

## Pay the artist now! For better working conditions in Austria's cultural sector

Artist Ina Wudtke staged the following text written by Dieter Lesage in the video work "A Portrait of the Artist as a Worker (rmx.)" (2006): "You are an artist and that means: you don't do it for the money. That is what some people think. It is a great excuse not to pay you for all the things you do." Even at present, the text and its staging have lost little of their topicality. But here and there, we can see gradual change – also in Austria. There, the current government has enshrined the topic of fair payment in the arts and cultural sectors in its government programme for the first time ever.

### Tyrolean Artists' Association and IG Bildende Kunst

The interest group division of the Tyrolean Artists' Association and the IG Bildende Kunst have been campaigning for fair pay for artistic work for many years. Since the beginning of 2020, the Kunstpavillon and Neue Galerie Innsbruck exhibition venues have explicitly paid exhibition fees to exhibiting artists. This is done at the expense of the venues' production budgets, as the relevant subsidies have not yet been adjusted adequately. The IG Bildende Kunst has been working on the key focal areas of "talking about money" since 2011 and has been campaigning for the enshrinement of adequate fees in legislation with its "pay the artist now!" initiative since 2016.<sup>1</sup> In November 2018, the IG Bildende Kunst initiated and organized a networking meeting on the topic that saw representatives of Austrian artists' associations and art institutions meet in Vienna to exchange views on the status quo as well as possible steps towards a solution. "The common goal is that artists in Austria are paid appropriately for the work they do! The argument, often used by critics, that artists can sell their works of art after exhibitions perpetuates a concept of work that is antiquated and, in many cases, no longer applicable", wrote Michael Strasser (board member, Tyrolean Artists' Association) following the meeting.<sup>2</sup>

### Panel discussion and networking meeting in Innsbruck

The IG Bildende Kunst, the special interest group division of the Tyrolean Artists' Association and the battlegroup for art<sup>3</sup> arranged to follow up on the meeting in Vienna from 16–19 October 2020 and implement the four-day thematic focus "Fair pay in the arts and cultural sectors" in Innsbruck. The meeting kicked off with a panel discussion in which initial thoughts on fair pay in the Austrian federal government's programme and examples of best practice were presented and discussed.<sup>4</sup> On the following day, artists and representatives of off-spaces, art associations, art galleries and artists'

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<sup>1</sup> IG Bildende Kunst: Kunst & Geld. (Art & Money), URL: <https://igbildendekunst.at/themen/kunst-und-geld/> (accessed 18 August 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Pay the artist now! Gemeinsam nächste Schritte setzen, quer durch Österreich (Taking the next steps together across Austria), Michael Strasser, URL [https://igbildendekunst.at/bildpunkt\\_/pay-the-artist-now/](https://igbildendekunst.at/bildpunkt_/pay-the-artist-now/) (accessed August 18 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Since 2005, the battlegroup for art has formed a network of various special interest groups, platforms and associations active in Innsbruck in the field of contemporary arts and culture, URL: [www.battlegroup.at](http://www.battlegroup.at).

<sup>4</sup> The panel discussion can be viewed via the following link: <https://vimeo.com/user32527194>. The booklet accompanying the four-day programme can be accessed via the following link: [www.kuenstlerschaft.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PAY-THE-ARTIST-NOW\\_folder.pdf](http://www.kuenstlerschaft.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PAY-THE-ARTIST-NOW_folder.pdf).

associations came together in person and digitally for another networking meeting.<sup>5</sup> The weekend was financially supported by the Austrian federal government and the city of Innsbruck.

The launch of an initiative aimed at the development of a fair pay strategy for Austria instigated by the responsible State Secretary Andrea Mayer, was publicly announced that same October weekend.<sup>6</sup> As of November 2020, ten invited special interest groups, representatives of the art and cultural division of the federal government and representatives from the nine federal states have been meeting regularly in the Fairness Forum and the Fairness working group to discuss measures to improve the working situation of independent artists and cultural workers in Austria. As an initial move – and following a long-standing demand on the part of the various special interest groups – a systematic survey of the fair pay gap is currently being conducted<sup>7</sup> to determine the difference between the fees and salaries actually being paid and the minimum standards recommended by special interest groups<sup>8</sup>.

### **Guideline and fee recommendation**

As of December 2020, Sheri Avraham, Jannik Franzen (until April 2021), Vasilena Gankovska and Daniela Koweindl on behalf of the IG Bildende Kunst and Petra Poelzl and Michael Strasser on behalf of the Tyrolean Artists' Association (interest group division) have been meeting weekly to formulate recommendations and calculation aids for fair pay in the art and cultural industry based on the outcomes of the aforementioned networking meetings in Vienna and Innsbruck. A guide, a fee schedule and a list of supplementary FAQs<sup>9</sup> have been published, which will now serve as a basis and aid for the systematic survey of the fair pay gap and as a starting point for further discussions with funding bodies. The motto remains: "pay the artist now!".<sup>10</sup>

### **Petra Poelzl**

Artistic Director and Managing Director

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<sup>5</sup> Strasser, Michael in: If not now: Kulturpolitisches Wochenende in Innsbruck: Pay the artist now! (If not now: Cultural policy weekend in Innsbruck: Pay the artist now!), URL: [https://igbildendekunst.at/bildpunkt\\_/if-not-now/](https://igbildendekunst.at/bildpunkt_/if-not-now/) (accessed 18 August 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Press release: Staatssekretärin Mayer startet Fairness-Prozess für bessere Arbeitsbedingungen im Kulturbereich (State Secretary Mayer launches fairness process for better working conditions in the cultural sector), URL: [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20201016\\_OTS0068/staatssekretaerin-mayer-startet-fairness-prozess-fuer-bessere-arbeitsbedingungen-im-kulturbereich](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20201016_OTS0068/staatssekretaerin-mayer-startet-fairness-prozess-fuer-bessere-arbeitsbedingungen-im-kulturbereich) (accessed August 18 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Fair Pay! Zwischenbilanz zum Forum Fairness (interim results of the Fairness Forum), URL: [www.igkultur.at/artikel/fair-pay-zwischenbilanz-zum-forum-fairness](http://www.igkultur.at/artikel/fair-pay-zwischenbilanz-zum-forum-fairness) (accessed 18 August 2021).

<sup>8</sup> On the survey: survey/data collection by the Austrian Gallup Institute entitled "Fair Pay-Gap in der österreichischen Kunst- und Kulturbranche" (Fair pay gap in the Austrian arts and cultural industry) (working title), URL: <https://gallup.warpit.net/warpit2019/survey/index.php?loginSID=bda82618a0a04f9-2213462> (accessed 18 August 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Pay the Artist Now! Empfehlungen und Kalkulationshilfen für faire Bezahlung in der Kunst- und Kulturarbeit (Recommendations and calculation aids for fair pay in the arts and cultural industry), URL: [www.kuenstlerschaft.at/kulturpolitik-payheartistnow/](http://www.kuenstlerschaft.at/kulturpolitik-payheartistnow/) (accessed 18 August 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Sheri Avraham in: Statements der Verfasser:innen zum Leitfaden für faire Bezahlung in der bildenden Kunst. (Statements by the authors on the Guide to fair pay in the visual arts sector), URL: <https://igbildendekunst.at/themen/we-are-fighting-for-fair-pay/> (accessed 18 August 2021).

Tyrolean Artists' Association (Neue Galerie Innsbruck & interest group division)

[www.kuenstlerschaft.at](http://www.kuenstlerschaft.at)