the employer (or rather client). The freelancer's autonomy may turn out to be a trap; while [s]he is economically dependent on [her] client, this dependency is not formalised and [s]he is unable to disobey. [S]he is on [her] own and cannot go on strike; strikes are by definition a collective action. The freelancer's condition is therefore one of social powerlessness … The payment [s]he receives is not a wage, meaning it is not intended to reproduce [her] labour-power; it is a compensation entirely unrelated to [her] needs and often paid with considerable delay, long after the work has been completed. The freelancer's condition of social inferiority becomes even more striking when we consider [her] lack of welfare rights. [S]he has no claim to health insurance, unemployment benefits or a pension."*[36]

This sounds awfully familiar to a whole army of art workers and people who toil in the cultural or creative sector where self-employment is the name of the game for almost half of the people working in the sector.[37] While there are policies that governments in some places and some countries implemented to "*protect*" the art workers, such as the "status of artist" that can be the base for subsidised healthcare, social security or tax credits,[38] I use quotation marks to highlight that these policies are merely an illusion. Most of these policy measures are based on merit. One gets these basic life necessities paid because they are exceptional or good enough artistically and due to their exceptional creativity and high status, they get enough work or gigs as artists. But they do not get it because of a simple fact of life that we all need social security, healthcare and a living wage not because we work well and are exceptional but as a matter of basic necessity under capitalism.[39] Put simply, does a doctor get paid only when they heal or cure a patient, or does a teacher get paid only when a student passes an exam? Art work is invisible and therefore culturally and economically devalued, but this is where the two worlds, the one of the arts

34 Rastko Močnik, "Trg delovne sile in sestava delavskega razreda [The labour market and the composition of the working class]", Teorija in praksa 48, 1 (2011): 181–182.

35 Sergio Bologna, "Workerism: An Inside View: From the Mass-Worker to Self-Employed labour" in *Beyond Marx: Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Marcel van der Linden and Kar Heinz Roth (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 121–143; Sergio Bologna, "Nove oblike dela in srednji razredi v postfordisti□ni dru□bi [New forms of work and the middle classes in post fordist society]" in *Postfordizem: razprave o sodobnem kapitalizmu* edited by Gal Kirn (Ljubljana: Mirovni in□titut, 2010), 133–143.

36 Bologna, "Workerism" 2014, 139

37 In 2020, on the EU level self-employed represent almost 50% of the total cultural employment, which is three times higher than in other sectors. See Eurostat, »Culture statistics - cultural employment,« https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_employment#Cultural_employment_.E2.80.94_overall_developments (Aug 19, 2022)

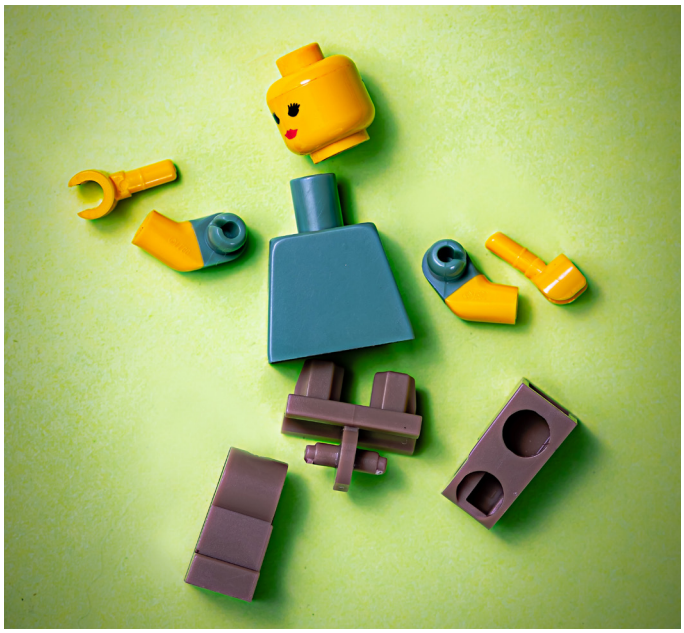
38 See UNESCO, *Culture and Working Conditions for Artists: Implementing the 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist* (Paris: UNESCO 2019), pp. 1–30.

39 See Katja Praznik, "Autonomy or Disavowal of Socioeconomic Context", *Historical Materialism* 26, 1 (2018): 109–112.

and the one of contemporary labour coincide. Bologna convincingly argues that atypical workers or self-employed workers are "*denied the status of 'workers.'*" They are classified as small or micro-companies or even one-woman-businesses.[40] Similarly, as we saw is the case with self-employed art workers. What is the problem, you might ask?

There's a dehumanising aspect at play even if it is couched in the language of freedom and autonomy. A human being is not an organisation or a business, or sole enterprise. "The expression is absurd and nonsensical,"[41] asserts Bologna. And he has a point. "*A business is by definition an organisation, a social micro system, a form of cooperation that has as its goal not merely to produce a mass of commodities but also surplus value that is generated in the process of cooperation or in the added value that is created with the use of technology or human intelligence.*"[42] And we shall add, with and by human labour. Bologna's question is on point: "*How can a 'small business woman/entrepreneur' do all this?*" That is, how can she do all this if economic theories are based on a concept of a business that requires three key elements: capital (invested by owners), management (organising and directing the resources) and labour power (workers). That one should do all this as one single individual is the neoliberal ruse that the post-for-dist transformation brought on since it redefined the legal nature of employment relationships. The worker got renamed into an enterprise. "*In order to make an employment contract into a business contract, a worker needs to be called an 'enterprise'.*"[43] For example, an art worker in a gallery or a museum. Or a freelance actor, costume designer, scenographer, theatre director to a theatre company or a writer or a designer or a translator to a book publisher and so on. They are all outsourced by an institution/organisation regardless if these organisations are not for profit or even public institutions.[44]

While workers with an employment contract usually benefit from being integrated in a social security system (paid sick leave, access to healthcare, parental leave and retirement), the second-generation self-employed worker enjoy none of these labour standards because the legal definition of the employment relationship is transformed. This creates a double structured labour market, one with workers that have an employment contract and the other with workers that are defined as enterprises/self-employed. This distinction, which is a form of legal fiction, is therefore one of the central tools, not to say weapons, in contemporary class struggle. In the context of art, such divisions along with other issues "*atomise economic struggles, reducing them to personal grievances and remediations that are isolated from collective processes capable of raising individual struggles to the realm of shared policy.*"[45] That is why labour organising and the struggle for labour standards and a living wage in the arts sounds so bewildering. We have the theory but can we put it to practise?



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On the Side of the Artist – Worker

Fred Hampton once remarked "*theory's cool but theory with no practice ain't shit.*"[46] Writing two books on the paradox of art, the condition that what artists do is not understood or seen as a form of labour let alone appropriately remunerated – has driven me to begin to grapple with the theory concerning this paradox from a new practical angle. The application of theory to practice is guided by some of these questions. What does it take for art to be understood as labour not only on paper, discursively, on the level of cultural attitudes, or in theory as some might say? What does it take to put in practice the theory that art is labour, and to stimulate art workers to embrace the labour organising discourse in their perennial struggle to secure labour standards and a living wage for the work they do? By "*payment for work*" I'm not referring to the possibility that an art worker can or is able to sell an object or a service, but to the payment and labour standards for the actual often painstaking process of work through which a tangible or an intangible object/service becomes that thing we as audience call art (the final finished project, such as a film, a concert, a performance, a book, a poem, an installation, a photograph, a painting, a sculpture, a song, an exhibition etc.).

In my quest, I turned to the labour and union organising praxis[47] that has in the past couple of years seen an immense revitalisation across the globe, but also in the United States – the country with the highest levels of anti-worker and anti-union politics – where I also work. It was the stories about recent unionising efforts of the so-called unorganised workers from Starbucks to museum workers to the groundbreaking establishment of the Amazon labour Union that can inspire us to act collectively to change unjust or exploitative working conditions.

My ongoing pursuit to put labour organising theory and discourse into practice in the context of art and creative sector is stimulated by a desire to find a collective and not an individualistic approach to issues of rampant exploitation of artwork that is most visible in subpar remuneration for art work and in the lack of labour standards for this kind of work. Why? Because individualist approaches merely reproduce and perpetuate the western ideals of freedom, exceptionality and autonomy that breed competition rather than ideals of cultural solidarity that are vested in collective power. The individualistic approach to solving the problem

40 Bologna, "Workerism," 139
41 Bologna, "Nove oblike dela," 138
42 Bologna, "Nove oblike dela," 139.
43 Bologna, "Nova oblike dela," 139.
44 The provision of public services such as culture, healthcare, education etc. all in the final analysis depend on capital accumulation, but the scope of this essay doesn't allow me to elaborate on this aspect. See Heinrich, 203–208; Praznik, "Autonomy or Disavowal of Socioeconomic Context", 109–112, 116–123.
45 Eric Golo Stone, "Reconsidering the Services Working Group" in Services Working Group January 22–23, 1994, edited by Eric Golo Stone (Vancouver, Fillip, 2021), 13.
46 Fred Hampton "They Killed a Revolutionary But They Can't Kill The Revolution. Speech by Fred Hampton, April 29, 1967," The Movement vol 5, no 12 (1970): 12.
47 The use of the term "praxis" in this way returns us to its linguistic origins where praxis means doing and not as something that at least English language dictionaries define as that which is the opposite to theory, as if doing has nothing to do with theory.

of miserable remuneration and for challenging the status quo leaves art workers isolated as black sheep among the white, dismissed, undermined and called "*difficult.*" As the labour movement struggles, isolating workers and pitting them against other workers is a classic anti-union and anti-labour practice. In the land of "*American dream*" they call it union-busting strategy.

