

Paying Artists Research *Phase 2 Findings*



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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The aim of [a-n The Artists Information Company](#) and [AIR Artists Interaction and Representation](#) is to affirm the value of artists in society and improve artists' status and economic conditions. a-n/AIR regularly undertake a range of research and consultations to ensure that knowledge of visual arts practitioners and the circumstances in which artists practise is current and accurate. This is not only to ensure that the programmes and activities they directly provide for artists are relevant and timely, but also to inform discussions and advocacy with partners, funders, stakeholders and employers.

a-n/AIR commissioned DHA to explore artists' experiences of exhibiting and exhibition practice through interviews with artists, building on data from an online survey already undertaken.¹ In addition, a number of interviews were undertaken with publicly-funded venues to explore perceptions and issues from both sides of the experience. This summary offers a brief overview of the main findings from these interviews.

Artists

- Artists report a mixed portfolio of activities which makes up their work as professional artists. For some, this portfolio adds to their overall practice; for others, elements within it are seen as undertaken primarily for economic rather than artistic reasons.
- Whilst sales and exhibitions are not seen as key income drivers, more established artists do stress the need to ensure that their overall portfolio of activities supports them in making a living income.
- Artists exhibit in order to: gain exposure for their work; gain feedback from a range of places; engage with the public; connect to the wider artworld, including curators and other artists; and to have the opportunity and impetus to create work which they would not otherwise create.
- Barriers to artists exhibiting focus less on the absence of opportunities, more on the quality of individual opportunities to exhibit. Competition for the 'best' opportunities is something which artists recognise. Building the right networks and connections is considered important in gaining access to good opportunities to exhibit.
- Artists report weighing up a number of issues in deciding whether to pursue an opportunity to exhibit. These issues include: time constraints, and particularly other professional commitments (such as teaching) which have to be met to ensure income; the 'quality' of the artistic opportunity on offer, and the sense of 'fit' with the potential venue and its programme; and the financial costs of exhibiting, particularly the question of whether expenses are covered. Overall, this assessment of 'opportunity costs' is something artists report undertaking on a case by case basis.
- When engaging with venues in developing and undertaking exhibitions, artists reporting poor practice have particularly highlighted experiences where there is a lack of clarity from the venue on arrangements (including confirmation of an offer and financial and practical arrangements), which can lead to artists perceiving a lack of professionalism from venues and their staff. There is also a sense from some artists that they are not prioritised when the different costs of supporting an exhibition are considered.
- Early career artists are more likely to report not receiving a fee for an exhibition. Those artists who are more established stress the importance of artists knowing what to ask for, and of being prepared to ask for it.
- Artists report benefiting significantly from positive engagement with curators and other staff at venues, where exhibition experiences have been good. They refer to: the expertise and

¹ The findings of this survey are published in the report: *Paying Artists Research. Phase 1 Findings*. The report can be accessed at: www.a-n.co.uk

guidance of curators; the opportunity to connect with the wider artworld (including critics) through networks which the venue/curator have; the role which venues can play in mediating between the artist and the local community and context; and the support which venues can give to artists in developing innovative work, and work which would not be created otherwise.

- More generally, participants in the research report being selective about the venues they work with where they are able to be. Experiencing better practice and support from some venues has prompted artists to expect better experiences elsewhere. Artists feel that they should be insisting upon better support and terms and conditions from venues, but not all were confident to do so and some suggest that it might be difficult to raise and talk about these issues as individuals. They also feel that the better practice that they do experience in some venues should be shared more widely.
- Publicly-funded venues are seen as important in supporting artists to take risks. When deciding on whether to take up exhibition opportunities or not, artists report considering the collaboration and intellectual 'fit' with the venue as particularly important.

Venues

- On the whole venues do not have a separate exhibitions policy, but include organisational statements on their approach to exhibitions in their business plan or mission statement. However, many participants in the research report having submissions guidance, and one had a more extended set of guidance for artists covering exhibitions practice.
- Venues feel that their role in exhibitions, beyond providing a space for work to be seen in, includes supporting artistic merit and practice via commissioning and engaging audiences through quality interpretation.
- All the venues participating in this research report fundraising beyond their revenue or core funding in order to support exhibition programmes. Venues report working closely with artists to support them in developing and submitting applications for funding, and for some it was considered important that the venue supplied this expertise, so that the artists could be worked with because of their artistic merit, rather than their ability to fundraise.
- Venues usually programme in the context of needing to balance all the different space they have, and over an extended period with significant lead-in time for individual exhibitions. Venues report a range of different ways in which artists are engaged, including solo and group shows, through the provision of studio space and through residencies.
- Unsolicited submissions from artists are always unlikely to be accepted, but curators see such submissions as a useful way of being introduced to new artists whose work they might follow over time. Where an artist's work is of interest to a venue, they might engage with that artists over time; curators see developing artists and their careers as one of their key roles. Some venues report that the costs of visiting other venues and artists to see work is not always covered in organisations' budgets, and can be difficult to afford.
- None of the participating venues has a 'policy' on fees for exhibitions and commissions, through individually they report having a kind of internal 'standard practice'. On the whole respondents feel that artists do not expect fees for the exhibition (as opposed to commissions), and group shows in particular are considered too costly on the whole to provide a fee per artist. By comparison, venues are clear that fees for events (including talks, workshops and learning activities) are paid for in addition to any arrangements made for exhibitions and commissions.
- In terms of expenses, the venues participating in the research report paying travel, transport and installation expenses to artists as standard. They also report meeting the costs of private viewings, though some respondents suggest that meeting these costs is becoming difficult.
- Venues feel that the benefits of exhibiting for artists include: raising the profile of their work; being able to use the catalogue and images produced in sharing their work; the

opportunity to network with others from the art world; and the mentoring and critiquing role which curators and other senior figures can play.

- On the whole, venues report concern over the effect of reductions in public investment on their ability to continue current activity, and some respondents did link these concerns to the impact which they may have on the sustainability of artists' careers.
- In terms of the pay and conditions which artists receive, improving fees for exhibitions was not particularly considered a priority by participating venues; nor were the pay and conditions of artists more generally considered a particular talking point in the sector at the moment.

Introduction

1. Introduction

In January 2013 [a-n The Artists Information Company](#) and [AIR Artists Interaction and Representation](#) commissioned DHA to undertake the Paying artists research study looking specifically at artists' experiences of exhibiting, with a particular focus on exhibition practice in publicly-funded galleries. a-n/AIR regularly undertake a range of research and consultations, providing an evidence base and information point around good practice for the professional visual arts sector and for art education.

The aim of the Paying artists study is to understand what the range of different experiences and practice is, to identify both good and poor practice, and to consider – where possible – what kind of recommendations might be made for sharing and spreading good practice more widely.

The study has three phases:

- An online survey, designed in consultation with members of the AIR council, exploring artists' experiences of exhibition practice;
- A phase of interviews with artists and those running and curating exhibition spaces;
- A final phase of drawing together evidence from across the survey, interviews, case studies and other examples, in order to develop a range of thinking and advocacy materials upon which to base proposals for improved practice.

This report presents the findings from the interviews, and considers different experiences and approaches.

This introduction offers a brief overview of the design of the questions for the semi-structured interviews, and of the sample selected for interviews.

1.1 The interview structure

Interviews were undertaken in the summer of 2013.

