

# Creating the Moment

Prepared by Arts Marketing East  
on behalf of Eastern Arts Board  
and Suffolk County Council  
November 1999



## Contents

Section 1 - Introduction .....	3
Methodology .....	3
Section 2 - Results of Artists Interviews .....	7
Conclusion to Artists Interviews .....	10
Section 3 - Results of Marketplace Interviews.....	11
Section 3.1 - Who Buys What and When?.....	13
Section 3.2 - How the Buyer Finds the Artist .....	17
Section 3.3 - Selection Criteria .....	22
Section 3.4 - Common Reasons for Rejection.....	28
Section 3.5 - Researching an Organisation .....	33
Section 3.6 - Contractual Issues .....	35
Section 3.7 - Approaching an Organisation .....	39
Section 3.8 - Sustaining the Relationship .....	42
Section 4 – Summary of Notes.....	45
Appendix A – Artistic Disciplines .....	47
Appendix B - Artist Marketplaces .....	48
Appendix C - Artist Interview Topic Guide.....	50
Appendix D - Marketplace Questionnaire.....	51

## Section 1 - Introduction

This research into the marketplace for Artists and Makers was commissioned by Eastern Arts Board and Suffolk County Council as one part of a three year programme which seeks to enable Artists and Makers in Suffolk to develop and expand their businesses by providing research, seminars, surgeries and a mentoring scheme.

In summary, our brief was *'To collect data on the marketplace for Artists' work and services to enable Artists to develop their businesses'*.

In particular, the brief emphasised *'understanding the needs of the marketplace'* and *'assisting Artists' approach to marketing through product and skills development'*.

The research was to be qualitative and priority was to be given to speaking to the people who make the decisions which give Artists and Makers access to their various marketplaces. The intention was not to produce a 'How to' guide for Artist businesses. Such guides are already available through Artists Newsletter and other publishers.

The project was managed by a Steering Group made up of Artists, Makers, people managing visual arts organisations, officers from Eastern Arts Board and Suffolk County Council.

A qualitative method was specified in the brief to allow the voice of the decision-makers to come through. They were asked open questions about the values they apply in selecting Artist/suppliers. This led to a variety of answers which reflect the diversity of the people we spoke to. We believe that this is the first time decision-makers in the marketplace have been researched and presented in this way.

Some of what they say might sound predictable. However, the important point is that here are the words of the people that Artists need to influence, in order to market their products and services.

### **Acknowledgements**

Our thanks are due to the members of the Steering Group, officers of Eastern Arts Board and Suffolk County Council, the Artists and Makers who participated in the Artists Interviews and the many people who spoke on behalf of organisations who use the products and services of Artists and Makers.

### **Methodology**

Our approach was in four phases:

1. **Define the marketplace** – identify the area in which Artists' products and services are sold or where their careers developed and who makes the decisions.

2. Conduct telephone **interviews with Artists and Makers** to identify the issues.
3. Conduct telephone and face to face **interviews with decision-makers** in the marketplace.
4. **Analyse and report** findings.

The project used the following definition of the marketplace:

*The marketplace is any domain in which the sales process of Artists' products and services is progressed.*

These include; sales arenas for Artists' products such as galleries, trade fairs, retail outlets, users of Artists' services, such as media organisations, education organisations, commissioners of art, publishers, people who act in an agency capacity such as Artists' agents; art consultants, etc. and people who further Artists' careers through bursaries and residences. (See Appendix B for a list of the areas covered).

In accordance with the brief, the project took the broadest definition of the term Visual Artist which extended from Filmmaker to Furniture Maker, Architect to Photographer, (see Appendix A for artistic disciplines covered).

Whilst it would have been impossible to conduct a detailed review of the needs of the marketplace for each artistic discipline, we wanted to ensure that our general research covered the full breadth of disciplines. To this end we produced a matrix with the various marketplaces along one axis and the Artists' disciplines along another. In this way we were able to ensure that the important marketplaces were covered for all disciplines. The matrix was circulated to the Steering Group and Visual and Media Arts Officers at Eastern Arts Board, who made useful amendments and corrections.

### **Interviews with Artists**

The initial research phase involved telephone interviews with 14 Artists from different disciplines within the visual arts. The purpose of this phase was to identify the issues of concern to Artists, so that they could be explored in our conversations with people in the marketplace (see Appendix C for the topic guide for the telephone interview). To this end we targeted Artists who were already established in their chosen profession and managing to combine business success and creative fulfilment.

The themes which emerged were how Artists could be more successful in their approaches to securing new work or opportunities, and how they could be more effective in sustaining the relationships that develop. Emphasis was given to asking questions which might be difficult for Artists to ask for themselves or where Artists might not have got a straight answer.

The data collected from these interviews (see Section 2) was used to inform the topic guides for the marketplace interviews. As a result two topic guides were drafted, one for products (goods) and another for Artists' services (Photography,

design, etc) (see Appendix D). The questions asked were broadly similar for products and services but the language used was different.

Once the topic guides were drafted, a further consultation took place with the Steering Group, so that they could add any additional questions they thought would be useful.