Fragmentation of employment relations and the changes in its legal nature has created a double structured labour market, which at least for the arts sectors in Europe and North America has been the case since the second world war. The double structure of the labour market means that we have a central although shrinking group of safely employed workers on the one side and the growing peripheral market of precarious and poorly paid workers with little to no labour standards on the other. This double structure impacts the organising efforts because of the neoliberal demolition of the welfare state regimes and because organising workers today needs to be based on surpassing structural competition between workers. And perhaps even more importantly, organising needs be based on "*raising expectations*," which according to long time labour organiser, activist and scholar Jane McAlevey, is at the heart of any organisation. People in general "*don't expect much from their jobs, governments, or unions because the reality is they don't get much.*"[48] Nevertheless, the goal is to change that and to raise expectations of (art) workers "*[a]bout what they have a right to expect from their employer, their government, their community, and their union. Expectations about what they themselves are capable of, about the power they could exercise if they worked together, and what they might use that collective power to accomplish.*"[49] Artist and art work organiser Sanela Jahić asked her colleagues; '*Why swim alone in the ocean instead of building a raft or a boat and face the ocean as a group?*' And she couldn't have asked a better question.

I conclude by arguing that organising is central in overcoming the paralysing effects of competition and embedded ideas of individualism among art workers and for a successful building of a culture of solidarity rather than competition. Now when I say union, everyone already is holding a gun to shoot down the idea. Unions are not only de facto in crisis with decreasing membership but also have a fairly poor public image, which is partially because a number of them are hierarchical bureaucratic inert structures that are largely organised according to a servicing model. Servicing model of union leadership means that the union is understood as a top-down organisation that solves job problems for workers. In other words, the union provides services to members who are its customers. Union is led by professional staff and helps the workers by solving a problem for them (usually through a grievance process) rather than involving workers as a collective in the solution (for example by petitioning or protesting), decision-making through which workers get empowered. The latter approach is characteristic of the "*organising model*" and I'll return to it in a minute. Before that I have to emphasise that the poor public image of unions, we should not forget, is also due to over four decades of strong anti-worker attacks by the neoliberal dogmas about freedom and creativity and by liberal triumph over really existing socialist regimes. Finally, it is also not in our favour that the context of the art and creative sector is by definition and historically (as I discussed above) averse to unions, collectivity and solidarity, that is for the most part in profound denial of class struggle in the field of art production.

Today unions have their own issues. One pointed out brilliantly by McAlevey is that they have neglected organising on the account of what she terms "*shallow mobilising.*"[50] Nevertheless, McAlevey due to her long-standing practice of organising builds a powerful argument on what strategies and what kind of unions we need today to build a movement that will be able to bring about social change. And recent cases of labour organising prove her right. Organising art workers is by no means going to be some fancy image of a revolution as it may seem but it will depend on building human connections and empowering relations among people who think they have no power and are trapped in learned helplessness.

For that to happen we need to focus on the *organising model or leadership* to unions (which is different from the service model of a union that I mentioned above) and whole-worker organising because this way we can surpass the divide between social justice movements and labour organising. The organising model has gained increasing popularity in union building and revival across the globe.[51] It centres workers as a tightly knit collective and gives union members a sense of power. Workers in a bottom-up fashion form committees and decide about the strategy and actions plans, they actively and en masse participate in bargaining, canvassing non-members and are supported by the staff and leaders. The union is highly visible, it educates members and situates the struggle for wages, benefits and working conditions in the larger context of improving a community's quality of life.[52] This brings us to the idea of whole-worker organising. The term is also used by McAlevey to emphasise that as working people we are never just and only workers, we wear different hats, and have a variety of interests besides our work. However, that also doesn't make us merely individuals who participate in a plethora of interest groups. With McAlevey's words, "*whole-worker organising begins with the recognition that real people do not live two separate lives, one beginning when they arrive at work and punch the clock and another when they punch out at the end of their shift. Whole worker organising seeks to engage 'whole workers' in the betterment of their lives.*"[53]

This approach is key also for the context of the arts and creative sector because the recognition or acknowledgment that art is also work and that people working in the arts are not merely there to spread their love of art needs to be combined with appreciation for what art can do and how art is a powerful bond for communities and also sometimes (not by default) plays a vital role in social change. In other words, the whole-worker organising strives not to build an alliance between social movement practice and union organising but rather the point is "*to bring community organising techniques right into the shop floor while moving labour organising techniques out into the community.*"[54]

But perhaps the best news of all is that whole-worker or deep organising is a set of skills that McAlevey among others has turned into a teachable methodology that anyone can obtain by training and practice.[55] She didn't invent the model but has adapted it based on her organising experience into a model that can be passed on and emulated. It is based on a couple of core elements. It is based on face-to-face communication or one on one conversations and building relationships with workers that surpass the endemic ways we communicate today via emails, social media networking and so on.[56] Another important ingredient is a collective power structure analysis, which combines the knowledge of each worker about their communities with the conventional research by union professionals.[57] It is done collectively by workers because it helps them to recognise and map the resources and weak points in the power structure so that they can effectively apply their resources and challenge the political and economic powers that rule their lives. So here we are and this is a strategy we should embark on. For example, ask your fellow art workers, what are the three things about their working conditions that they would change tomorrow if they could. This is one central question of the one-on-one conversations that labour organisers hold with workers. And then they listen and collect the answers and soon it may happen there is a group of workers ready to embark on a power structure analysis.

48 Jane McAlevey with Bob Ostertag, *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell): My Decade Fighting for the Labour Movement* (London: Verso, 2014), 12.

49 McAlevey, Raising Expectations,12.

50 Jane McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: organising for Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

51 The model is based on class-struggle unionism of the 1930s and promoted by AFL-CIO's Department of organisation in late 1980s as well by SEIU Local 1199 New England, where it was passed on to McAlevey by her mentors. See Department of organisation and Filed Services ALF-CIO, *Numbers That Count: A Manual of Internal organising* (Washington, DC: Department of organisation and Filed Services ALF-CIO, 1988); McAlevey, *Raising Expectations; McAlevey, No Shortcuts.*

52 See also the chart that compares the servicing and organising model created by Washington Public Employees Association, UFCW Local 365: https://web.archive.org/web/20050918021806/http://www.wpea.org/mobilizing_members_twomodels.htm

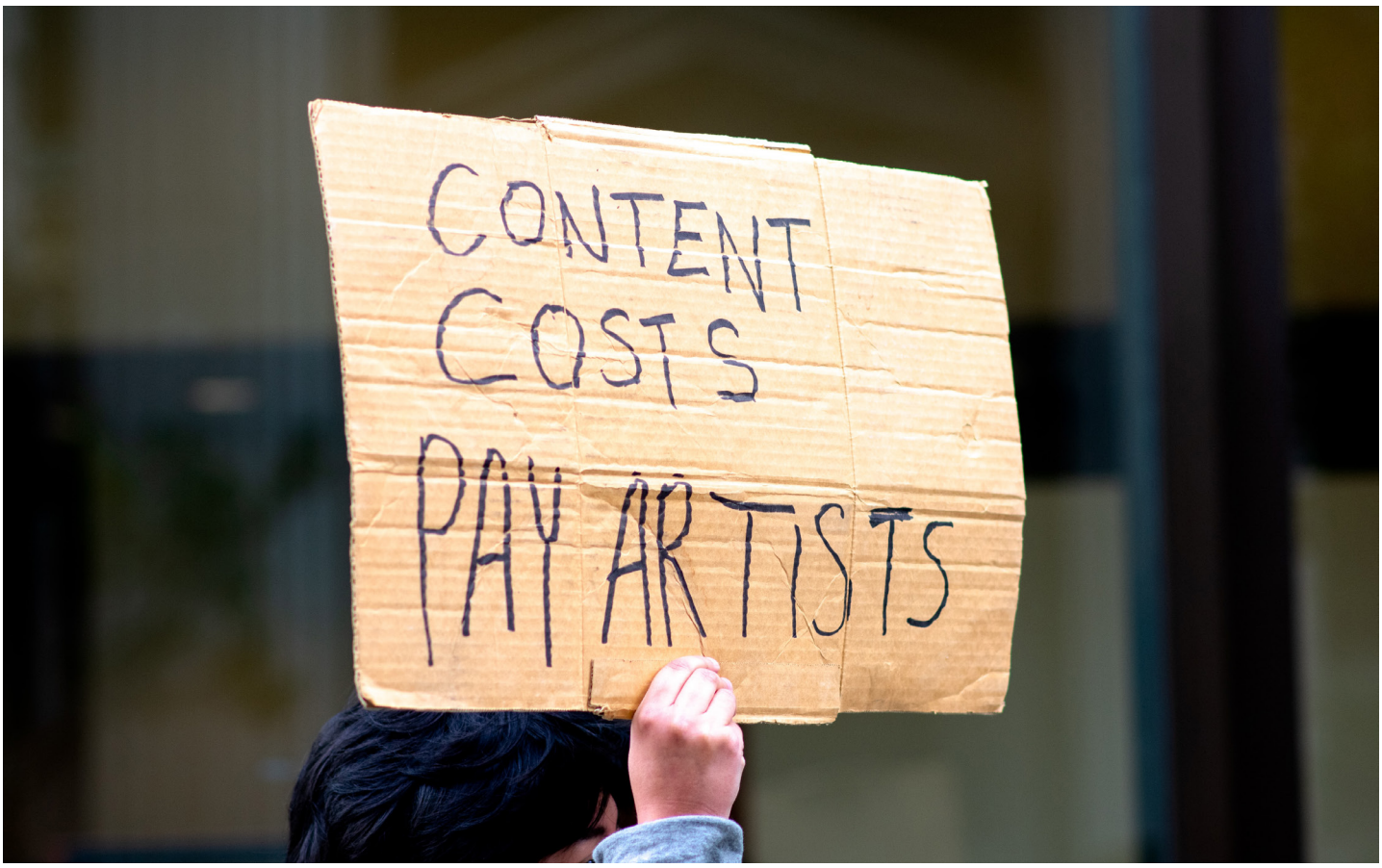
53 McAlevey, *Raising expectations*, 14.