The interviews with artists covered the following areas:

- Background information, including their current artistic practice and income from that practice, and the degree to which they exhibit regularly.
- Motivations and barriers for artists in developing their practice and exhibiting, including exploring what artists feel they get from the process of exhibiting their work and what practical challenges exist in securing suitable exhibition opportunities.
- Payment and support received by artists in relation to exhibitions, including experiences of contracts, fees and expenses, and of other kinds of support from galleries.
- How artists feel about the future, and what they would like to see improved or changed.

The interviews with venues covered the following areas:

- Background information on their current exhibition programme, including policy and approach, lead-in times and the overall balance of different kinds of exhibitions.
- Motivations and barriers in working with artists, including approaches to selecting artists for exhibitions, what they feel the benefits of exhibitions are to artists and how exhibitions are funded.
- Approaches to paying and supporting artists to exhibit and undertake related activities.
- How venues feel about future opportunities to work with artists and support exhibitions, and what they would like to see improved or changed.

1.2 Interview Participants

Artists

In total nine interviews were undertaken with artists. Six were recruited through the survey undertaken in the first phase, and three were recruited directly through a-n/AIR. The group included both artists based in London and based in different regions. Participants were asked (either through the survey or directly in the interview) to identify what stage of their career they felt they were at. Four participants identified themselves as ‘established artists’; three as ‘mid-career artists’; and two as ‘early career’ artists. All those artists participating in the interviews had exhibited in a publicly-funded gallery in the last three years. Of those who were selected through the survey, both artists who reported good and poor experiences of exhibition practice were chosen.

All the artists participating in both phases of this study are a-n/AIR members, due to the recruitment approach. At the time of the Phase 1 survey, a-n/AIR had c. 17,000 members; whilst this is unlikely to represent the total population of visual artists in the UK, the relative scale of the membership suggests that it should comprise a significant proportion of that population.²

The selection process described here seeks to ensure that some breadth and balance of experiences could be explored in this study. This sample is small, and should not be considered representative of the wider population of visual artists, and so caution should be taken in considering what the implications of the findings of this study might be for all visual artists. In addition, some potential ‘variables’ in demographic or practice characteristics (e.g. age, specific artform, emphasis on different types of practice, etc) which may be important in the ways in which artists engage with and experience exhibition practice cannot be explored in any detail here. What is important to note, however, is the relative coherence between the broad findings of the survey and the more detailed responses offered within this phase of fieldwork, suggesting that the issues and opportunities discussed here are likely to reflect the experiences of a group wider than the participating sample.

Venues

Venues referred to – both positively and negatively - in the responses to the Phase 1 survey were identified to create a long-list of those publicly-funded venues in the UK from which to seek interview participants. 11 venues agreed to participate, with nine based in England (including venues based in both rural and urban locations) and one each from Wales and Scotland. Eight of the venues programmed work across a wide range of forms/media; two were venues exhibiting craft forms, and one focused on digital art and new technologies.

As with the artists who participated in this research, this selection process sought to ensure some breadth and balance of approaches and circumstances in which venues might operate. Again, the sample is small and should not be considered representative of all publicly-funded venues exhibiting visual arts.

² It is difficult to assess exactly what proportion of the potential constituency of visual artists are a-n/AIR members; the Labour Force Survey for the period January – December 2011 reports just over 42,000 artists (ONS, 2011). Beyond this group, some proportion of those listing their occupation as photographers, in some areas of web design, and in the applied arts (textiles, ceramics and glass, weavers and knitters) would also be relevant to this constituency.

Findings

2. Findings - Artists

2.1 Artistic Practice

The artists interviewed had a range of different experience levels and artistic practices. The majority of them work 'portfolio careers' combining different roles in their work sometimes combining roles they perceived as being beyond their core artistic practice. These are discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1 Sources of Income

There is much evidence from the interviews of artists working a diversity of roles to earn a viable income from their art practice; a strategy of focusing on one role and developing that exclusively is not economically viable.

Artists have very different perspectives on whether all these roles are part of their core artistic practice, or whether these roles are undertaken as a financial vehicle to allow them to spend the rest of their time focussing on what they consider their core artistic practice. For example, one artist reports only earning 5% of their income from their core artistic practice; the other 95% of income is derived from being an art teacher which they feel is not connected to their practice.

The general point is that two artists with similar roles can perceive them very differently: one viewing teaching as an inevitable compromise, the other seeing it as an extension or integral part of their artistic practice.

Yes it was a good job [teaching] and I think a lot of people do it, and I think it's good to do something part time that gets you an OK amount of money and I did really enjoy it but it's always been something I did to support what I wanted to do for the rest of the week. (Mid-career artist).

I consider it [teaching] very much part of my practice. It doesn't feel like a compromise in that sense. (Established artist).

It is hard to discern a linear career strategy from many of the artists interviewed. While they have strong ideas about how they would like their careers to develop and what kind of work they want to be doing, many are uncertain about how they will be earning income after their current projects finish. Additionally, career paths display a degree of serendipity rather than strategy, and have to be constructed often without clear or obvious routes to follow. Interviewees report discovering new opportunities and roles as their careers progressed.

Artists report teaching, commissions, research, writing and socially-engaged art as the key roles earning them an income, with commissions and teaching being the most important, and many interviewees work a mix of these roles simultaneously or consecutively. Exhibitions are not an important source of income for any of the interviewees.

Sales are either irrelevant or secondary for most artists; none report sales as their key income generator or as their key priority when producing their art but there were significant differences in perspective. The majority of interviewees view sales of their work as a secondary benefit, something to be welcomed but not integral to shaping their practice; one interviewee, however, stressed the importance of a commercial imperative:

In terms of my survival strategies, and in terms of being able to keep going they both, commercial and practice development come hand in hand...I tend not to be able to do what I'm doing unless I was paid for it. And that's always my bottom line. (Established artist).

There is a strong sense from this particular interviewee that commercial considerations are integral to maintaining this artist's practice, and that finding the balance or 'fit' between the practice and income is fundamentally important. Proper financial support and funding is also considered essential for the quality of the art work:

If you get to the point where the idea itself has to be produced or modified in a way that is undermining the core intentions simply because of the lack of technical or financial support, then it maybe at that point that the project is fatally flawed. (Established artist).

2.1.2 Motivations to exhibit

All the artists interviewed, even the emerging artists, have significant experience of exhibiting. Exhibitions are a very important feature of artistic practice for all interviewees, and the main reasons for exhibiting work are: to gain exposure; to gain feedback; as a means to having a conversation with public and the art world; to work collaboratively with other art professionals (artists, curators); and because exhibitions provide the opportunity to create work that simply would not be possible otherwise.

Interviewees feel strongly that exhibitions are the most effective vehicle for getting their work out to the wider art scene and the general public; this was particularly emphasized by emerging artists. This exposure can subsequently lead to more opportunities for commissions, residencies and sales:

Obviously people see your work and the public can see your work, but probably more importantly in terms of career and income is that the art world can see your work. (Mid-career artist).

It's a way to get my work seen and to be part of the artistic scene. (Emerging artist).

Closely connected to exposure, and often an outcome of it, is the feedback or 'conversation' that exhibitions afford.

