

Temporary Gallery

At the end of April 2021, after a challenging year of lockdowns, postponed projects, and lost income, we gathered for an online workshop to discuss the volatile nature of freelance curating, the lack of transparency in curatorial fees, and the expectation of unpaid work. During this 2-day event led by Kris Dittel and Katia Krupennikova, freelance curators from different walks of life shared their experiences and potential methods of advocating for each other. The following text/list is a collection of our thoughts and resources and can be considered as a statement.

OUR CORE VALUES

Transparency

We acknowledge that transparency is the first and foremost step towards equal and adequate pay. Talking about money and finances is, for many, a taboo, and the misconception that the value (cultural, intellectual, personal) of art is defined by its monetary worth just reinforces this. We need to take care not to undervalue our work for the sake of creativity or the unhealthy concept that money inherently devalues creativity. The ability to talk about budgets and fees can only be seen as a step forward and will create accountability between colleagues and institutions. One should be able to ask the institutions about their annual budget and the current working conditions, to be transparent with their colleagues and other professionals, and to have the ability to ask for advice on fees, budgeting, management, etc.

Solidarity

Working in a fragile industry where we rely on each other, mutualism and solidarity is our tool and goal. One should be able to stand in solidarity, not only with fellow curators, but also with other art workers, such as artists, producers, and art handlers. Solidarity comes with redistribution of resources - finances, time, energy, etc.- and negotiating for colleagues and other professionals. Be aware, the fees will vary depending on the context; between different geographical locations, institutions of various scales with various budgets, and experience, and in this, comparison can potentially be unhealthy. That said, by having a clear line of communication amongst ourselves in our respective local communities as well as on an international level, we won't be left thinking, "I suppose this is just normal for here" when in reality we're being underpaid and underappreciated.

Collectivity

We think that collectivity is not about having a consensus, but mutual understanding and standing behind each other. Let's share our resources, energy, and time to nourish and thrive; create networks of support and empowerment, take care of one another, and check in on the mental states of colleagues and friends.

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How to advocate for yourself on a short-term and individual basis?

Curatorial labor should be acknowledged as creative labor, not purely administrative work, and should have adequate fees. Lack of fees is a sign of a general unappreciation of the artistic/curatorial work. Remember, this is still a career, and we should never be expected to work without compensation for our time and effort. On this list, we collected a few tips on how to negotiate for curatorial fees. We realize that these tips might not be applicable to everyone, yet you can give a thought to them and use it as a guide.

1. When offered a project, ask the institution their overall budget for the project as well as their annual budget. This can give you an idea of the scale of the project and how the budget is distributed.
2. You can request a % of the budget as your fee, or ask for hourly rates.
3. Before accepting the project, talk with colleagues and ask for advice about fees/budgets.
4. If possible, talk with people who work for the institution and/or curators who have worked with them in the past.
5. Learn not to feel ashamed when asking for your fees (your work has value).
6. Say NO when you think your work is undervalued or if you are not comfortable with the offered fees/conditions.*
7. Make sure to have a legal contract with the institution. This should contain the details of your work, hours, and budget. If you are not familiar with contracts or not sure about certain details, ask colleagues and other professionals for their opinion and help.
8. Prepare an access rider where you can lay out your expectations and potential conflicts that might occur during your work. Samples are linked [below](#).**
9. You can use Copyright Law to aid in explaining the value of curatorial work, though be aware that a curator's copyrights are not currently included in most Copyright Law. The specifics of this will depend on national legislation, however, you can use the following example (or similar) to change the discourse: If you think of an exhibition as being, at its core, similar to an anthology of texts, then two levels of copyright exist: First, you have copyrights for the compilation and second, the artists have their own copyrights. Again, this depends on national legislation but is still a useful example to change the discourse. The aim being that we change the legislation in our respective countries and as a whole fight for the job of "curator" to be included in copyright law.
10. After being commissioned to do a project, count your working hours. You can track them with breakdowns to see your tasks and the time they take. There are many tracking apps and websites online, and we will list some of them under [resources](#).
11. Once the project is done, invoice the institution with your hours and breakdowns. If you worked more than what was covered by your fee or contract, include these on the invoice as "pro bono" or "donation". These will go into institutional and governmental records, and over time it will create accountability for fair wages.