54 McAlevey, *Raising expectations*, 15.

55 See McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*.

56 For example see Jane McAlevey, "How to organise Your Friends and Family on Thanksgiving," *Jacobin*, Nov 27, 2019, https://jacobin.com/2019/11/thanksgiving-organising-activism-friends-family-conversation-presidential-election

57 For more see McAlevey, No Shortcuts and also Sam Gindin, "The Power of Deep organising," *Jacobin*, Dec 8, 2016: https://jacobin.com/2016/12/jane-mcalevey-unions-organising-workers-socialism



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It is precisely this discourse and more importantly the praxis of labour organising that is the solution to the end of exploitation of labour in the institutionalised art and culture and has the promise of emancipation of art as a form of work that is not available only to the privileged upper classes but to anyone who wants to practise it (and until there's capitalism to get paid for such labour). But it has to be combined with a knowledge about the nature of the contemporary world of work, the legal nature of working relations, and a demystification of some long standing pervasive ideas, for starters with the idea that art is not labour. One of the key reasons why this method holds a promise is due to its focus on organising, which as opposed to advocacy or mobilising, counts on mass, inclusive and collective power of (art) workers who are involved in large numbers because they have the power to withdraw labour or other cooperation from those who rely on them. Advocacy is focused on elite power and has low worker involvement and counts on researchers, lawyers and communications firms. Mobilising also focuses on the elite power and can bring larger groups into the struggle but they are not ordinary people or art workers in our case but rather already committed activists. Both strategies for change either rely on one-time wins and narrow policy change or are set in ambitious goals with weak enforcement provisions.[58] Advocacy has been tried in the arts and creative sector over and over again, in recent years also from the point of view of labour standards or fair payment campaigns, however there have not been any significant wins. As experiences show, advocacy campaigns and even grassroots policies to achieve fair payment are either narrowly implemented and have not yet changed the normalised culture of poor payment and lack of labour standards. This is because they are on the one hand technical – it is not an issue to figure out how much an art worker should be paid and it is not really an issue what labour standards should apply to this kind of work, recent examples in several countries attest to that[59] – the issue is implementation, an actual change, and for that I believe we need a mass union of organised solidary art workers who with the sheer mass of their bodies and voices are able to make your theatre stages empty, your museum and gallery walls and rooms void, your radios and speakers silent, your cinemas dark, your book shelves empty and your streets boring and uneventful.

That is why the key solution to instituting labour standards and a living wage for art works is in establishing a mass union because it is only collectively that structural issues such as fragmentation of labour, normalised non-payment or poor payment of work can be overcome and labour standards for art workers secured. Finally, organising and building a mass union is not just a technical matter, a question of skills and methods and manuals. No that is not what I wish you to take away, dear reader. It is first and foremost a political matter, a matter of working-class solidarity and a consequence of not merely understanding how power works but also how to confront its agents collectively. It is a question of art workers' position in the class struggle and also the question that I chose as the title of this essay: *"Which side are you on?"*

58 McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, 9–12.

59 See, for example, initiatives Juist Is Juist in Belgium, Kunstenaars Honorarium in The Netherlands, W.A.G.E. in the United States, or CARFAC in Canada, the oldest one globally: https://www.juistis-juist.be/en/, https://kunstenaarshonorarium.nl/en/for-whom-by-whom/, https://www.carfac.ca/tools/fees/, https://wageforwork.com/home#top

SECTION 2
Making temporal kinships: Beyond the project

Bojana Kunst

Making temporal kinships: Beyond the project

Bojana Kunst

Introduction

There exists a form, which has prevailed in the production of culture and arts, and through which we economise and arrange our working lives today: projects. Artists, but also those working in other creative professions, have this word in common which is often used for describing what it is we do: we work on projects. At first sight, *project* seems an all-encompassing term that is difficult to define. It is used to denote many different activities – from grand artistic events to local dreams, from research activities to construction work. Artists, and workers in the cultural, private, and public sectors are today constantly engaged in projects – often several at once – and move seamlessly between the implementation of one project and the completion of another. Most of their work exists as an endless string of projects, often overlapping with each other. Apart from the projects set in motion, there are also endless numbers of those that have never been carried out, those that have been conceived of for the future but never received the '*drive*' for implementation, which would be the financial (or more accurately, the economic) settlement between the idea of the present and the calculation of the future. It seems that art and the creative professions have never before placed so much emphasis on future projects (in terms of conception, experimentation, reflection, and shaping their content) as well as upon encouraging and practicing the ability to conceive of what is yet to happen. However, despite the focus of artists and other workers in the culture sphere on continuously conceiving the future, we live in a time radically marked by the inability to imagine political and economic ways of life different from the known. Why are we so incapable of imagining and working in ways different from the status quo?

In this essay, I would like to engage with these difficulties and speculate about how to think and work beyond the project. I will limit myself especially to theatre, dance, and performance production, on their workings and institutional context. I would like to show how specific qualities in the process of performance, theatre, and dance, can help us to think and practice another temporality of work, which I will name here *temporal kinship*.

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What is a project?

There is always work that is goal oriented. We want our work to achieve something, to make something: we want our crops to grow, we want to build a good house, we want to create a good theatre performance, and we want the audience to come to the performance. Unlike working on something, it is working *towards* something. A project is a specific temporal form of work, where the value of the work is projected into the future. In the project we speculate about the value of the crops and house in the future. We have to show what kind of value our work will have in the future yet to come. In the project, the value of the present is always in relation to speculation about its value in the future. If this is not the case, then the project fails or it is not recognised as work worth doing.

Project work is therefore different from endless work (like educational work, the work of care, maintenance work, work on the crops, basically all work belonging to social reproduction). Such work cannot contribute to the future rise in value. Its value arises from everyday work and it is not progressive but, rather, always bound to the dense relations of the presence. We love to say we are educating for the future but at the same time, every process of learning is reorganising and reassembling the present, opening up how are we in the world.

When we care for our loved ones or the environment, we do not strive for a healthier future but weave the conditions for living into the present, enabling the well-being of the many who are together in the now and will maybe also continue to live together. Because we cannot speculate about it, it seems as if there is no progress in it, no development in the sense that there is no possibility of additional value (in the sense of investment or profit).

In the project, the work itself has to have a value for the future, but paradoxically this value has yet to be made or created. It is not there yet, and has yet to be recognised and implemented, so it has to strive and become better continuously; it has to produce more to become worthy of its value. For that to be possible, we have to believe that the future is a future of progress, development, and growth. To speculate about value is only possible from this perspective; there should ultimately be something more valuable than the very now-ness of our work. In this way, the project is an ideal temporal form of working in capitalism, because it has a specific relationship between work and the future, which sees the future '*as an open field ahead of us that we can shape and construct through our work*'.[60] But that also means that in our work we are condemned to have a future and because we have a future we have to work, Desideri and Harney write. In this way, we always have to act strategically and should always be productive, organising, structuring, and manipulating time for the future yet to come, only so we can keep working (and surviving).

60 Valentina Desideri, Stefano Harney, Fate Work, A Conversation. [online], Ephemera, Theory & Politics of Organization. Available at: http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/fate-work-conversation.

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A project is a temporal form of work and its evaluation is enmeshed with the capitalist creation of value and the modern understanding of temporality, where time is seen as progress, development, continuous discovery, and creation of the new. The meaning of the Latin word *projectum* is '*throwing something forth*'. I cannot help but see the image of the javelin thrower, where the winner best combines strength, the anticipation of all the forces that might hinder the throw, and the ability to ignore anything that might threaten the endeavour. The thrower starts again each time the throw happens because even if the thrower stands in the same place, the relationships and expectations have already changed. Projection is thus also the ability to disregard, to render invisible what does not count, what is in-between, to subtract and erase distracting elements and factors, especially if they do not contribute to the value that is ultimately associated with the longest flight. The path must carve its straight line regardless of the obstacles. Capitalist projects in this way calculate their value of the future without including the rights of nature, without taking into consideration communities or environments, the rights of the present time from which they are moulding their projections. In the same way, artistic projects calculate their value in the future without recognising the diversity and various abilities or disabilities of bodies, communities, and cultural environments, the asymmetric conditions of race, class, or gender, different micropolitical locations and power structures, which have very different temporal rhythms and relations to the present time. Projects privilege able bodies and flexible subjectivities, and even if they are involved in the imagination of a '*better*' future, they are mostly creating hierarchical and anxious environments, where the sap of the present is squeezed like an orange to give everything to the future to come. In that way, projective time causes a lot of anxiety and exhaustion, because it constantly drives the rhythm of work and erases the value of repetition, insistence, and incompleteness. This is particularly significant for artistic and other creative professions, where it goes hand-in-hand with an expectation of being able to experiment with time, but at the same time demanding that something is ultimately thrown forward, that something is taken from the present to create value in the future yet to come.

A bit of history

In this essay, I relate the project to how capitalism creates value with the manipulation of time ahead of us (this can be either a time of living beings, nature, or matter). I relate project work also to the many facets of modern temporality and the ideology of continuous progress, which is related to the financialisation of the future (what is projected is a value). This kind of understanding is also deeply ingrained in the production, evaluation, and distribution of artistic works, including ones that are deeply critical of the ideologies of modernity and the outcomes of capitalism. It is not only a pragmatic way to organise work, but it is a form that adds depth to existences and possible futures, and which shape the political and social lives of artistic environments. There are two reasons the project is so prevalent in artistic work. First, project temporality is still embedded in the very modern idea of the artist as she who can create visions and make suggestions about the future, she who always somehow embraces the new. This idea persists still in many of the applications, competitions, and their understanding of values. It is still one of the forces shaping not only the artistic market but also proposals in cultural politics. The second reason is that artists today mostly operate like small entrepreneurs, who must always be able to show the value of their project (their work is privatised, personalised) for the future and persuade the investors (public or private) to support them. Most of the artists work then as *'projectors'*, described in a Daniel Defoe text, *An Essay Upon Projects*, written as far back as 1672. In this lengthy, detailed document, Defoe, besides being critical of misogyny, of the exclusion of women from education/professions, of banks and their punishment of debtors, also wrote about projects and projectors and their role in the economic progress of society. The essay is primarily concerned with the observation and analysis of the important figures in the advancement of early capitalist society. From today's perspective, projectors are firstly capitalists; their description is quite similar to what we perceive today as small business owners or entrepreneurs. However, among the projectors, writes Defoe, there have always been '*more geese than swans*'. A large proportion of projectors use covert '*trick and cheat*' tactics, but there are also those who '*direct their thoughts to honest creation, established upon the platform of intelligence and integrity*'. Defoe distinguishes between a mere projector and an honest projector, the former being a contemptible thing, the latter being someone who creates what he envisioned, makes his project a reality, '*and contents himself with the real produce as the profit of his invention*'.[61]

61 Daniel Defoe, An Essay Upon Projects, http://www.online-literature.com/defoe/upon-projects/2/

What Defoe does in this essay is to distinguish between projectors as criminals and those who are working for the benefit of society. I am curious what Defoe would say today about artists as projectors, and other workers in the public sector, in science, and in various public/private enterprises. Nowadays it often happens that artists are seen mostly as corrupted projectors, especially in the context of a huge distrust of public services, cuts to public money, and where attacks on artists are at the forefront of discussions about which culture is worth supporting, with many moral and political arguments. But while Defoe was critical of corrupted capitalists and embraced the projectors who worked towards the betterment of society, nowadays artists are attacked as corrupted because they are working inside a public environment and understanding their place within the community. In addition, those who are attacking them are the corrupted projectors, the ones who work for private interests, and for whom Defoe, in his early essay, had only contempt.