For me it's important having feedback from your peer group on your work and moving forward and then you learn from that as well. So one piece leads to the next and you develop, not just skill but other work. (Established artist)

Feedback from both the general public and peers is seen as valuable. Some interviewees push this further, viewing exhibitions as a space for conversation through their art:

You don't just produce for yourself. You can tell yourself that you just produce what's in your head but you want to communicate what you do to other people whether they are looking at it to understand, appreciate or buy. So it's vital to communicate. (Established artist).

But I think it's the feedback, for me that's important. It's like a conversation really, that's how I view it. That enables me to judge what I'm doing and where I'm next going to go...it's creating a dialogue with the people who are curating and I think that the dialogue is very important because whichever format the work is shown it's going to have a different outcome. And I think if people like your work it is very encouraging and if they don't it is also useful to know why. (Mid-career artist).

Artists also value the opportunity and experience of working together with curators and other professionals connected to exhibitions, including peers where the exhibition was group based.

It gives you the chance to work with a new group of people and develop work around a team (Mid-career artist)

I worked for a very small space . . . with quite a modest budget but it was clear that there was a strong belief in what they were doing from the beginning and that they were going to work extremely hard on a shared agenda with me to make the work happen, and that was more valuable than if there had been an extremely well funded private institution (Established artist)

For one interviewee exhibitions are essential to the work being created in the first instance:

[The reason for exhibiting is] to realise work that could only ever exist in theory otherwise. [To gain] The possibility of critical feedback. It's possible to work on things that have a greater ambition and work collaboratively with a venue or a commissioning agent . . . the exhibiting isn't the basis of the work but a lot of my work can't exist without a venue. (Established artist).

2.1.3 Barriers to exhibiting

Interviewees report a number of challenges with galleries and other exhibition spaces that could be considered barriers in exhibiting their work. None of the artists interviewed report a lack of 'opportunities' to exhibit: all interviewees report no real issues securing offers to exhibit their work, although not all offers are the same or equal.³ Artists distinguish between spaces on the basis of reputation, support, fees and their previous experience of working with venues.

The significant questions here concern how artists secure opportunities to exhibit work in venues that are artistically appropriate for their work, that are able to undertake necessarily activities effectively upon their part, and where there is the potential that artists will receive fees and/or appropriate production costs and support. In some cases, this comes down to competition:

It's not difficult to get my work exhibited but sometimes the challenge is to get my work exhibited in the best possible circumstances. So there is extreme competition for working with the best museums and commissioning agents and making sure that you're working in the best possible conditions so that your work isn't compromised. (Established artist).

For others at different career stages, building profile and networks is key:

I'm at the stage in the past couple of years where people are just approaching me. But before that it's difficult to know where to start. Usually everything is through your peers. (Mid-career artist)

. . . you have to keep your profile up in the domain of galleries. So you have to spend so much time sending things out, making sure people know what you are doing . . . you hope you might jog a mind and then suddenly you'll get an email or call saying we're looking into doing something along those themes and would like you to take part. (Mid-career artist).

For most, the key issue is not the absence of opportunities, but the quality of those opportunities. Reported barriers to exhibiting centred on time constraints, artistic and professional reasons and the associated financial costs for artists of exhibiting their work in particular spaces.⁴ Interviewees report weighing up these different issues, in the context of the given point in their career, when deciding whether an exhibition offer is beneficial.

The following two sub-sections look at these barriers in detail, considering those which arise from the personal circumstances of the artist and those which reflect venue policy and practice.

³ It is worth noting that the selection process for the interview sample in this study required those participating to have had some experience of exhibiting in a publicly-funded venue in the last three years; this will have precluded artists without this experience, and therefore this sample is not representative of wider experiences of all artists.

⁴ The issue of costs is considered highly contingent on the 'quality' of the offer to exhibit, as well as being contingent on the associated fees and production support attached to the offer.

Personal circumstances

The personal circumstances of artists that can amount to a barrier to exhibiting work predominantly relate to time constraints and/or opportunity costs connected to other commitments. Participating in exhibitions can be time and resource intensive and so an artist's ability to take up an offer is contingent upon existing commitments. Additionally, participating in exhibitions is an opportunity cost for artists who could spend that time in other roles that are financially more rewarding. Given the significant importance of exhibitions to an artist's practice, there was a general feeling from interviewees that if the offer to exhibit was too good for them to refuse, particularly for artistic reasons, then time and resources would have to be found; this might often cost the artist directly, either through actual costs of making work and exhibiting, or because of lost income from other work not pursued.

Interviewees stressed that not all exhibition offers are considered appropriate for their work, and that selecting the 'right' exhibitions is important in building their artistic profile. Although artists may be left 'out of pocket' from participating in exhibitions, financial losses were easier to accept than a loss of artistic credibility:

I understand that even if the project is something that I will make a catastrophic loss on, if the project is something I feel very proud of I believe that over the longer term I will benefit from it ...it's not because I am wealthy...in the past I've worked as a librarian, a carpenter, a lighting designer, a rigger, an electrician, a multimedia programmer; all these things to avoid me making editions of my work I didn't want to make. (Established artist).

Artists who undertake teaching work on a regular basis can also find it difficult to participate in all opportunities that come their way. Teaching time is fixed and is often the only regular secured income in an uncertain environment; managing these time constraints can be a significant issue.

Venue Practice

Interviewees highlight a number of venue practices that can make their participation in exhibitions difficult, or preclude it altogether. The key issues here relate to the way in which venues are perceived as being 'professional' in particular areas, such as: in venues' communication and dealings with artists; in their competence in fundraising; for marketing and installing exhibitions; and the degree to which they prioritise supporting artists and deploy the necessary resources to support artists.

The lack of clarity and communication from some venues is a common issue for interviewees. This can impact on relationships between artists and venues in a number of ways, and create a barrier to exhibiting in specific venues in the future:

An example, one gallery I've just come back from seeing them. I sent through some recommendations for things we needed to go through. We had two days of meetings – no agenda – no structure in two eight hour long meetings. The second meeting where we were supposed to be talking about costs people pulled out! (Established artist).

Interviewees are often unsure how confirmed an offer to exhibit is, and this can result in artists being uncertain, not knowing whether their participation in an exhibition has been secured. There are examples of interviewees who had been informed very late that their services would not be required for an exhibition, even though an artist had already committed resources and time to a

project. For interviewees, this kind of experience reflected on the perceived 'professionalism' of the venues; as one interviewee reports:

Sadly there seems to be a lack of professionalism and an attitude that you're constantly banging your head against...a lack of care and consideration, difficulty in people getting back to you. Basic professional etiquette I would say.

[A large-scale gallery] was another nightmare. They wanted two performances. I went off and separately fundraised. As far as I was concerned everything was going forward with the work and then we heard they didn't get the money. I said I will still do it and still fund it...kept emailing, kept calling...then a month before it was due to happen, having already put in loads of man-hours, they pulled the plug with no explanation, without any kind of reasonable professional etiquette. (Established artist).

This perceived lack of professionalism and clarity also related in some cases to the scale and nature of the project, sometimes leaving interviewees uncertain over production costs and fees they will be receiving for their work and not knowing what level of resources to dedicate to the production of particular projects:

If people don't say in the first conversation or email about money you usually know there isn't any. Some people are straightforward about it. (Mid-career artist).

Being very clear at the beginning with who does what and contracts...that for me is good practice basically. I've been stung quite a few times where a contract never comes. I now very rarely start working without the contract. When you don't have a contract you've got nothing to stand by. (Established artist).

