

## Latvia - a response to Artist Exhibition Payment Rights

There is no formal tradition of exhibition payment for artists in Latvia. In fact, private galleries often charge some amount from artists for their works to be displayed. A very common practice with gallerists is to 'keep' one work from an exhibited collection - this is a practice that is discussed and splits the artist community. Some artists are willing to provide an artwork as a barter for services of exhibiting their artwork and the future promotion/sales of their work. But would prefer to give the work by their own choosing. Other artists are completely against this system of giving an artwork.

Museums funded by the state do not have a budget to cover 'artist exhibition payments'. This is considered to be a 'normal' situation - as there is no formal/public discussion about it. When asked about this issue, most of the curators were puzzled about it and didn't see the nonexistence of payment for exhibiting as an injustice.

It is suggested that the possible explanation tacitly approved by artists and curators when asked - is that the grant given for 'creative work' by the State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia (SCCF), is thought of as covering everything the artist gets paid for a particular work/project. The exhibiting of the produced artworks is tacitly implied when submitting for a project grant.

The State Culture Capital Foundation is a public foundation that operates as the main art funding organisation. SCCF states that it provides 'funding to promote the balanced cultural and artistic development of creative industries and cultural heritage in Latvia in accordance with national cultural policy guidelines'. It is financially supported by Latvian state and does not aim to make a profit. Its aims are 'to attract, accumulate, manage and allocate funds for projects in the cultural life and scholarships for outstanding cultural and artistic staff for their lifetime contribution to cultural and artistic development'.

Cultural policy-making is the duty of the Ministry of Culture and the Culture Capital Foundation. The Ministry of Culture supervises working conditions of artists.

A survey on the status of the artists - In 1996, the Ministry of Culture in co-operation with the Market and social research group Baltic Data House carried out the research "The status of the representatives of creative professions". The main purpose was to have more exact and complete data and evaluation of the most important problems the artists face in their professional work. A special attention was paid to the questions concerning creative activities, participation in exhibitions and international projects, divisions of expenses, author's rights protection, and evaluation of creative activity. The results of research gave an understanding of the needs and problems of the representatives of creative professions. However a UNESCO report states that there is neither a work permit nor a "professional" status for artists in Latvia.

The Council of Creative Unions of Latvia (CCUL) is the main NGO that involves artists in cultural policy making at local and national levels. Founded in 1988, it unites 10 professional organisations which represent their member social, economic and artistic rights. The most important advisory body to the Ministry of Culture is the National Council of Culture, established in 1995, whose main tasks are to promote public participation in cultural life and to enhance co-operation between the state, public institutions and individuals. Advisory councils counseling the Ministry include also the Latvian Council of Theaters, the Strategic Council of the Latvian National Film Center, the Visual Arts Council, the Latvian Council of Museums, the Latvian Library Council, the Council of Literature and Books.

Through the discussions held during the project seminar the CCUL and the Artist Union of Latvia (LMS) will now consider devising an awareness campaign to highlight issues regarding artist payments and the current economic state of the visual artist working in Latvia. This will then initiate the devising of recommendations for payment guidelines, artist toolkits and contracts.

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