However, are we not living in a time where the idea of the artist at the forefront of time has finally been abandoned? In our time, the consequences of modern temporality (with its progress and development) are becoming visible and frightening; we can see how such temporality of continuous growth and development is destroying the environment and also radically changing the experience of the future yet to come. How is it that in this time of precarious future, of demands to shift our understanding of progressive temporality and develop other temporal modes, which would enable us to stay enmeshed in the troubles of this world, projects are still flourishing, accelerating, and expanding as never before? Why is it almost impossible to be an artist or a cultural worker if you are not a projector too?

Let's look at another use of the word *project* in the arts, which is more emancipatory and bound to experimentation and collective work. This usage is very different to project as a capitalist form of working, which speculates about the future value of the now. In his text, *Beyond the Project*, Simon Bayly refers to a historical study of two authors, who observed the use of the word project in French conceptual art from the middle of the 1960s on. In this period, artists used the word project to resist the fetishisation of the artistic work (the object) and to strengthen their collaborative and interdisciplinary nature, resisting the singular authorship of work. From the middle of the 20th century, a project also became a pragmatic emancipatory notion in arts, replacing the value of artistic work as a final object and shifting attention from the product to the process. The project then created the possibility of temporal experimentation, which not only takes time but allows one to play with time – re-appropriate and change it. The project opened up the possibility of *making* as a shared, convivial, changing, and inventive temporal process.[62] In this way, the project opened the artistic work to intermediality and the collective process but also included failure and incompleteness. This mirrored the strong interest of the artistic work from the second half of the 20th century in abandoning the normative criteria of totality and perfection, bringing art closer to life. So how is it that we find ourselves today in the grip of projective proposals, which instead of opening up the artwork to experimentation and dissolving individualities, instead of maintaining processes and relations in the present (even including failure), have to subsume themselves into the production of value in the future? And how is it that in this kind of production, even if it is full of experiments, projects somehow destroy the time for political alliances and complex social processes, and erase durations of alliances?

I would link this to the specific changes, which happened in capitalism from the 1970s on and with the rise of Post-Fordist production, financial capitalism, and neoliberalism. They do not only erase the relational, communal, and collective forms of working, but also devalue the work of social reproduction (paradoxically with the privatisation of emotional and affective work) and radically affect our understanding of public services and the public in general. With global neoliberal shifts, with Post-Fordist experimentation with time and flexibility, with the capitalist production of subjectivity (the production of lives instead of objects), the experimentation with time became crucial for the creation of value. Jobs became not only flexible and precarious, but many communal relations became part of capitalist financial flows. This has had a destructive effect, not only on public services but also on communities and ways of life, which cannot be included in the production of value. At the same time, this is a temporality of continuous accumulation and the push for continuous growth, even paradoxically in the very present in which we live, radically unsettles exactly those projections in the future, because maybe there will be no future at all.

So how can we then imagine ways of thinking and making beyond the project, that would be more embedded in the difficulties of the present and their production more akin to the work of social reproduction? Henri Lefebvre writes about an architect and an electrician who work on the same house but experience the temporality of their work differently. If the architect is a projector in the sense that he is engaged with the totality of what the building will become, the electrician comes there every day to maintain the electric infrastructure, with no regard to the totality of time. However, I would add, there is a difference between the architect who can complete his house only in relation to its new value in the future, and the architect, who works more as an electrician, whose work is arising from relations to the present. Such an architect is not erasing the temporalities of how and by whom the house will be built, the impact on the environment, communities etc. The temporality of his project is arising from the micropolitical relations constituting the very act of building the house. Because what ultimately enables the house are the temporal kinships between the multiplicity of agents – human and also beyond the human. The house has a future not because of its future value, but because the very making of it belongs to the present, to the relations of the very now of work.

Temporal kinships

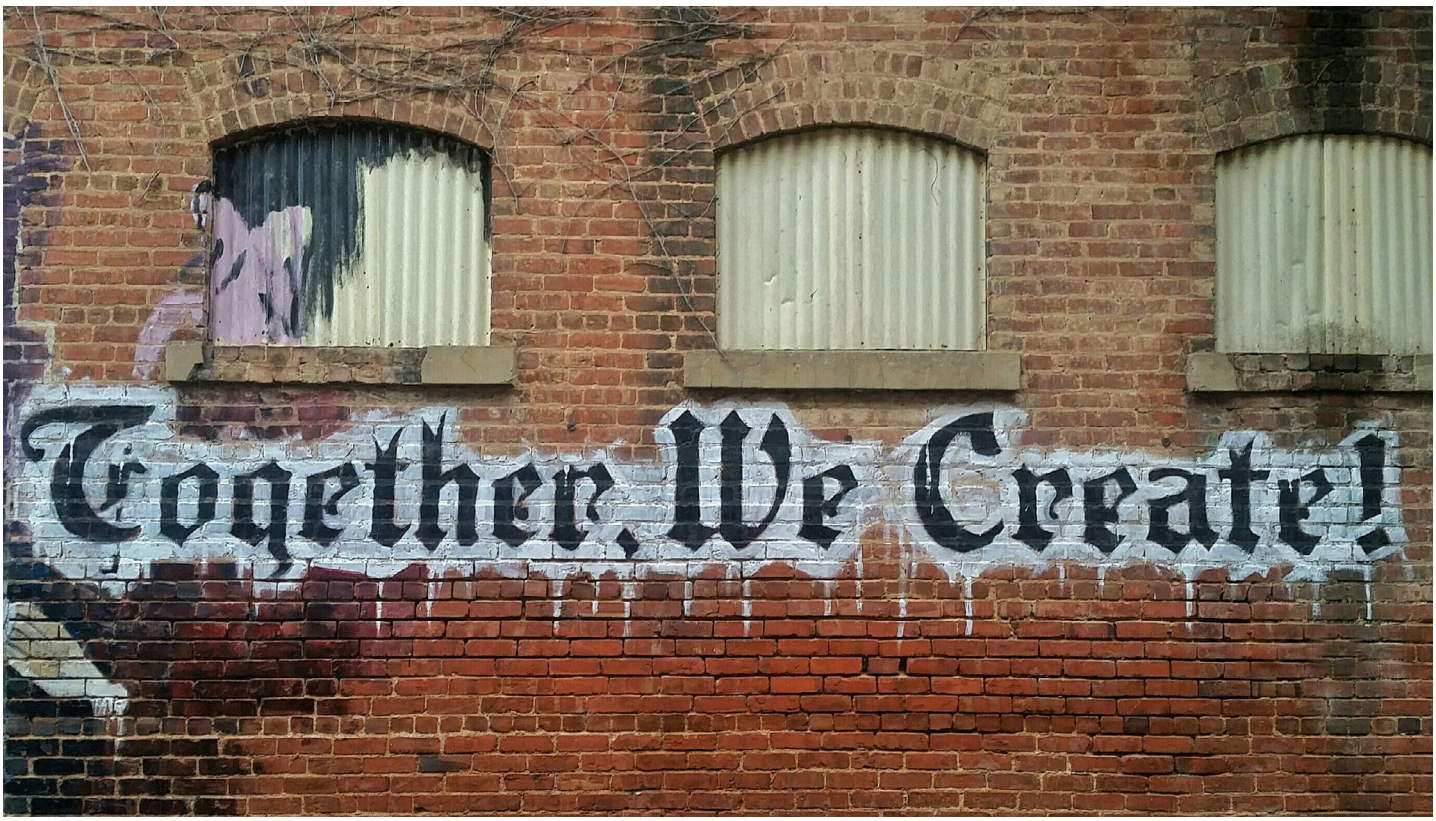
What does it mean for the artistic work to belong to the very now of work, to be enmeshed in the present? Again, the relation to the work of social reproduction can help here. I don't want to romanticise it, because we know well that the work of social reproduction is at the core of various hierarchies (such as gender divisions). Rather I would like to demystify it, make it more visible and present in our everyday theatre, dance and performance practice.

The temporality of social reproduction is, as an example, touched upon in the manifesto of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969). In this manifesto, she introduces another idea of artistic labour, related to the labour of social reproduction and maintenance of life. She writes from the perspective of an artist who is also a mother, taking care of her child and the household. She establishes a distinction between the two principles of art: development and maintenance. If the first is aimed at individual creation, '*the new; change; progress, advance, excitement, flight or fleeing,*' the second principle, which she describes as maintenance, has different qualities. Maintenance is '*keep[ing] the dust off the pure individual creation; to preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight.*'[63] This second principle is related to the series of sensual paradoxes, which show: how everything is created from dependencies; how everything exists only through a relation of care; how any change must also be sustained; how there is always something new from which the dust should be continuously cleaned. Whatever we do and create (or better yet *re*-create) belongs to the dense mess of the presence, and artistic practice is no exception.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles turns our attention to another temporality of work, which is due to the very pressing ecological and environmental crisis. This is related to discussions about the different economies, modes of sharing, and distribution of sources. In the arts, having more performances and arts projects which address current problems is not enough, if we do not also alter how they are produced and shared, how they belong to the environment, and how they are maintained. The current discussions around a more sustainable economy, long-term solutions for de-growth, and economy of the commons, influence not only the themes and concepts of performances, and the curatorial ideas of festivals and art events; they also deeply unsettle how arts and performance are created, supported, evaluated, and shared with the audience. Performance itself is an experiment in alternative forms of temporalities, economies, and more varied practices of living. It is, therefore, necessary also to think about cultural politics through a more durational and diversified perspective, which would work beyond the evaluation and short-term perspective of

62 Johnnie Gratton, Michael Sheringham (Eds) (2005), The Art of the Project, Oxford: Berg Hahn Books. See also: Simon Bayly (2013), The End of the Project: Futurity in the Culture of Catastrophe, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities,* 18 (2).