Sometimes you have no idea until after the exhibition whether there's any money or not. Some galleries just do not know what the show is going to cost and if there is money left they then they'll pay you but if there's not, then 'tough'. (Mid-career artist).

When considering what kind of support they expected from venues, interviewees also report problems with regard to fundraising:

So when I got the money to tour [through fundraising independently], one of the galleries put in an application to match fund from the Arts Council to make it all happen. To cut a long story short, they actually applied to the wrong...fund. They applied to [a particular fund] as opposed to [a different fund] which was a mistake and so we didn't get the money. And so then I had to recalibrate the application, I applied independently and I managed to get the money...so there are two sides of things, one is not being paid, the other is serious ineptitude across the board which is very difficult to deal with when you yourself apply a certain level of professionalism to your practice. (Established artist).

For some interviewees the perceived 'lack of professionalism' of some venues extended to curation and programme choices, and the balance of resources relating to the exhibitions:

There was a huge team of technicians...and we [artists] all got about £200. They wanted new performances so the budget was eaten up immediately by production costs, the project ended up costing us about £3,000 all together... we had some pretty stroppy technicians walking around... they were paid per hour... And I must admit it rumbled me that night. I thought the only people not being paid in this building [venue] are the artists. That's a ridiculous situation! (Established artist).

The final issue raised by interviewees is the most important and ubiquitous issue: venues' responses to the financial implications of exhibiting for artists. Interviewees perceive an inability or unwillingness on the part of venues to pay fees and appropriate production costs to artists. Some artists were resigned to the fact that exhibiting their work does not pay and, indeed, often means incurring costs:

I suppose I've got really low expectations of how things are. I feel like I make the work anyway and if people are interested that's really good. So if someone wanted to show my work I'd be happy for just expenses to be covered. I wouldn't expect a fee. (Emerging artist).

This was more common for interviewees in the earlier stages of their career; in the cases of the mid-career and established artists, time and experience have provided them with the tools to circumvent, negotiate or avoid such opportunities. Some interviewees expressed both anger and exasperation at the general attitude towards an artists' role in exhibitions:

The difficulty comes when there are conversations about finances and about who is going to pay for what and the unrealistic expectations that are placed on to the artist's shoulders in almost every single negotiation I have had...very simple, the idea that people can work for no remuneration or very little remuneration is something that has been a constant throughout my work as an artist. And in the first couple of years you kind of swallow hard and you grin and bear it. There comes a point where you have to put your foot down and say I'm not prepared to take this anymore. (Established artist).

A common concern for artists is the lack of clarity on this issue from venue, and some perceive what they feel to be a purposeful vagueness (at times) concerning available fees and production costs and support. Interviewees were clear that they prefer an honest and direct approach:

Because there is a lack of communication or you don't quite know what the situation is and the first thing to be compromised is the artist's fee. (Established artist).

Early on in my career I noticed the way things seemed to work was that you'd go in for meetings and you'd be flattered and you'd talk ideas and it would be really exciting and of course you would want the platform to show your work and then the last thing you'd discuss was the budget. And when you get around to that conversation they say 'well yes, we haven't really got any budget' or 'it's really limited'. (Established artist)

The next section focuses in more closely on the experiences of interviewees regarding fees, provision of production and installation costs and other support by venues.

2.2 Payment and Support

2.2.1 Fees

Early career interviewees were more likely to have not received a fee, though artists and all stages of their careers had undertaken exhibitions without fees:

I've never had a fee for showing my work (Emerging artist).

If there's a grant available to do that the money is there to cover the costs, there's no actual fee for exhibiting as such. But it's there for your expenses and costs. It's not a lot of money. (Emerging artist)

Interviewees also report a trend of being asked to pay in order to exhibit:

More recently you get people offering you space so you have to pay to show your work, which I really don't want to do. It's a road I don't want to go down. (Emerging artist).

While acknowledging the funding limitations that venues operate under, interviewees feel that venue policies and practice can either mitigate or exacerbate the lack of provision for artist fees and costs, rather than believing that poor provision is inevitable or inescapable. The challenge is felt to be encouraging the better practice which some venues already demonstrate:

I think it's the galleries themselves and the policy they have and how they operate. So there are particular galleries who believe artists should get paid properly and they should get a fee so they do that

and have that in the funding. But there are certain galleries, if they don't have a budget they might have a chat with the artist and say this is the budget we have what can you do? (Established artist).

It depends on who you're working with. Certain places are amazing they'll have everything you'll need for when you get started. They'll just say "a contract is going to be ready in two weeks time...we need to go through this"...if there is anything you're not happy with you can ask [for it] to be changed. (Mid-career artist).

Interviewees also suggested that artists have a responsibility to ask for what they need, and some of the more established artists do feel that 'artist agency' is an important variable in determining levels of fees and production support for exhibiting artists:

One of the consequences of that broad activity is that it takes one artist to say, "I don't need to be paid because I believe that as an artist I don't need to be paid". And there are plenty of artists who're guilty of this and I've done the same; we're complicit. There are plenty of artists who say "don't worry this is not about being paid this is more meaningful" and this gives fuel to the fire of bad practice...if they feel artists shouldn't be paid, that's their position but that doesn't mean it should affect other people who cannot afford for that to be the case...if people are not paid for their labour that's a breach of their human rights whether you're an artist, an intern or whatever. (Established artist).

Unsurprisingly, the more established artists who were interviewed report more success in earning a fee, often determining from a larger budget what is required for production costs and what can be set aside for time spent. A number of factors contribute to this: the artist's experience; their reputation; knowledge of the sector and which galleries to work with; and their more developed sense of agency in dealing and negotiating with galleries.

Yes for me I usually receive a fee. On the project I'm working on at the minute there's a separate commission budget and a separate artist fee... but there have been times when there is just a budget and it's left up to you and you take a fee out of that. (Established artist).

If the work is existing and it's something that is being shown again the fee would cover travel for myself to work, the work and the time involved for the installation...if it's a new piece of work either the venue or the funding body would provide for the development of the work which in an ideal world would include all production expenses and that would include a fee for me. If it was modest circumstances it should at least cover the expenses of making the work even if the time isn't valued...often it will be a lump sum where I can negotiate how much will be fee and how much will be production costs. (Established artist).

2.2.2 Expenses (production costs, transport and travel)

Interviewees expect that expenses and production support offered by venues will vary according to the context and content of the individual exhibition, and in general interviewees report that venues meet at least some expenses and production costs. For many artists the provision of production costs (rather than a fee) is the key to enabling them to take-up exhibition opportunities. However, there are clear gaps between expectation and experience here too. Some artists receive only travel expenses but nothing for producing their art:

I did get that (expenses) for that exhibition for transport and travel expenses but I've never had any sort of funding to make the work. (Emerging artist)

Other interviewees report a range of other cost areas where further expenses and production costs have been met by venues. These are considered essential if an artist is to avoid being 'out-of-pocket' for exhibiting their work, or if they lack the technical skills or equipment to physically install their work in a space:

So they do everything with transport, publicity and the promotion of your work but invariably I've got a fee if it's been about producing new work as well. (Established artist).

I will work for free if there is a production budget. A really, really important thing is technicians and space to build and people with skills and tools because I can't afford to do that myself. Those are the things a gallery has a budget for. (Mid-career artist).