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12. Occasionally, it's okay to work for free but take a look at who invites you. If the people who invited you are being paid, demand a fee. If the whole project is activism or voluntary work-based, it's your decision to take the project. Choose your battles wisely.
13. If you have no possibility to pay bills consider having a "money job" for a while - a job that doesn't get in the way of your main career. Remember, having a money job is not something to be ashamed of, break this taboo and do what's best for you.
14. Continue questioning how to advocate for a fee as a collective. :)

** We realize that saying "no" could be a privilege and we are still questioning how to make an impact when one isn't allowed to say no, as well as how to unify and redefine this as a political issue.*

*** [Frame Finland - Access Rider](#)
[Hedva's Disability Access Rider](#)*

RESOURCES

Organizations advocating fair wages in arts and culture

Belgium

- [Curators Anonymous](#) - Group of curators in Belgium advocating for better working conditions

Finland

- [Frame Contemporary Art Finland](#) is an advocate for Finnish contemporary art. Frame supports international initiatives, facilitates professional partnerships, and encourages critical development of the field. Their [Access Riders](#) publication is both a tool and an invitation, to institutions and individuals alike, to consider initiating safer ways to open up dialogue regarding our various needs, limits, boundaries, and wishes when entering into working relationships.

France

- [Astre-Reseau](#) is a visual arts network that aims to support and promote artistic creation and expression, to make artistic productions accessible to all, and to ensure equitable development, cooperation, and support of the plastic and visual arts sector in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, and developed a referential for artistic remuneration system.
- [D.C.A](#) - Charter of good practices for contemporary art centers, a guideline about honorarium
- [DOCUMENTATIONS](#) is a participatory media fighting against the conservative and hegemonic discourse that governs art today. Public call outs in Frech: [Instagram](#)

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Germany

- [medienwerk.nrw](#) is the network for media art and digital culture in North Rhine-Westphalia. Consisting of 25 institutions, including art associations, museums, exhibition spaces, festivals, production sites of the performing arts, archives, and universities, we see ourselves as an alliance of diverse actors in the media art landscape of North Rhine-Westphalia. [Guideline](#) about the honorariums.

Netherlands

- [Platform BK](#) researches the role of art in society and takes action for a better art policy, represent artists, curators, designers, critics, and other cultural producers.
- [The Fair Practice Code](#) is a code of conduct for working in the arts, culture, and creative industries based on five core values: solidarity, diversity, trust, sustainability, and transparency. The code invites critical reflection and offers guidance on how the sector can achieve a future-proof labor market and professional practice.
- [Kunstenaarhonoraria](#) - calculator for artist fees
- [Dutch Museum Association](#) - Museum curator salary scheme (pg.10/11 - only in Dutch)

Italy

- [Art Workers Italia](#) is the first association, autonomous and non-partisan, born with the aim of giving voice to contemporary art workers in Italy. (only in Italian)

Norway

- [The Norwegian Association of Curators](#) works to enhance the understanding of curatorial practice in Norway and to promote the legal and economic conditions of its members vis-à-vis public policymakers and cultural institutions.

Poland

- [Obywatelskie Forum Sztuki Współczesnej](#) - an initiative of artists, critics, and curators of contemporary art. Its aim was to influence the legal and institutional changes in order to allow the proper development of the field of culture. [Agreement on minimum wages for artists](#)

Sweden

- [Konstnärernas Riksorganisation](#) - the Swedish Artists' Association represents Swedish visual artists in political issues concerning art and artists' financial and social situation. [The MU agreement](#) - Agreement of Payment of Artists for Participation and Exhibition

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USA

- [Arts and Museum Salary Transparency](#) - Open-Source Google Spreadsheet, 2019
- [W.A.G.E for Work](#) is trying to establish sustainable economic relationships between artists and the institutions that contract our labor and to introduce mechanisms for self-regulation into the art field that collectively bring about a more equitable distribution of its economy.

Further Readings*

[Art Workers](#): Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice

[Preliminary Statement Freelance Curators](#) by Platform BK

Parse Journal issues on “[Art and Work](#)”

Research Handbook on Art and Law by Alana Kushnir, 2020 - [The curator’s copyright](#)

[The Trouble with Value: Art and Its Modes of Valuation](#) by edited Kris Dittel, 2020

[Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism](#) by Bojana Kunst, 2015

[Reproducing Autonomy: Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art](#) by Kerstin Stakemeier, Marina Vishmidt, 2016

[Facing Value](#) by Maaïke Lauwaert & Francien van Westrenen, 2017 (*sold out indefinitely*)

*If you can't find any of the resources feel free to get in touch with us at info@tempoarygallery.org.

Not sure about what curating entails? [Here](#) is what we put together during our workshop.

Curator Zeren Oruc