63 Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1969), Manifesto for Maintenance Art.



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the applications and projects. This is even more important in this time of economic crisis, where there is a danger – due to cuts in public budgets – of a scaling down of all the practices and living inventions, which are an intrinsic part of the ecosphere of the performance. There is a risk that those practices which are related to the development of different working processes – sharing of knowledge, developing experimental and convivial environments (through laboratories, work in progress, collaborative processes), and inventing other processes of organising and economic distribution – will be destroyed due to lack of public support. Consequently, the focus will be increasingly put on the competitive individualism of the project's most visible content.

So how can cultural politics work beyond the project? It is not enough to respond to the troubles of this world through ever more environmentally conscious performances, events, and festivals. In this time of crisis, it must participate in creating a sustainable infrastructure that will survive the political, social, and economic crises. It has to work towards being more sustainably embedded in diverse artistic fields.

Performance as an art practice can be especially helpful in learning, practicing, and creating ways of sharing, collaborating, and conviviality. My use of the word *performance* here differs from how it was used in the studies of performance in the last few decades; performance here is not used to describe the constitution of the self or subjectivity, nor as a term describing the change in capitalist production, its understanding of productivity and efficiency. As Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović claim, performance should instead be explored as transindividual practice, going beyond the performance of the self.[64] In my understanding, performance is also a micropolitical and embodied experimentation with temporality, a daily continuous process of rearrangement and redistribution of collective, collaborative, and relational desires, a continuous re-creation of the common. Even if it seems at first sight, that every performance creates its miniature world and has some similarities with the projective time (process versus product, isolation in the studio, resynchronisation with the showing at the end), this is not the core temporality of the performance work. The making of performance as I understand it and how it was practiced in the last decades (especially in more experimental formats and independent fields of performance), is far from project temporality. So much in the work on performance depends on the capricious winds of the present, on the continuous negotiation with the liminality of its practice, which is never a practice of the one, but always a practice of the many. Working on the performance is a continuous rearrangement and attention to the micropolitical acts of the bodies and relations, objects, and atmospheres, which are an intrinsic part of experimentation in performance. The performance consists of the whole series of temporal and spatial practices, collective and collaborative methods, economies and dispositive of rehearsals, production modes, contextualisation, and dissemination. It arises from the biospheres of working, which constitute its event. In this way, the work on performance also becomes an experiment in temporality, but not oriented to the future yet to come, it rather arises from temporal kinships of the present. I use here the word kinships intentionally, referring to the specific use of the notion of 'being kin', as used by Donna Haraway, where being kin goes beyond the family or human kinship. For Haraway, making kin is part of the feminist imagination in action, actively establishing kinships with bodies (human and beyond the human): objects, atmospheres, things, and environments. This is how she describes making kin in one interview: '*Making kin seems to me the thing that we most need to be doing in a world that rips us apart from each other […]. By kin I mean those who have an enduring mutual, obligatory, non-optional, you-can't-just-cast-that-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient, enduring relatedness that carries consequences.*'[65] From the perspective of performance, making kin means going beyond the performance group working on the performance or beyond the very individuality of performance work. It is about opening up to how performance is enmeshed in the social fabric, and how it is weaved together through many different mutual obligations. It is working towards something but it does not belong to the project time, because in this *working towards*, the relations are re-arranged, the spaces inhabited differently, and time is plentiful. In this sense, performance lingers inside the temporal kinships with the present, because the work in performance belongs to the maintenance of relations and not the development of the new. Performance is making kin through time, decelerating, reorienting, repeating, recycling, and recreating time; this is at the core of the poetics of work on performance.

The work on performance corresponds with the queer, feminist, and decolonial approaches to time, which relate in a better way to the crisis and ecological disaster we are living in. In this way, performance as an art practice (especially collaborative, experimental work) has a lot of

64 Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović (2022), Towards a Transindividual self, A Study in social dramaturgy, Oslo National Academy of the Arts.
65 See Donna Haraway, available at: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/making-kin-an-interview-with-donna-haraway/

knowledge and experience in de-projecting, like sharing knowledge and practices, decelerating time through repetition and restaging, maintaining time for collaborative processes to last, etc. However such knowledge is rarely used and recognised in the creation of cultural political models, for an understanding of how to build a better environment for art practice. Seldom is the experience and knowledge of the artists intertwined with discussions on the new modes of temporal politics and duration in this era of crisis. Performance (especially through the lens of cultural politics) is still too often seen as a poetic intervention, a singular action, an event, or a temporal summary at the end of the process, which is isolated from the duration of social realities, bodies, and objects that form it.

If we go from this idea of performance as a field of temporal kinships, how can this help us imagine different models in the organisation of politics, cultural politics, and economies in which we are living? What would it look like to think and work beyond the project? I would like to speculate about that in the following three points.

1. The performance always belongs to the many; it is a work of the many, regardless of whether it is a solo or a group performance. Performance artists addressed this in the performances from the last decades: how they always work inside dense networks of relations; how their work belongs to the rearrangement of those relations and continuous negotiations with the spaces they inhabit; how they are deeply related to the recreation of lives around them (like proximity to activism, self-organisation of living, political grassroots initiatives, etc.). This means that performance is not a singular practice, but rather a dense environment, where multiple practices are enmeshed and at home together. It is an environment where institutional theatres are dependent on precarious collectives, where experimental forms and radical critique can spill over into more institutionally framed repertory politics. Because for (just one) performance to be made, the whole environment is necessary. In this sense, cultural politics has to develop more sustainable models of redistribution of support, through which the balance between different articulations is maintained and various practices can last. This is not about the preservation of specific practices or singular works, but about the recognition of the whole biosphere of artistic works. If cultural politics were no longer organised around singular works, it would become more ecological, because it would approach the artwork as a field of practice and every work as a poetic and political environment concerning others. This is especially crucial in a time of economic crisis, where cuts to the arts always affect the most precarious agents in the field. Cultural politics should learn to practice redistribution throughout the entire field, among the many living and working there. With the focus on the biosphere, time also gets another rhythm, instead of projecting into the future and accelerating the competition of applications (in the hope of maybe making it at the end), the time of work gets more horizontal, gets a muddy, flowing quality of a river with many interconnected streams. Some say it is impossible to think about the future if we do not learn how to live more enmeshed, dependent lives. However, this is also valid for art, we need a poetic and political reinvention (but also recognition) of how the making of art is always already redistributed among many, belonging to – and at the same time creating – the biosphere of practices. That is why we need the maintenance *of biospheres instead of the accumulation of projects*. This should be a politics of listening to the scenes, fields, and environments of art, which demand porosity of institutional borders and work towards their common survival.

2. As I wrote previously, the project temporality squeezes the sap of the present in the name of the future yet to come. This has also serious consequences on accessibility, on who can inhabit, visit, and even make herself a home inside the biosphere of artistic and performance practices. Due to the acceleration of time, which has to be managed efficiently to keep up with the applications and projects piling up, certain (project) fitness is acquired. A certain bodily capacity and adjustment of lives is required, which excludes those who cannot keep up with its accelerated tempo. This fitness is violent since there is a kind of presupposition that projects are independent of the conditions of their agents, which all have to work in the same way with no regard to their economic, class, or gender difference. At the same time, the consequence of such project fitness is an overproduction at work, which is felt not only in the lives of artists but also in how art is shared with their audiences. This does not mean that there are too many artists and events, the problem is rather how and to whom they are accessible, how they are open to various temporalities, capacities, and flows of lives, and how their accessibility is spread through the whole biosphere. Accessibility has become an important issue in recent years, but it is mostly limited to the bureaucratic regulation of access, representation, and equality, not does not engage with the problem at the core of the very production of arts: the demand to be fit for the project. From the perspective of temporal kinships, accessibility means that bodies with different temporal needs can come together and share the performances or other works of art, inhabit political and poetic practices inside biospheres of art, which as we saw in the previous paragraph cannot be divided from other social and political environments. Institutionally the production of art (and performances) is still organised around able bodies, working bodies of the artists, and the resting bodies of their audiences, where the precarious flexible body of the artist entertains the free time of the mostly middle-class labourer. If we abandon the fitness of the project value, the whole biosphere of art will become more accessible since it will be open to different capacities, more sustainable, slower running, more aware of the context and conditions, in negotiations with different capacities of lives. In addition, in this way it can also become open to various audiences and visitors, because the time will be there to endure and continue the practices, to repeat and maintain the habits of poetic inventions. Accessibility belongs to the formation of temporal kinships: how to enable time for various bodies to come together. Instead of managing the projects yet to come, we have to make time and space for the diversity of practices and celebrate their multiple temporalities.