However, the variable provision of production costs, expenses and fees means that artists can find it very difficult to even meet the costs of producing their work let alone generating enough income to make a living. One interviewee talked about the longer-term consequences of this for the art sector more widely:

Immediately you are reducing your pool of artists to people who can only afford to continue to do it then straight away you've lost lots of interesting artists. (Established artist).

2.2.3 Other support

Exhibition venues do offer additional resources, expertise and opportunities for professional development for artists, but again interviewees' experience of this is variable. Where additional support of this kind has been provided it is much valued by the artist and, in some cases, more so than the provision of a fee.

There are examples of artists who have no experience of receiving additional support in the form of professional development:

Not from galleries that mainly comes from peer groups at the studios. (Emerging artist).

Other interviewees report more positive experience of the role which venues can and do play, and particularly of the role which curators have:

The curator is a really important person in terms of studio visits and pastoral care looking after your development as an artist. Helping you decide what to do, what to make. Certainly as an emerging artist it's a really important function. (Emerging artist).

Venues can also play a critical role in connecting an artist's work to the wider world, particularly in prompting the significant interest from the art scene:

Sometimes more valuable than the actual fee is having institutional support in terms of the expertise of the gallery...there is great value to me in a gallery that is competent at managing and encouraging critical response from journals and magazines and that kind of thing and if there is intellectual engagement from the gallery director or curator. (Established artist).

In addition, working closely with different exhibition spaces up and down the country enables artists to draw on the expertise of the space and its connection to the local community. This too adds value to the artwork produced and allows the artist to work with the space to tailor their art to a local context:

If a work is in the public realm, or if it's got a direct link to a community or context, then having a strong mediating gallery can be extremely valuable. In that, if they have a sensitive understanding of their relationship to their site and their communities, it can help avoid the possible naivety of an artist coming in and trying to very quickly understand a complex demographic landscape. (Established artist).

A final area that is less tangible and harder to explain revolves around the relationship between the artist and the venue, particularly the creative administrators (such as curators and art directors). Interviewees point to the value to their work when venues actively engage with them throughout a

project somewhat akin to co-producing. For one artist in particular this is the most valuable asset a venue can provide to an artist to help develop their work and their practice:

Most important is that the gallery believes in what you do and that they are intellectually committed to providing a platform for what you are doing. Either through a shared endeavour or simply through extreme tolerance so there isn't a resistive relationship. (Established artist).

The development of these kinds of relationships are seen as an essential backdrop for innovation and the development of new ideas and new art. This collaborative working is highly valued by the artist; the professional support from within a venue adds much value to exhibitions rather than simply facilitates an artist exhibition:

The gallery put on a really complicated exhibition; they allowed me an entire technical team to work with me and try to develop this in the short time we have...the value of that, a team who knows the venue means more to me than having a higher budget that I could use to bring people in to help. (Established artist).

2.2.4 Artist agency/strategies

In response to such a variable environment, it is worth considering what strategies and approaches artists can and do utilise to ensure that they are protected as workers. One interviewee was very clear that a number of minimum elements must be in place to sustain an artistic practice, and they are non-negotiable:

The artist fee [income] for the year...is between £25-30k mark...and that is your first cost and that is non-negotiable. Everything else has to fit around that. Now of course I'm biased but the result is, if we don't do it is [sic], we're just going to have a bunch of rich kids making art. And that is already the case, but it is a very difficult situation to find yourself in for someone who's not going to get funding from the bank of mum and dad into your 30s. (Established artist).

More experienced artists are more selective about who they work with as a way to deliver a better overall package of fees, production costs and other support. Past experience and a degree of fit between artist and gallery are important here:

I try and be reasonably selective about who I work with, so I make sure I [have]got a good understanding of the track record of the organisation I'm embarking on working with. (Established artist).

There are so many different types of exhibition spaces. I think I've had a reasonably good experience because I've worked with a small sub-set of public and private venues that are out there. (Established artist).

In addition, the actual experience of best practice means that artists may make different choices in the future:

Especially if you've had a really good experience it raises your expectations and it perhaps means you are not going to work in a certain way any more. (Mid-career artist).

Negotiating and building positive professional relationships with venues were important features of the approach of more established artists. Their greater experience in dealing with venues enables them not only to explore how the artistic relationship between the parties will develop in a project but also enables them to get in place the 'nuts and bolts' of the arrangement:

I've tried to get contracts. Sometimes they're forthcoming other times they are not. (Established artist)

I've been writing my own contract where I get them to sign. It's not even a contract, just a letter of recognition that things need to be done and responsibilities because you need to know when to get paid and when to invoice in order to do the work...it's basic responsibilities, dates, if things don't happen what happens, payments which is the most important thing to flow the project. These are the things that you learn. I get approached by young artists and I give one to one advice and I always talk about contracts. (Established artist).

The absence of a clear, defined agreement can lead to a number of problems:

I've worked on very large commissions, or very large budgets and four years later I still don't have a contract and this project was meant to be finished in 10 months and its still going on four years on...this is something I would not do again, it's best when you have something that's written. (Established artist).

However, individual agency is not straightforward in an extremely competitive environment. For one interviewee negotiation was not a part of their experience:

I haven't had the sense that I could negotiate it in the past because it's been a straightforward offer. (Mid-career artist).

For some interviewees, there is concern about the extent to which individual agency can be exerted, or even discussed openly:

The other thing is for there to be basic professional attitudes towards the people who you're dealing with because the whole time you're led to believe that if you make a fuss you're going to be blacklisted. I believed that when I was younger but now I am much more assertive and if I feel that they are being unprofessional I will say. It's difficult because if you desperately want to do the show and you're passionate about it...it's really difficult. (Established artist).

I think that artists of a certain age and experience – yes we can make a difference. But the great sadness is that can we do that publicly? Absolutely not! For me it has to be advocates for artists (Arts Review, Arts Monthly, trade magazines, etc.)...saying this is unacceptable. Finding ways to lobby – unionisation. (Established artist).

The potential for greater agency through collective action is highlighted here in the final quotation in this section.

2.3 Summary and challenges

Two interviewees (both more established artists) articulate very similar views of what constitutes a successful exhibition for an artist:

[The most important thing is] collaboration with a gallery, second is good practice, and third would be funding. (Established artist).

Most important is that the gallery believes in what you do and they are intellectually committed to providing a platform for what you do...the second thing is viability. So making sure there is a minimum amount so that it is possible to live and work, where a lack of funds doesn't mean that the idea itself is compromised. The third thing is ensuring sustainability for the artist so that they are able to produce the work that they believe in but also being in a position where they are able to work as an artist rather than having to stop their practice in order to raise money to survive again. (Established artist).

Two clear but interconnected themes emerged from the interviews with artists relating to their experiences of working with galleries. The first relates to the 'business' relationship, the 'nuts and bolts' of the project they are engaged in. The interviewees are fully aware of the funding limitations of the sector but this does not mean they are resigned to the status quo or do not have the aspiration and ambition to change things.

Artists expect, sometimes only aspire, to be able to cover their costs and generate a living wage. The interviewees also understand and accept that there will be exceptions to this rule and are at times willing to engage with projects that will not cover their costs or provide a fee. They feel that such engagements can potentially deliver benefits to their artistic practice, but that they should be the exception and not the rule.

