

Art Worker Inquiry

Building Worker Organizing in the Arts Industry

Name

Email

YOUR WORK AS AN ARTIST

The following questions are related to: 1. Any work you do that's in the arts industry (from direct art creation to administrative/clerical/service work at arts organization). 2. Any work that you do so that you can survive as an artist (day jobs). For all questions in this section, please give multiple responses if you perform multiple types of labor in relation the arts or your artistic practice.

What is your medium/trade? (Please list both work in the arts and day jobs that support an artistic practice.)

Do you perform your labor on a freelance basis, or are you formally employed? (Again, please answer for any and all labor you do that's related to the arts or in support of your artistic practice.)

If your employment is formal/official, what type of employer do you work for? (Nonprofit, corporate, private, public, etc). If your employment is freelance/contract basis, what types of employers do you typically work for?

How many other workers are employed where you work? Feel free to estimate.

How many supervisors do you report to in your work?

How is your work schedule established? In other words, does a supervisor set working hours and timelines, or do you determine those individually?

How far do you live from the place(s) where you most often work?

Is your labor performed largely individually, or do you work collaboratively? Are you given a choice about whether/with whom you collaborate on your labors? If so, describe this process. If not, who decides on your collaborators?

Do you have an agent, manager, gallerist, or other formal representative for your labor? If so, are they helpful? If not, why not?

How many hours would you say you spend weekly on your labor? How many hours would you like to spend or you feel you need to spend on your labor? If you have a day job separate from your artistic practice, what's the ratio between time spend on your day job and time on your artistic labor? What would you like that ratio to be?

For workers with a day job that supports their artistic practice, how does your day job affect that practice? What is the relationship between your art work and your day job? Are you seen as an artist at your day job?

What kinds of compromises have you made in the search for employment?

Do you tend to work more during the day or at night? Is this by choice or necessity?

If you had the power to change the nature of your work (in the arts or otherwise), what would you change about it? Be as bold and visionary as you like!

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COMPENSATION

In this section, please respond in relation to any labor you perform in the arts industry or apart from it.

How is your rate of compensation determined? (For example, are you a member of a union or guild that negotiates wages and benefits, or do you bargain with your employers individually? Are you paid hourly or per completed piece/project?)

Have you ever had an employer violate a compensation agreement, either by delaying payment or refusing to pay you for your labor? If so, please describe.

If an employer violates an agreement or contract with you, what recourse (legal or otherwise) do you have?

Have you ever performed artistic labor for a gatekeeper, employer, or supervisor for which you have not been compensated? Have you ever been offered professional exposure or industry connections as compensation for your labor? If so, did you accept? How did the exposure or industry connections as compensation materialize?

List the expenses you have related to your work (materials, instruments, insurance, etc.) Do you pay for space and/or tools with which to perform your labor, or are these provided by an employer?

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WORK SPACE

If you work at home, describe the conditions of your work room. Do you use only working tools or small machines? Do you have a separate work space, or do you work in your living/sleeping/eating area?

How would you describe the rooms/spaces/ facilities in which you work? Are they hygienic? Adequately lit? Be as specific as you'd like!

Performers - Do you practice and rehearse at home or elsewhere? Do you rent rehearsal space on a regular basis? Visual/studio artists - Do you keep a studio at home or elsewhere? Do you rent studio space on a regular basis?

Are you able to obtain adequate studio, rehearsal and performance spaces? How much do they cost? Where does the money to pay for them come from?

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GENDER, RACE, POWER

How would you describe the gender composition of your artistic workplace(s)?

How would you describe the racial/ethnic composition of your artistic workplace(s)?

What would you say is the relationship between gender and power in your artistic workplace(s)?

What would you say is the relationship between race/ethnicity and power in your artistic workplace(s)?

What would you say is the relationship between age and power in your artistic workplace(s)?

Who are the "gatekeepers" -- people who decide whether an artistic project will be funded -- in your field of artistic labor?

Please describe the demographics of the gatekeepers, as you perceive them, in your field of artistic labor. (Feel free to focus on gender, race, and age, as well as other demographic factors.)

Have you ever performed artistic labor for a gatekeeper, employer, or supervisor for which you have not been compensated? If so, did you expect to be compensated when you began these labors?

Who funds your creative endeavors? Are you comfortable with taking money from capitalist oppressors? Are you or your employers complicit in global warming?

Are you ever culpable in exploiting other workers? If so, what pressures or incentives drew you to this situation?

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UNION

Are you in an union?

Do you think your union is effective in helping you obtain your economic well-being? Is it effective in helping you obtain your creative goals?

How many strikes have taken place in your field that you are aware of? Have you ever participated in strikes or boycotts for your own benefit?

Were strikes in your field ever supported by strikes of workers belonging to other trades? How long did these strikes last?

Were they for the object of increasing wages, or were they organized to resist a reduction of wages, or connected with the length of the working day, or prompted by other motives?

If you could build an organization that supported workers (in the arts or otherwise), what do you think that organization's top priorities should be? How might such an organization use its power? Be as bold and visionary as you like!

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HEALTH

Are there any health and safety concerns in your artistic workplace(s)?

Do you have adequate health insurance?

Are you able to take adequate care of your health? Do you rely on non-traditional healthcare which is not compensated by health insurance companies?

EDUCATION

Do you have access to training/educational opportunities that you feel would help your artistic labors?

What is your highest level of education? Do you have a college degree? In what? Where and when did you go to college?

If you went to college, was it a valuable experience for you? Are you in debt because of your college education? How much money do you owe?

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LIVING EXPENSES

Do you have a weekly and yearly budget of your income and expenditure for self and family? Have you noticed, in your personal experience, a bigger rise in the price of immediate necessities, e.g., rent, food, etc., than in your income?

How much money do you have left after paying for your necessities? Are there items that you need that you can't afford?

How much of your income goes to paying off debt?

Do you have money for an emergency? Have you ever had to rely on food stamps or any other social welfare programs?

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DOMESTIC WORK

Who lives with you? Who does the cleaning and cooking in your home? Who takes care of the kids? How is the domestic work shared in your household?

How much do you spend on cleaning, cooking and other housework help? Do you hire someone to help you with household duties?

CHILDREN

Do you have children? How many, how old?

Are you able to participate in school decisions that affect your children and your community? Are you able to participate in your child's education and activities to the extent that you would like? Are you able to save money for your child's future education?

Have you benefited from the NY Paid Family Leave Act? How?

Who takes care of your children when they're not in school and you're working, either on your art project or at your secondary job? Do you get compensation for childcare?

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NEW YORK CITY/HOUSING

Do you live in New York City? If so, how long have you lived in New York City? If not, where do you live?

Do you own or rent? What percentage of the money you earn is spent on housing?

What is your experience of finding a place to live? Do you like where you live? What do you like about your neighborhood? Dislike? Are there adequate and affordable places to shop for food and other necessities in your neighborhood? How much input do you have about what happens to your neighborhood?

How many times have you moved in the last 10 years? Why have you moved?

Has gentrification of the city affected your ability to live and work? If so, how?

Do you feel responsible for gentrification in New York City?

If you could change the way housing works in New York, how would you change it? Be as bold and visionary in your proposals as you like!

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BEING AN ARTIST

What would a sustainable life as an artist look like? How would it be different than your life now?

How can artists organize collectively against exploitation?

What structures do you imagine would be needed for effective organizing?

Do you feel solidarity with other workers?

Are you involved in any campaigns focused on fighting exploitation or building power for workers in the arts? If so, please describe.

OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT YOUR WORK AS AN ARTIST OR LIFE IN NYC