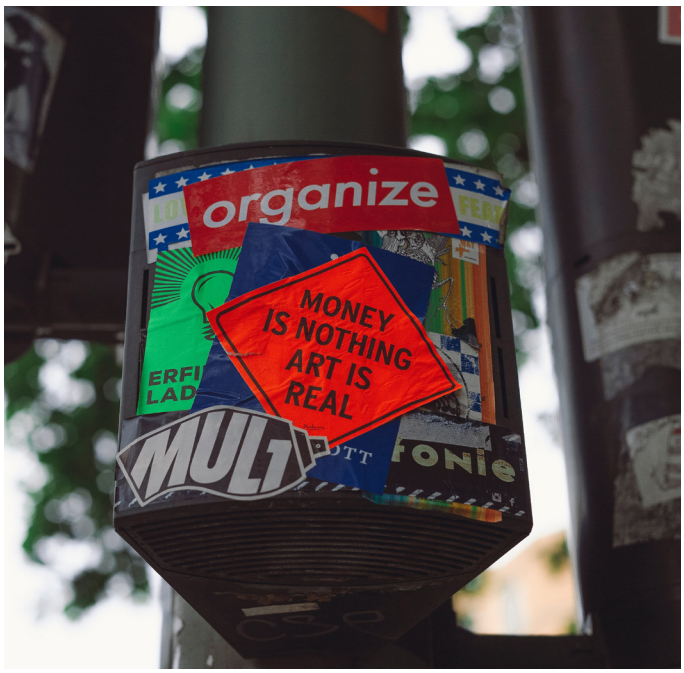
3. A lot of work in art and performance does not belong to the imagination of the project but rather to its implementation, and continuous organisation of the present so that the work of the imagined (and applied) project can happen. This is usually the most precarious field of work, done with temporary contracts, mostly done by women (women curators, producers, organisers, etc.), but also by artists, especially outside their working hours, in their free time. This work also shows how dull the future of project temporality and its projection of value is; it continuously needs maintenance in the present to be somehow achieved in the end. Therefore, we should turn the perspective around and make visible the maintenance of the present, the relations which are created in the present, make visible the bodies that are doing it, and amplify the noise of care that is continuously going on in the background of art projects. What can we hear inside this noise and how does what we hear change the experience of time? I wrote previously that the focus on the work of social reproduction can help us to resist project temporality, but only if this work is at the same time demystified, if it becomes amplified and visible. We can do this in two connected ways: politicise it and at the same time make it visible poetically. When we politicise it, the hierarchies and power positions, which are established through project temporality become clearer. There are huge differences between a) temporally/spatially able bodies, which can still exist in the imagination of projects and move between many of them at the same time; and b) the temporal-spatial experience of the bodies, which do not have the access to such flow of projects, due to the very different temporal and spatial structure of their lives. The unsustainability of the support structures we have now in many European environments originates from the fact that these structures rather reinforce this split instead of diminishing or eliminating it (like gender difference, motherhood, visa accessibility, disability, etc.). Behind the idea of the project is a specific flexible subjectivity, which is in complete contradiction with the needs of the environment in which we are living. Instead of individual developments, we need more collective knowledge and experiences, but also forms of support, which would recognise this need for collective reorganisation and for hearing the background noise of care. In this way, the work of social reproduction comes to the forefront, as something which is shared and belongs to the common. It is not delegated to specific precarious and invisible professions. In many artistic grassroots initiatives, the goal is to amplify the noise of care, to bring its temporality to the forefront of poetic creation; to poetically and politically invent more collective and joined structures of care and support. The care here is not about the future value, but about living in the present, about the very relations which constitute our work and living and which have to be continuously imagined and poetically re-invented, together. This is very much what art can do in troubled times, but for that, it must also change how it exists in the world.

SECTION 3
An Attractive Low-Income Profession

Hans Abbing

An Attractive Low-Income Profession

Hans Abbing



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Artists in all of the art disciplines throughout the West are on average poor, and many of their art careers are unsustainable in terms of making a living. This is, in part no doubt, because of the exceptional appeal of the arts as a profession, which originates in the modern human desire to work in a field where one can express oneself. In this context, I will focus on various new developments, like those of artists with a hybrid art practice, more and more self-taught artists and new bohemian artists who care little about money and success. I will also look at art education, at the fading boundaries between the art disciplines and state support of the arts. I conclude that, for the time being, careers in the arts will on the whole remain unsustainable… and, furthermore, that this is not totally bad.

The artists I have in mind are Western artists working in a variety of disciplines. However, I pay extra attention to popular musicians. I know that the IETM membership is made up mostly of artists and arts organisations working in the often called "*established*" performing arts.[66] But, as we shall see, many popular music careers are also quite unsustainable. And popular musicians are, of course, also performers. By elucidating insights from the angle of their careers, I hope to shed a new light on the careers of artists in the contemporary performing arts.

Poor artists. Second jobs. Artists are pretty poor *on average*. This can be extrapolated across the entire range of individual disciplines in both the established and popular arts. Some artists have *overall* incomes that fall below the, so called, poverty threshold. Since they often have other sources of income, their *overall* incomes are not always so meagre, although their incomes earned exclusively *from their art* is low; too low for many to work full-time as artists. Much of the research shows that the average overall income of artists is around 60% of what workers in professions with a similar level of education earn.[67] Over the course of the average artist's career, the income gap will continue to increase. While people in other fields will begin to earn more as their career progresses, artists' incomes remain stagnant.[68] Recent data is scarce, but a Norwegian researcher found that in Norway between 2006 and 2013 artists' incomes earned from an art work-corrected for inflation-has declined slightly.[69] The available data show that the income gap between self-taught artists and that of academy educated artists remains small.[70] Some evidence even indicates that in some areas self-taught artists are doing better than artists with art degrees.[71]

Given the average abysmally low incomes earned in their field, it is no surprise that most artists also have non-art jobs in order to survive. Many artists have second jobs and/or receive some form of social benefits and/or are supported by others, mostly partners. Holding a variety of jobs is important, and research shows that the phenomenon of multiple-jobholding has increased over the last decades, and that most artists do *not* have full time jobs in the arts. The average artist currently spends circa 40% of his or her working hours on activities other than the making of art. I don't know of any other major occupation where the average professional spends so much of his or her time engaged in paid activities outside of one's field.

The research mostly focuses on *professional* artists. There are a variety of definitions of professionality and methods for defining what a professional artist is. Definitions of professional artist often include: "*having graduated", "earning more from one's art than from outside activities*", "*having institutional recognition*", "*the artist perceiving oneself as a professional artist*", among others. Each one of these criteria can be criticised on one level or another especially when art academy attendance is a primary criterion.[72] Many art theorists today readily agree that many self-taught artists can indeed be considered professional artists. The number of self-taught artists is usually underestimated, however.[73] It is obvious that self-taught artists have not taught themselves. They simply did not attend an official arts academy, preferring for one reason or another to pursue their arts education in their own manner. The many definitions for what constitutes a professional artist means that the boundaries between professional, semi-professional and amateur artists remain unclear—and are becoming hazier over time. But existing data is nevertheless informative, especially when they focus on trends regarding artists' income and numbers of artists.

There are likely to be clear differences between countries, disciplines and those who identify themselves as performing or creative artists. Performance artists who are members of established performing art organisations tend to be better off in general. With regard to boundaries, it can be argued that many so-called performers are, in fact, creative artists or *also* creative artists. Conductors and directors and, to varying degrees, actors and musicians in smaller ensembles must also be considered creative artists because they often have creative input when it comes to their performances. They are indeed creative-performers. Their relative number in the established performing arts has increased over time. The overwhelming majority of popular musicians are creative performers, unlike most musicians in the classical music world. But the boundaries between "*mere*" performers and creative performers has become increasingly less clear in the course of this century.

66 The distinction between popular art and the other art is becoming less clear and this is significant. I nevertheless observed that many people and policy-makers still distinguish the two (See also Abbing, 2022). The terms that are used for other than popular art, however, differ. To mention a few: high art, highbrow art, traditional art, established art and recognised art. Dutch statisticians speak of canonised arts. In my own texts I tend to use the term 'serious art'. In this text, however, I use the relatively neutral term 'established'.

67 Alper and Wassall (2006) analyse a variety of research reports in both the US and Europe.

68 (Alper and Wassall, 2006).

69 (Mangset et al., 2018).

70 (Filer, 1986) and (Alper and Wassall, 2006).

71 (Towse, 2006) and (Towse, 2019). But recent Danish research shows that, at least in Denmark, academy-educated artists officially perform better in most art disciplines. (Bille & Jensen, 2016)

72 (Abbing, 2022) Chapter 3 section 17.

73 This is certainly the case if one uses artist members of one or another artists' association as a primary characteristic of what constitutes an artist. (Abbing, 2022) Chapter 3, Section 17.

Referring to the aforementioned data, many economists would argue that there is an oversupply of art and artists, and policymakers increasingly agree with this assessment. But I shall argue that incomes will remain low regardless of whether there are fewer or more artists. There is more or less supply but not necessarily an *over*supply.[74] The term oversupply is often used to institute unpleasant policies, such as the closure of art academies, for instance.

But supply and demand are not unrelated. Most Western nations have seen significant increases in prosperity over the past several decades. It is therefore not surprising that both the demand for art and the number of artists has increased dramatically. At the same time, consumer preferences have evolved. A much more significant portion of overall spending on the arts is now on popular art. This shift has little to do with social class. Significant numbers of elites can often be seen in attendance at popular art performances.[75]

Self-expression. Many artists are prepared to work for low incomes and many have second jobs that enable them to continue to create their art. Why is that? Why are the arts so exceptionally attractive? A 2015 German opinion poll found that 24 percent of the young indicated that they wanted to become artists.[76]

The incomes of artists had already begun to decline in the nineteenth century, when a liberal humanist view of the self as a coherent entity began to take hold.[77] This view contributed to the romantic ideals of authenticity and freedom, befitting the emerging primacy of the individual.[78] The ideals of autonomy and authenticity continue to thrive today over a century later. Autonomy kindles self-discovery, self-fulfilment and self-expression. Considering the perpetual low incomes of artists it seems like the desire to express oneself—one's self—or actualise oneself is stronger than ever—despite the gloomy income prospects. There is no self-actualisation without some degree of autonomy. The majority of workers in the popular performing arts have more freedom than those in the established performing arts, and the opportunity to express themselves is also larger. This in part explains why their numbers continue to grow so that today there are many more pop musicians than classical musicians. Demand for pop musicians also continues to explode. Audiences seem to prefer artists who openly express themselves.

Workers in countless other professions have periodic opportunities to be creative in their jobs. But artists can offer proof of their creativity to audiences small and large. People appreciate their authentic and unique work and appreciation is always valued by the artist. Meanwhile, creative technicians or managers do not often get to express themselves through their work, and when they do, it is noticed by very few.