There is a strong feeling among interviewees that for some venues there needs to be an improvement in the manner in which they engage with artists; there is an expectation of 'professionalism' that is not always met. Better communication, more clarity, openness and honesty from the outset will result in artists being better able to decide the merits of engaging in particular projects. Ideally the outcomes of these discussions and negotiations should be summarised in a contract setting out both the conditions of the engagement and the responsibilities of both parties. Artists also acknowledge that, in an ideal scenario, artist agency to secure these outcomes would be more robust:

It's almost like galleries need a toolkit which outlines good practice in relation to their relationship with artists in the same way that artists need to be empowered with a toolkit as well...my sense is that actually the lack of understanding seems to be entirely on the shoulders of the gallery, the lack of understanding of their responsibility in terms of the artist seems to be entirely in their court...The toolkit has to be designed for galleries

1. *What should you be paying your artists?*
2. *What are reasonable expectations in terms of your communications with an artist you're interested in working with?*
3. *What should you be doing in terms of contracts – what advice can you get for contracts?*
4. *When do you need to tell an artist that you are not interested in working with them? Don't leave them hanging. (Mid-career artist).*

The second theme relates to the 'artistic' relationship between gallery and artist. The emphasis here is slightly different, less tangible and harder to break down into contractual provisions. It focuses on the quality of the relationship between artist and gallery and how essential this is to generating innovative work.

One of the key roles for publicly funded galleries should be to support the emergence of new ideas, new art and new artists. Interviewees feel that the role of such venues is not to reproduce or repackaging existing ideas; public funding should enable a greater degree of risk taking:

I think potentially, if it's a publicly funded gallery, there is a mandate to embrace risk and attempt to do more than the market can do. And for that I think there needs to be direct engagement with the artists themselves... it's not simply about representing the same work that can also be shown in commercial galleries. (Established artist).

Artists too have a responsibility here to push back at times, but that responsibility is contingent on and only possible where innovative galleries and curators exist.

I tend to be careful in terms of not succumbing to pressure to make work, which supports the business model of a gallery or a producer's work, which maybe fits the brief but has no intellectual connection with your practice. (Established artist).

Overall the variability of experiences for artists stretches across a spectrum of poor to excellent with some artists experiencing all kinds throughout their careers and others managing to navigate towards those galleries they know and trust. One quote from an artist summed up the challenge ahead.

I am sure there are examples of really good practice out there. I'm sure there are and to a degree putting those practices out there in a positive way and finding those good examples is a great way to succeed and say this is the ideal model. (Established artist)

Overall, these findings suggest that there are examples of good practice by venues, and the interviews discuss the kinds of support which artists feel is important. For many interviewees it is their experiences of good practice which highlights where artists are treated poorly. Artists have provided examples of venues undertaking extremely good practice with limited resources; the challenge going forward is to find the ways and means to ensure better practice across the sector.

3. Findings - Venues

3.1 Exhibition Practice

The venues participating in these interviews vary widely in size and type. Three are city-based art galleries which exhibit contemporary artists alongside works from their permanent collections. Four are contemporary arts centres holding no permanent collection, where exhibition spaces often sit alongside other facilities, such as performance spaces, cinema screens, learning and engagement spaces, artists' studios and retail units. Two of the participating galleries focus on exhibiting contemporary crafts. One gallery provides artists with residential and development opportunities and has a limited exhibition programme. One venue specialises in showcasing art created through use of new creative technologies, facilitating an online network of international artists. All of the galleries exhibit work created in a wide variety of media.

The venues report taking a similar approach to choosing artists to exhibit, with the exception of one that programmes work created through on-site residencies. Venues programme on a rolling 2-3 year schedule, aiming for a mix of local, UK and international artists, established and emerging artists, and varied artistic media and themes. Some of the galleries have a specific remit to promote and develop the work of artists from their local region, linked to their status as an organisation which is revenue funded by a national arts council. In some cases venues sought work which was complementary to the strengths of their permanent collections.

3.1.1 Exhibitions policy

Most of the galleries do not have a detailed and up-to-date written exhibitions policy. In some cases there is a mission statement or similar document, or the exhibitions policy sits within the venue's business plan. These policies and strategy documents tend to be venue-focused, covering aspects such as how exhibitions contribute to the achievement of the organisation's wider strategic vision, the decision-making process for the exhibitions programme, and the organisation's systems for accepting and assessing exhibition proposals. There was no example of an exhibition policy which set out an approach to the contracting and payment of artists. However, one of the craft galleries surveyed has developed a detailed guide for makers which provides advice on the practicalities of exhibiting and selling in galleries, and a number of the galleries do provide detailed submissions guidance for artists.

3.2 Motivations in and barriers to supporting exhibitions

Exhibiting and showcasing the work of contemporary artists is central to the remit of all of these venues. Their motivations for creating exhibitions fell into three broad areas:

- To show the work of artists and makers they consider to be of great artistic merit, and to support their practice by commissioning them to make new work;
- To be an integral part of the wider arts ecosystem, by providing space for work to be seen;
- To reach an audience and provide them with access to the best in contemporary art alongside excellent interpretation.

All of the galleries had a balancing act between the expectations of funding partners, audiences, and artists. They placed the emphasis differently – some prioritised artist development and would always choose the most challenging and exciting art to show, others wanted to bring audiences into the gallery in numbers and balanced the programme between artists whose work they knew would be popular, and work which would push the gallery and audience creatively.

In our vision and policy it says we are supporting the arts, but it actually feels more important nowadays to be committed to the audience and understand artists rather as allies that work with us.

We would choose to show challenging work over something that we knew would be popular because that's our programming ethos – we programme for the people who know and appreciate what we do rather than the kind of people who wander in off the street.

3.2.1 Exhibition funding

Venues vary widely in their approaches to funding their exhibition programming. Models described by participants in this research tended to fall into two categories:

- Venue core/revenue funding from a national arts council and/or the local authority that includes an exhibition programming budget which is supplemented by external fundraising; or
- Core/revenue funding from a national arts council and/or the local authority that covers the organisation's core costs – venue management and staffing – and all exhibition programme budgets come from profit from the venue's ticketing, retail and catering operations, and from external fundraising.

External fundraising is critical to venues, and the main sources of funding are: project funding from national arts councils; trusts and foundations; and sponsorship. Exhibitions by international artists are often funded with support from their own national arts funding organisations.

For venues in England, those which receive core/revenue funding from Arts Council England articulate an issue with access to project funding from the same source. Grants for the Arts funding is considered by interviewees to be a primary source of funding for exhibitions and arts projects in England, and organisations with NPO status are not eligible to apply. As a result, applications for Grants for the Arts funds tend to be submitted by artists. Some venues worked closely with artists on these applications, or used their internal fundraising staff to write them on behalf of the artists, while others expected artists to lead this process. One curator whose organisation regularly wrote funding applications for artists stated that this enabled the venue to programme the best artists, rather than those who were best at attracting funding to their projects.

3.2.2 Artist selection

Curators selected artists whose work they found interesting and which met the standards of their gallery in terms of high levels of creativity and technical skill. They also programmed their venue as a whole rather than as a series of individual gallery spaces, and programmed over an extended time period to ensure diversity in the venue's programme over time.

