

The Netherlands: The Dutch model for artists' exhibition remuneration

In the Netherlands, the first 'Covenant exhibition remuneration' (Convenant Kunstenaarshonoraria) was signed on 21 February 2017, after three years of preparations. In 2014, the BKnl (Beeldende Kunst Nederland) initiated a research about the remunerations for visual artists in the Netherlands. BKnl is an informal consulting body consisting of organisations that work for the interests of visual artists, as well as for museums, presentation institutions and galleries in the Netherlands. The members of BKnl are Platform BK, Museumvereniging (Museum Association), the Kunstenbond, Kunsten'92, BBK (Association of Visual Artists), NGA (Dutch Gallery Association, and the association for presentation institutions 'De Zaak Nu'. The Mondriaan Fonds (the public fund for visual and cultural heritage in the Netherlands) facilitates and coordinates the BKnl.

The research enquired art institutions (museums and presentation institutions) and visual artists, regarding exhibitions without commercial goals. Its result demonstrated that there were no guidelines in the Netherlands on artists' remuneration, nor models with national effect. Each museum and presentation institution had its own policies. BKnl set as its task to create such guidelines and, after a long period of negotiations and careful formulating of the text, it generated the covenant. The signing took place in The Hague in the presence of the minister of culture and several high officials in the cultural and social field.

In the covenant, four exhibition categories and respective fees are defined: exhibition of new work, of existing work, adaptation of existing work, and activities (often requested from the exhibiting artist, such as curatorial work, lectures, tours, educational activities, workshops, etc.). Also, the institutions are categorized by their size, namely whether their annual turnover is more than 500.000 euro or not, according to the 2017 price indication. In case of a solo exhibition smaller institutions pay the artist a fee of 6.500 euro for a new work, 500 euro for an existing work, and 2.500 euro for an adaptation of an existing work. For a duo exhibition, the corresponding amounts are 3.606 euro, 277 euro, and 1.387 euro per person. For exhibitions of more than two artists, the amounts per person are adjusted correspondingly.

A separate charter, the 'experimenting regulation', states the funds that museums and presentation institutions receive from the Mondriaan Fonds by way of compensation. This only applies when the remuneration level amounts to a minimum of 50 % of the remuneration mentioned in the guideline. When applying 100 % of the remuneration mentioned in the guideline the compensation amounts to 50 % of the artist remuneration. When applying 70 %, the compensation amounts to 40 %; when applying 50 %, the compensation is 30 %. This was effective from 2018 until 2020. At that time, this adjustment period included the 'apply-or-explain regulation': museums were not bound to offer remuneration to the artists, but they were bound to explain the reasons in case they did not.

The Mondriaan Fonds needs to receive specific funds from the Dutch State in order to furnish the institutions a compensation for the given remunerations. Whereas mid 2017 only 1/3 of the institutions paid some remuneration to the artists, by mid-2018 already 2/3 had applied the regulation. Financial prob-

lems were corresponding: halfway through 2018 the assigned funds ran out. As a result, a lobby rose to turn these funds – initially set at 400.000 euro and on an ad hoc basis – into structural funds and preferably subsequent to a raise. On 19 September 2018, after a fiery negotiation with the officials, the favourable announcement came that for 2019 and 2020 the amount was raised to 800.000 euro per year. Yet, when all institutions would have joined, more funds would be needed, estimated to 1.200.000 euro.

The implementation of the covenant did not go without problems. One of the parties that set up the covenant, the Museum Association, decided to pull out (re-joined in 2020). This meant that museums had to be persuaded to join one by one. Within a year from the signing of the covenant, the number of museums and institutions that joined was doubled – by May 2018, 110 had joined. At that point, the biggest Dutch museum of contemporary art, the Stedelijk museum of Amsterdam, joined as well.

As mentioned before, the ‘experimental regulation’ did only apply until the end of 2020. By the beginning of 2021, a new regulation was compulsory. In spring 2021 the Mondriaan Fonds suggested that the ‘experimental regulation’ for institutions with less than 100.000 euro turnover should be continued under a new name, notwithstanding a widely accepted (130 out of 150) motion by the Parliament. BKnl, being the author of the exhibition remuneration, declined this as, moreover, the evaluation of the scheme had not yet been published. When the evaluation was published, it hardly showed negative points, and an increasing popularity amongst artists and art institutions was obvious.

The coronavirus crisis certainly is no reason to stop a flanking policy. Actually, the possibility of applying for the regulation was prolonged for one more year. Thereupon the Mondriaan Fonds decided not to facilitate the BKnl any longer from 2022 on. The BKnl continues working with the goal to make the scheme viable by transforming it or including it into a structural policy.

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Beroepsvereniging van Beeldende Kunstenaars

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