Similar explanations can be offered for why artists choose to become artists and accept the fact that they will most likely be working for low wages. Many artists value the freedom and autonomy that comes with being an artist. Some—not all!—creative artists and creative-performance artists consider being self-employed another plus. The arts, however, remain a risky profession, and certainly when artists are self-employed. Thus, some social scientists observe that among the young who desire to become artists there is a propensity to seek out risk, which represents another perk to pursuing the arts. But this special attraction of risk in a profession can only exist if the young have a clear safety net. Many social-democratic countries have this kind of safety net, but this net is often insufficient and unattractive for many artists. However, knowing that there are family members who will come to the rescue when artists are in a dire financial predicament is certainly reassuring. No need to point out that a family safety net for the poorer among the young aspiring artists is usually absent. This is one of the reasons why there are few artists from poor families.

New bohemians. Broader societal developments in the more prosperous countries has seen the emergence of a new kind of artist. I call them "*new bohemians*", because like the bohemians of old, they are passionate and accept the risks of their artistic endeavour, while generally having some family safety net to fall back on. The new bohemians usually do not care much about money or success.[79] But there are also differences between the old and new bohemians. Being an artist is seldom a vocation for the latter. And leaving the arts and going for another occupation they often regard as a real possibility. Not by choice but they may actually relish the change. Staff members at certain arts organisations, such as small record labels, art dealers and publishers, can also be new bohemians. In this text I pay particular attention to the group of new bohemians, because although many of their careers may be unsustainable, many of them don't seem to care.[80]

In 1972 artist Josef Beuys declared: "*Everyone is an artist*". At the time, this was a provocative statement, but in the twenty-first century far more among the young than ever before believe that anybody can be an artist. Most of the young, however, eventually choose not to become artists. Some, however, consider self-expression as essential and chose to become artists—at least for a while. This may bring them some status, but far less than in the previous century. And any status will certainly not compensate for their low earnings. Typical of this breed of new bohemians is their carefree attitude, which also characterises their choice of occupation. "*Why not do something we enjoy and where we can freely express ourselves? Why not become an artist?*" It will very likely not work out, but if it does not, there will be other opportunities, which will probably end up not being so bad after all. This carefree attitude can, of course, only exist in prosperous countries.

Part of the enjoyment involves belonging to a group of like-minded people. This is especially easy to find in the popular performing arts. where artists often "*band together*". These young artists often create art together and they are often part of a larger network of producers, staff at small labels, among others, in which they play an active role. It's a DIY culture where self-organisation and peer-to-peer education are important values. They often manage to sustain their art practices by seeking out irregular forms of income in the art world such as gigs, commissions, by commoning, by holding down second jobs and by being supported by family and friends.[81] An interesting characteristic of the new bohemians is that many of them make little effort to separate artistic from business activities, which are often integrated into their art activities.[82] When we question them, they often find it difficult to tell how much time they spend on making art or running a business or on non-art related activities.[83] They do not seem overly concerned about making these distinctions. And the success of one of their mates is seldom met with jealousy or rejection, even if the art has become more commercial and mainstream. Also, their departure from the art world is usually no big deal. There is no shame or sense of failure. All of this befits their carefree attitude.

The young, new bohemians may be carefree, but this does not mean they do not have values. Self-expression is their driving force and this may very well have a moral dimension. Creating art is linked to individual modes of existence and personally meaningful notions of a good life. In other words, there is often a longing to live an "*ethical life*", which can make precarity and meagre earnings seem worth it all.[84] A precarious existence can actually coexist with joy and pleasure.

The phenomenon is important in the popular performing arts, but is not entirely absent from the established performing arts. New bohemians can also be found in the margins of the established music, dance and theatre worlds. For those involved money and success are less an issue than it used to be. However, their numbers are smaller. Many performers in the established arenas are highly skilled and therefore have more to lose.

74 (Hesters, 2021) presents more and different arguments of why the notion of oversupply makes no sense. At least not in the case of the performing arts in Belgium.

75 As far as I know, this applies to most Western countries. In the Netherlands, we see this in the statistics provided in successive SCP reports.

76 (Mirzoeff, 2016).

77 (Abbing, 2002).

78 For a discussion of the romantic notion of expressive authenticity, see (Viannini & Williams, 2009).

79 (Van Dyk, 2018) and others treat the phenomenon of new bohemians in and outside the art world from the broad perspective of what is called wageless work and a wageless life.

80 This essay only focuses on a small selection of new bohemian artists and arts organisations. Meanwhile, some social scientists, such as Richard Florida, use the term bohemian (minus the "new" adjective) in a broader sense, to refer to both artists and other workers in the creative industries.

81 (Alacovska, 2018).

82 (Schediwy et al., 2018) (Everts et al., 2021).

83 (Everts & Haynes, 2021).

84 (Alacovska, 2021) and (Threadgold, 2018).

Artists engaged in hybrid art practices. This century has seen the emergence of another kind of artist who is likely to become increasingly important in the coming decades. These artists are engaged in hybrid art practices. It is well possible that their overall practice is more sustainable than that of other artists, and one can certainly make a case that they are no less relevant.

The term "*hybrid artist*" is not new. Social scientists applied the term to artists who also hold down a second, art-related job, which may involve helping to construct theatre stages or mount paintings on museum walls or sitting on a committee to decide on artist grants. But the term has increasingly come to mean artists who have an art-related second job in which they cooperate with non-artists while providing unique artistic input in a non-art product.[85] Their input can only be provided by an artist. This second job is not always necessary to maintain one's own art practice, in fact, they often choose this particular kind of second job out of a sense of conviction. They function as professionals in their own art practices but also when they are cooperating with or working for non-artists. To make it clear: in this they are professionals, not amateurs or hobbyists. More artists begin to realise that this kind of second job is not a second-best choice or anything to be ashamed of. It is something they chose for. One example are artists who make their own art but also design games for a company, where they may have artistic input. Sometimes hybridisation occurs; the artists stop distinguishing between one's own autonomous work and cooperative work with non-artists.[86] Art education can prepare students for a hybrid practice.

Art education. That many graduates from official art academies have a hard time making it, live a precarious life, have short careers, or, immediately after graduation, decide not to pursue their art is not new or unique. The short career or no career phenomena also occur in other disciplines, but to a lesser degree. A new development, however, is that academy staff have become more concerned about these phenomena. Staff members now tend to highlight the fact that job opportunities are few and incomes are low. They don't want their education to result in precarity. Staff members have, moreover, become increasingly aware that more and more students are also engaged in alternative curricula or upon graduation pursue other non-art careers. What they have also noticed is that some self-taught artists tend to be more successful. And they are aware that after a long period of growth in the number and size of art academies, governments have become more critical and sometimes opt to close some of these institutions.

There are a variety of possible responses: One involves preparing students for situations in which they combine their art practice with a better-paid, non-art practice which may require considerable parallel schooling. A result is that there are now art academies that have allied themselves with non-art higher education institutions. Together they develop new kinds of inter-faculties in which students can learn skills that enable them to have both an art career and an art-related practice. One example is the RASL in Rotterdam. Here the inter-faculty is organised by the Codarts art institute together with the arts and culture department at Erasmus University in Rotterdam.[87] Graduates receive a dual degree.

This is one response. Another—sometimes simultaneous—response is to better prepare artists for a hybrid art practice. For instance, audio-visual skills used to be taught to enable students to create audio-visual art. But now the taught skills are broader in an effort to better prepare students to have artistic input in projects in which they cooperate with non-artists in creating non-art products with an audio-visual component. One example is the game industry, which we mentioned earlier. Another example is prospective composers—classical as well as DJ-producers—being taught skills necessary in the world of advertising.

So-called transprofessional skills are taught. The result is "*expanding professionalism*".[88] It is interesting to note that people involved in these transprofessional approaches to art education emphasise that a different mindset is necessary in the pursuit of a hybrid art practice career, which will ultimately require some "*unlearning*". Having an overly fixed view of what art or an artist is can hinder the broadening of an artist's perspective.[89]

I think that, given the general precarity of the arts, it would be beneficial if more art academies began preparing their students for hybrid practices. This is even possible in institutions that teach high levels of technical skills that are needed for the performance of among others classical music and ballet. A book by Finnish researchers emphasises the expanding of professionalism in music and music education.[90] Many interprofessional collaborative projects are discussed in this book. And, in the context of a pilot program, one of the researchers focused on three socially engaged projects. The artists were engaged in transprofessional work while continuing with their own art projects. They never became simply social workers. In one of the three projects, the involved artists were music professional graduates and in another the participants were dance professional graduates.[91]

Post-graduates often complain about the cultural entrepreneurship courses in the official arts education curriculum, which apparently seldom led to a more sustainable career. These courses can be improved by becoming more practice oriented. The best scenario is "*learning by doing*" while taking courses. In the Netherlands, subsidised courses are offered by Cultuur+Ondernemen (the Culture and Entrepreneurship institute), which offers courses for all kinds of practising self-employed artists and artists with temporary contracts. A similar but smaller organisation is the Braenstorm Academy. (I am a board member here.) Several participants are active in new art disciplines or sub-disciplines under the rubric "urban art". Participants may also study networking and promotion strategies—in both the real as well as digital world. One goal of these institutions is to increase the, so-called, earning capacity of artists. This is why they are subsidised. If they succeed in teaching artists to be successful this justifies further or increased subsidies. Scientists at Rotterdam Erasmus University are currently developing instruments to measure the results. Official arts education institutions often feature related expertise, and could begin offering these types of courses to practising post-graduates and self-taught artists alike.

Fading boundaries. Fading boundaries are typical of the arts as currently practised. The boundaries are becoming increasingly fuzzy. Is a tattoo artist a "*true*" artist? (In some places in the US he or she is considered an artist.) Is all urban art real art? And are make-up artists and those who produce self-made videos and Instagram memes, and all those "*performers*" on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok true artists too? Some can actually make a living from their activities. Is it visual art plus theatre? Are they new art forms? If we agree they are artists, it becomes even harder to draw a line between professional, semi-professional and amateur. The drawing of boundaries often depends on the definition of professionality. As said, art theorists agree that graduating with an official arts academy is not an accurate criterion any more. Given most other definitions they could well be professional artists. But could they be entitled to ask and receive subsidies like "*regular*" artists?