The lead-in time for exhibition planning is significant for those interviewed, generally between two and three years, and as a result the vast majority of exhibitions emerged from a long process of relationship building between artists and galleries, particularly in the case of major solo shows. This lead-in time was also the main reason given for the unlikelihood of success for any artist submitting an unsolicited exhibition proposal to a gallery. Even those interviewees whose galleries accepted submissions stated that it was unlikely that a submission would lead to an exhibition. The value of submissions was considered to be in the introduction of new artists to curators:

We do obviously respond to everything that comes in, we don't discourage that, but we do make them aware that there are only four or five shows a year, and so it's not likely that somebody who approaches us cold is going to be a part of the show. What's happening is, we follow artists over a period of time and when the time is right, we can slot them into a group show or slot them into a separate space.

Curators described a process of following promising artists and tracking their careers over time. They used art journals, gallery websites and blogs to keep their knowledge of UK and international artists current, attended graduate shows, visited artists in their studios and went to see exhibitions at other venues. However some curators felt that the budgets available to them were inadequate to enable them to travel and see as much work as they would like, having to judge work based on photographs. One interviewee reported funding research trips from their own salary. Sometimes, other countries' equivalents of a national arts council or British Council would fund travel for curators as part of international promotional work.

Often artists and curators had been in discussion for several years before an exhibition happened. Venues report investing in artists over time, seeing the career development of individual artists as part of their responsibilities. For example, an emerging artist may have a piece in a group show, or a short residency in a venue, and then eventually develop a body of work appropriate to a solo show in the venue. As a result, having exhibited in a venue before is no barrier to doing so again.

Nearly all of the venues would not show student work, considering this to be overexposure for artists who are not yet ready. However some venues did have specific mechanisms for engaging with Fine Art students. They visited graduate shows, invited students to networking and masterclass events and encouraged them to visit the gallery, and in some cases were working in partnership with their regional Higher Education Institutions on specific projects and competitions.

3.3 Engaging with artists

Venues report a number of ways they were likely to engage with artists:

- Group shows – these shows are often the best way for new and emerging artists to have their work shown in a prestigious gallery.

- Solo shows – usually offered to artists considered to have reached a particular standard and level of recognition in their career. Curators are keen to identify promising artists who are ready and stage their first solo show.
- Selling shows – these are much more common in craft galleries, and the two craft galleries included in this research held a mix of selling and non-selling shows throughout the year. Often makers were able to sell their retail ranges in the gallery shop if their work was featured in an exhibition.
- Commissions - artists with a solo show (or a group show with limited number of artists) are often funded to create work specifically for the show.
- Residencies – artists are offered studio space for a specific period, often with accommodation and a fee. Usually there is no obligation for artists to show their work at the end of the residency – however in practice most are involved in open studio events, talks and workshops and sometimes open up the studio at intervals. Venues sometimes use residencies to widen the type of work they show and to engage with more experimental practice.
- Studio space – several venues offered studio space for artists to rent at what are felt to be competitive rates. Artists with onsite studio space were likely to be involved in the ‘community’ around the gallery, but were not guaranteed an exhibition. They were, however, likely to secure commissions around the learning programme, or illustration and design work.

Interviewees described a range of ways they expected artists to engage with the venue if their work is being exhibited, both before and during the show. These vary widely, not from venue to venue but from artist to artist. The contracts between artists and venues tend to be bespoke to each project.

Before a show, artists can be involved in a range of activities including:

- Researching and writing funding applications
- Arranging transportation and delivery of the work
- Collaborating with curators on the design and interpretation of the exhibition
- Producing commissioned pieces for inclusion in the exhibition
- Contributing to the development of a catalogue
- Working with the gallery’s technical team on the installation process
- Contributing to the marketing of the exhibition through their own networks.

During the exhibition, activities artists tend to engage in include:

- Attending the private view
- Press interviews and other PR activities
- Artist talks and workshops
- Delivering workshops for associated schools or community learning programmes.

Specific arrangements concerning fees and other contractual elements are discussed further in the next section.

3.3.1 Payment of fees

Venues tended to develop contractual arrangements with artists on a project by project basis rather than according to a policy on artist fees. However each gallery did have their own informal 'standard practice' which was their starting point for negotiation with artists. On the whole they negotiate directly with the artist, and few described having to work via agents or commercial gallerists, who tend to become involved only when there was potential for exhibited art work to be sold. One interviewee, however, summed up their experience of working with artists:

From my experience, artists usually don't ask for a fee. They don't have expectations.

Interviewees report that venues tend to provide artists with one fee which covers the commissioning of new work and an exhibition fee, and any 'curatorial' work such as supporting interpretation and installation. This also includes any costs associated with installation and attending the private view. There was a split between venues which pay an exhibition fee as standard to all exhibiting artists in addition to commissions for new work, and those which do not. Some curators felt that as a matter of principle, exhibition fees should be separate from commissions and that artists should be paid an exhibition fee for the inclusion of their work. Others did not see this as necessary, as long as the commissioning fee for new work was adequate. Exhibition fees were generally seen as a token gesture of recognition, with the bulk of venues' payments to artists being formed by commission fees for making new work.

All of the venues described difficulty with providing exhibition fees for group shows. Some did so on a limited basis:

I try to give each artist something, even if it's only fifty quid.

However most curators feel that it would be prohibitively expensive to pay exhibition fees to artists who had work in a group show, while making the distinction between exhibitions which have a theme and show work from a large number of artists, and exhibitions in which the work of a small number of established artists is shown together.

Payments for participation in events and learning activities are sometimes included in the single contract and sometimes arranged separately, but tend to be itemised and paid at the artist's hourly or daily rate. None of the galleries who participated in this research expected artists to deliver talks or workshops without being specifically paid to do so.

It would be quite rare for us to expect someone to deliver something because they are exhibiting. We would normally expect to pay them their going rate for them to deliver something.

3.3.2 Payment of expenses

All but one of the venues interviewed reported paying all the costs to an artist of transporting and displaying their work. The exception was a craft gallery which asks makers to pay the cost of delivering the work to the gallery, while they pay for return transport.

That's what we do from core fund[ing]; they would never have to pay transport. If they come in for a show, to install it or to do a talk, we'll always pay travel and accommodation, and

then we give them a fee for anything they do ... and sometimes they get a small commission fee. The only time we don't do that is if we've got 30 artists in a show, a big group show, we tend not to because that's a lot.

The venues considered paying for all of the costs of private view events to be standard practice, including design, printing and postage of invitations, refreshments, and the cost of opening the gallery after hours. They also paid artists' travel expenses to enable them to attend the private view. However several curators described actions they were taking to reduce the costs of private view events as they were becoming more difficult to fund from budgets. These included emailing rather than printing invitations, not giving complementary refreshments, and scheduling private views for exhibitions together even if they opened on different dates. While venues are happy to pay artists' travel expenses to attend private views, the cost of national and international travel is budgeted very carefully, and installation, private view and artists talk dates are often scheduled together to avoid doubling up on travel costs.

3.3.3 Other benefits

Curators described a range of benefits to artists which they feel result from the work venues undertake around their exhibition. These are:

- Profile raising – artists benefit from the reputation boost of having their work shown in a significant venue, and from having their work reviewed in the regional, national and specialist art press.
- Portfolio benefits – venues often pay for high quality photography of the artists' work for catalogue or marketing purposes, and provide the images to the artist.
- Catalogues – often a number of catalogues were provided to the artist from the initial print run, and this has both a direct monetary value and indirectly supports the artists to showcase their work to others.
- Networking – some venues were leading or involved in regional artists' networks which provided artists with development opportunities, training and support.
- Mentoring and critique – the extended relationship-building, which tends to happen between artists and curators prior to the decision to go ahead with an exhibition, offers opportunities for emerging artists to access constructive criticism and feedback, and career development advice.