As we mentioned earlier, the boundary between "*mere*" performers and creative performers is becoming increasingly unclear in all of the performing arts. Meanwhile, boundaries between recognised art forms and genres have also become less clear. There is a lot of crossover art, which often makes it impossible to tell where one genre stops and another begins. Artists today tend to operate in various hard to distinguish niche markets simultaneously. The lack of well-defined niche markets often makes it difficult for artists to find enough customers to sustain their practices. This is particularly difficult in the online art world.

One can currently find thousands of contemporary popular music niches and sub-genres on platforms like Spotify. Since both established and newer kinds of artists are participating in the so-called platform economy, distinguishing between professional and amateur has become increasingly difficult. A good example of this difficulty occurs when composers and musicians upload their music onto consumer-oriented platforms such as

85 (Abbing, 2002), (Lehikoinen, 2018) (Lehikoinen et al., 2021) and (Abbing, 2022).
86 Dutch research (Winkel et al., 2012) (in Dutch) shows that a decade ago this kind of hybridisation was rare. The authors, however, used a narrower definition of hybrid artist.
87 See: https://rasl.nu/education/codarts-euc/.
88 (Westerlund & Gaunt, 2021)
89 (Lehikoinen et al., 2021).
90 (Westerlund & Gaunt, 2021)
91 (Westerlund et al., 2021). Related articles: (Lehikoinen et al., 2021) and (Lehikoinen, 2018).

Spotify, Deezer and YouTube and on producer-oriented platforms such as Beatport, Bandcamp and Soundcloud. The total number of available tracks is huge. Meanwhile more contemporary composer-performers of classical music offer work on these platforms and some become popular. Some, like Wim Mertens or Steve Reich, are very successful on the platforms.

If we measure likes or streams, some artists are obviously more successful and earn more money on the platforms than others. But saying that those with the most likes or streams are professional artists while the rest are not makes no sense. Some are also very active in the off-line or real world, while others are not. But other than a few well-known ultra-successful artists, it is impossible to tell whether any one artist on the platforms is a professional, a semi-professional or an amateur, let alone if he or she is self-taught or academy educated. It is also impossible to tell whether their careers are sustainable or unsustainable, or whether they qualify for funding.

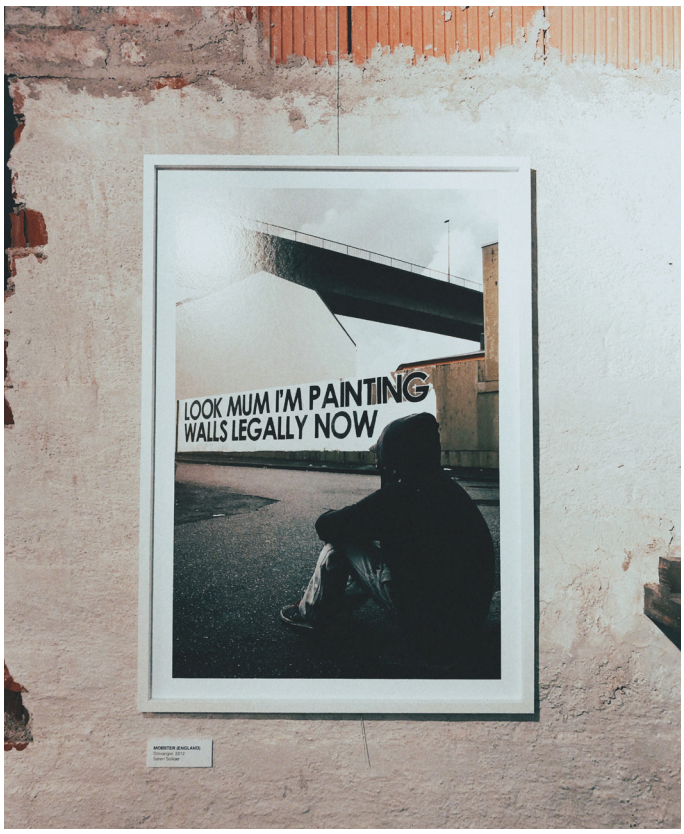
But the introduction of more or better regulations that cover copyright protection also for work on the platforms, for instance, is not impossible.

State support and demand factors. The effect of state support on the average income of artists is fairly limited. Since the 1970s, a goal of funding has been the improvement of the economic position of artists. Since the second world war most countries saw a dramatic increase in arts subsidies per capita until about 1980. The 1980s were a time of funding cuts in most countries. But the remarkable thing is that neither the increase nor the decrease in funding levels had an effect on the poverty levels of artists. So we can attribute this poverty among artists to factors other than funding levels.

But the impact of subsidies on groups of artists are not insignificant. Evidence from the twentieth century shows that more public support for *individual* artists actually led to an increased influx of new artists seeking careers; as a result the low-income problem persisted.[92] Generous subsidies for artists may be perceived by prospective artists as the presence of a safety net. Subsidies for individual artists still exist but the relative size of the arts budget for individuals is now much smaller and most of the available funding goes to artists who are already successful because, as the argument goes, they boost a particular nation's international cultural prestige. There is no recent definitive research that has determined whether funding levels have any discernible effect on the total number of artists. I think that in this century the effect is inconsequential—artists become artists regardless of the availability of funding.

The impact that the *distribution* of subsidies has on various artistic sectors and the demand for art both have far more effect on the employment of various groups of both lower- and higher-income artists. This is a particularly important point in the established performing arts in the West. After the second world war, demand for performances, corrected for population fluctuation, decreased considerably, while that for popular art performances increased dramatically. It has been only since circa 1980 that general demand for established art began to rise again—except in the world of classical music. The nature, variety and setting of theatre and dance and to a lesser degree opera, began appealing to younger audiences. The greying of the audience was reversed. But classical music with its formal setting and emphasis on the works of the great composers from the past saw an increase in the greying of its audience. In this century the average age of a classical music audience is still high, but concerts that feature a more informal and relaxed setting and a more varied repertoire, that for instance includes film music and crossover music, now have far younger audiences than in the past.[93]

State support has certainly played a role in these developments. In the previous century in several European countries national and local governments funded ensembles and venues to cover their deficits. This enabled the status quo to be maintained and had the effect of stifling innovation. To put it bluntly, it enabled these entities to be "*lazy*". It was mainly new ensembles that introduced change and innovation and, as a result, they became successful. Eventually a more flexible funding system and criticism of various key performers stimulated the older theatre



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and dance groups to begin innovating as well. This led to increases in employment for actors and dancers. This trend did not, however, carry over to the classical music world. The largest portion of total subsidies continued to go to the very costly, large orchestras. And when in the 1980s subsidies stopped increasing, several large orchestras went bankrupt, which, in turn, led to considerable levels of unemployment among classical musicians.

The funding trend has always been to prioritise famous, so-called "*excellent*" ensembles, but became even more prominent in our current century. Local arts lobbies and politicians play a role in the promotion of international cultural prestige. And despite—or maybe precisely *because*—of the decreasing popularity and demand for classical music this world is still the recipient of a lion's share of subsidies even today. In 2015, the Arts Council England allotted 85% of its £96 million music budget to opera and classical music while supporting almost exclusively the large prestigious venues and ensembles.[94] If a much larger portion of the budget were to be allotted to less prestigious and more innovative ensembles and venues, employment figures for performers would, thanks to subsidies, increase and that would include increased employment of classical musicians.

All this is not to say that subsidies cannot have an effect on the average income of *groups* of artists. It can. I earlier mentioned the subsidised courses that lead to increased incomes among participating artists. Regulations that protect artists can certainly also have a positive effect. But certain groups of artists also have power. Artists themselves can achieve much, for instance, through collective actions and unionisation. Nevertheless, the overwhelming willingness to work for low wages ensures that artists will continue to be exploited, by both commercial and nonprofit art organisations.[95] But this can be mitigated through collective bargaining and regulations that protect the interests of the artists.

92 (Menger & Gurgand, 1996), (Benhamou, 2000), (Abbing, 2002) and (Heian et al., 2008).

93 These findings are based on Dutch data found in various SCP reports that focused on developments that affected demand in the performing arts and detailed various traits of audiences.

94 Laura Bradon, "Small music venues are dying—blame the obsession with classical music", The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/18/small-music-venues (accessed 9/10/2022).

95 (Abbing, 2014).

To conclude, in practice there are no effective ways to raise the *average* income of *all* artists while, at the same time, making their careers more sustainable. Closing down official educational institutions really has no positive effect because the arts remain incredibly attractive to this very day. The young have found alternative ways to work as artists. It is possible that in the coming decades the arts will become less grand, less special and therefore less exceptionally attractive. Especially when the definition of what constitutes being art and an artist becomes less evident and is extended beyond the current parameters, the arts may well become less unique and less attractive. The platform economy may contribute to this downturn. But we are talking decades rather than years from now.

For the time being, we should accept the fact that many art careers are simply not sustainable and that this is not the end of the world. One can also offer the young the option of an exciting but perhaps temporary career in the arts before moving on to less exciting but better paid and stable jobs. As noted, working in the arts can be a less alienating experience and a somewhat precarious existence can go hand-in-hand with joy and pleasure. Moreover, those who stop being artists may actually end up continuing to make art as passionate amateurs. They can, for instance, easily upload their beats to Spotify or creative memes to Instagram or play in a good amateur classical music ensemble. What remains sad, however, is that low class youngsters usually do not have the safety nets that will enable them to become artists. Very few succeed. And they are mostly selected and educated by various upper-class gatekeepers. Although it is difficult—I do not know of any lasting successful projects that address this issue—I think that local governments could give lower-class young potential artists better options and space in which to create their *own* art, and not just the art that pleases the upper classes or art that will be appropriated by them. I am convinced that constructive self-expression is especially important for under-privileged people.

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