Curators felt that their role as mentors, particularly for emerging artists, was crucial:

Universities need to tell people what happens afterwards. After uni you are bereft of advice and someone to talk to about your work. I reassure artists a lot of the time that it's ok, people love your work, these are the various channels that we can try, we can try getting you funded, we can try to give you a platform, put you in touch with good people to speak to – direct them towards events they should be seen at. I'm very aware that they have no money and no one to talk to about their work and I'm as grateful to talk to them about their work as they are to talk to me. It's an attitude thing.

3.4 Future challenges and opportunities

There was no evidence from these interviews that venues engage in formal benchmarking of their remuneration of artists against other venues, and interviewees are reluctant to rate their own venue in relation to others as they were not aware of other venues' practice. On the whole they feel that their approach to paying artists is fair, and that they do the best that they can with the limited

resources available. The issue of pay and conditions for artists is not described as a significant talking point across the sector. However, individual curators did express concerns about the ability of artists to make a living from their work, and the need to invest in them for the future sustainability of the visual arts.

Mainly it's creating more opportunity because what might start to happen as funds get more and more squeezed, there will be less money around to try things out without any defined outcomes, and I suppose that's the thing that we're all trying to protect. And everyone's aware of it, and we're all trying to find ways of addressing it, but obviously, lots of venues are under huge amounts of pressure, especially from Local Authorities to deliver certain expectations.

There is broad agreement that national arts councils and other funders expected to see payments and expenses to artists adequately covered within funding applications, and that this was viewed favourably in the assessment of bids.

Interviewees described a general state of affairs across the sector in which venues' budgets for running costs have been cut as far as possible. Only in one case outside England was there confidence that the arts would be protected from cuts because of their 'intrinsic' importance to the nation. Interviewees feel that any further cuts will impact on staffing levels and the ability of venues to maintain their current visitor offer and opening hours. When asked how they would work differently given more resources (in terms of time and staffing as well as funding) the main priorities for curators concern increased audience engagement, interpretation and learning activity, and improved funding for residencies and commissions, rather than enhancing exhibition fee payments.

However, most interviewees feel that it is more likely that curators will be facing further reductions in the availability of funding in the foreseeable future. The most commonly referenced areas where further savings were possible included: running less residencies, running more group rather than solo shows, and keeping exhibitions on for longer periods. For example:

We would do less residencies. Most of our money for the residencies comes from trusts and foundations so it's never certain anyway. We'd scale back and do less but we wouldn't stop doing things for free [i.e. providing things to artists for free] or paying people.

Most galleries would not choose to pay artists more, but to commission more work or audience engagement activity from them, or put more money into production of catalogues or other forms of interpretation. While improving the rates artists are paid is an aspiration for most curators, it is not an immediate priority.

Conclusions

4. Conclusions

This phase of research has necessarily been undertaken with a significantly smaller sample than were included in the Phase 1 survey, and as such caution should be taken when considering the findings in relation to both the wider population of visual artists and in relation to other venues. Both artists and venues were prepared to speak about exhibition practice, and there is a sufficient critical mass of both common experiences and common approaches reported by participants in the research to suggest that some broad assessments can be made about this practice across the wider sector.

Artists and their practice

As with the Phase 1 research, artists report having portfolio careers, and particularly in requiring work other than exhibiting in order to make a living income. For some, the portfolio career is felt to be beneficial to their overall practice; for others, they would prefer (if they were able to) to concentrate solely on creating and producing new work, and on showing it. Artists recognise that building relationships within the sector is crucial for developing their practice and their profile.

Venues and their practice

Statements on exhibition practice are usually included within business plans or mission statements, with no participating venues reporting having a separate policy. Venues do provide guidance on submissions for artists, and there are examples of venues providing more substantial guidance on exhibitions and sales where it is felt to be appropriate. Venues fundraise beyond their revenue or core funding in order to support their exhibition programme, and report significant lead-in times to exhibition programmes, as well as the need to balance different spaces and the programme over a period of time (e.g. a year). Venues report a sense of responsibility in finding and developing artists and their careers and see this as a key role.

What are exhibitions for?

Again, supporting the findings from the first phase of research, artists report that reasons for exhibiting include profile-raising, engaging with the public and getting feedback and interest from the wider art-world. Venues report anticipating similar benefits for artists, and particularly point to the opportunity to build relationships between artists and curators, and the value of materials produced to support the exhibition (catalogues, portfolio photographs). For themselves, venues see their role as supporting both the artist in developing and the public to engage. Venues were different in the emphasis they placed on these two stakeholder groups, with some suggesting that the public should be the primary concern for venues.

Artists report needing to weigh up the 'opportunity cost' of an exhibition before they commit to it. This includes assessing whether a venue and opportunity is the right artistic and intellectual fit, as well as considering the financial costs and rewards associated with the opportunity. Time constraints caused by other income-earning activities and the costs of production and other expenses all contribute to this sense of whether an opportunity to exhibit is worth pursuing. Getting the best opportunities is competitive and requires an artist to build their contacts and relationships.

How do venues support artists?

On the whole, venues report artists not expecting fees; early career artists particularly report not asking for fees. More established artists are clearer about overall exhibition opportunities needing to be assessed within the context of what an artist needs to make as a living income. Venues report adhering to 'standard practice' in agreeing fees for commissioning (though no written policies on fees for either exhibitions or commissions are available), and are clearer about the need to pay expenses for artists, and to pay for additional activities such as talks, workshops and learning activities. Not all artists, however, report positive experiences in relation to expenses and the wider costs to themselves of undertaking exhibitions. There are examples of artists' costs appearing to be low on the list of budget priorities for exhibitions.

In addition, artists report that poor experiences can give the perception of unprofessionalism from venues: the lack of clarity around terms and conditions of offers, the status of offers and (sometimes) fundraising requirements are all cited in the research. These experiences can also affect whether artists pursue relationships with individual venues in the future. Venues are clear about the importance of getting to know an artist and supporting them in developing over time; in some cases, venues had examples of working directly with artists to support fundraising, in recognition of the expertise which venues can bring to bear and the importance of artists accessing opportunities based upon their practice (rather than their fundraising skills).

Venues report finding and developing artists through submissions (though unsolicited submissions do not result in exhibition opportunities), visits and other networks. Artists highlight the benefits of developing relationships with curators and other staff at venues, and particularly refer to the expertise and guidance of curators and the opportunities to create new work which would not happen otherwise.

What next?

Artists are clear about the value and purpose of exhibitions, and feel that publicly-funded venues are important in supporting more risky or innovative work. Whilst exhibition fees are an issue for artists, more generally the most significant issues are ensuring that the 'opportunity cost' of an exhibition feels beneficial.

Venues are concerned about reductions in public investment, and recognise that these may affect the sustainability of artists and their practice. However, fees for exhibitions are not seen as a priority. More widely, the terms and conditions of artists are not currently a particular talking point in the sector, nor are there particular drivers at present for venues to engage more in this area.

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