### **Marketplace Telephone Interviews**

A total of 56 letters were sent to decision-makers in different sectors of the marketplace. The letter gave a brief summary of the aims of the research, together with information about the length of the interview and assurances about confidentiality. Each organisation was given the option to opt out of the research.

From this letter there were three companies who indicated that company policy was to decline participation in research. A further two requested the information by post rather than by telephone. This left a possible 51 interviews to be conducted during the last week of September and the first two weeks of October. In the event a further 12 people were unavailable or declined to be interviewed.

In total 39 people were interviewed by telephone. We estimate that around 390 calls were made in order to achieve this number of successful interviews. After 39 successful interviews, we found that the amount of new material emerging was minimal. We were therefore satisfied that 39 represented a comprehensive sample for our purposes.

### **Marketplace Face to Face Interviews**

A total of 10 organisations were chosen from the original list, to participate in more in-depth interviews which were tape recorded and transcribed. The purpose of the face to face interviews was to provide more elaborate answers to the questions asked during the telephone interviews and to provide material that could be quoted in the report .

The organisations were selected to cover all of the main sectors of the marketplace for Artists' work.

They included,

- a regional Craft gallery,
- a national restaurant chain which buys work for display,
- a commissioning agency,
- a national Craft development agency,
- a large business which commissions work,
- a Film & TV company,
- a hospital arts project,
- a national glossy magazine,
- an interior design company,
- a major City corporation which not only buys Artists' work but also exhibits it.

It was anticipated that not every contact would be willing to take part in these interviews. From the possible ten initially approached, one refused to be included, two could not be contacted in time to arrange an interview and the other seven were interviewed.

### **Confidentiality**

The research was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Market Research Society. The interviewees were assured of confidentiality and therefore encouraged to speak freely. For this reason names have been removed from quotes and comments, although we realise that in some cases it may be possible to guess the origin of the quote.

### **Using this report**

We have used the word 'Artist' or 'Artist/supplier' to cover all kinds of Artist or Craft maker. The terms 'organisation,' 'client' and 'decision-maker' are used to represent the bodies which Artists may need to influence in order to achieve their aims.

For the purposes of this report the terms 'Products' and 'Services' have the following meanings:

*Products* are the material output of Artists and Makers where they have a relatively high degree of control over the finished article and the customer is most interested in the quality of the object produced.

*Services* are where the skills and experience of the person are the output and the customer is most interested in their ability to contribute creative skills and expertise. Services include almost everything that is not a product.

There will be much in this report which will be known to the reader or will appear to be common sense. However, the frequency with which some of the points were put by decision-makers in the marketplace shows that they still bear repeating.

## Section 2 - Results of Artists Interviews

The interviews with Artists were the initial phase of the research, with 14 telephone interviews carried out in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September. The purpose of this phase was to help define the kinds of places which make up the marketplaces for the work of Artists and to identify the issues which could help Artists improve their ability to develop these markets.

The interviews were conducted with Artists who were already established in their chosen profession and covered a range of disciplines within the broad category of Visual Arts.

This section follows the structure of the interviews. The Artists were asked general questions such as how they promoted their work, how they have learnt about the market for their work, and specific questions about the gaps in their knowledge of the market.

### Q1. How do you promote your work/services and in what places?

The most common response to this question was word of mouth. Most respondents found that this proved to be the most successful method for building their businesses. The second most common response was visits to exhibitions and trade fairs. Tradeshows were particularly important for Jewellers.

Good presentation was said to be the key to facilitate positive word of mouth in order to develop new business. The need to stand out and be noticed was a big issue, '*having a nice fat book of articles to show people impresses*'. However, a few of the Artists were quick to point out that although '*presentation is very important, you must have the goods in the first place.*'

21% of the Artists interviewed (3 out of the 14), offered their artistic services in the form of teaching to supplement their income, but also as an aid to promoting themselves, through improved networking.

*I am also a part-time lecturer in colleges - the students become your potential audience and are also part of your peer group.*

Multimedia Artist

A number of the Artists (21%) felt that the internet was a growing opportunity for promotion and as a result, were planning to invest in this area.

*As a maker I am a one man band and therefore have to balance work and marketing - I am now exploring a professional page on the internet.*

Woodturner

The development of the internet was clearly an emerging issue of concern to many Artists and therefore featured as a specific question in the subsequent research into the marketplace.

## Q2. What are the best ways you have found of learning about the market for your work?

This question definitely highlighted a troublesome area for Artists. Most seemed to be vague about their acquisition of information and suggested that any knowledge they did have had developed over many years. One Artist made this very clear saying '*I think experience plays an important role*' and was adamant that this was the only way an Artist could learn about their market and that no amount of training would help.

The main arena where the Artists' found they gained an understanding of the market for their work was at trade fairs which involved '*contact with other people who do the same thing.*' This opportunity to learn from other Artists was clearly important to them.

The last point, however, did not apply so much for Media arts, where organised workshops were more common, '*helped with other short courses for funding, marketing and negotiation skills,*' in relation to their marketplace.

For the majority, the main problems were time and money, both of which were said to be needed in abundance to fully explore the market for their work.

*I think there is a much bigger market for these areas than I have reached - it takes time and money and I don't have either.*

MultiMedia Artist

Some Artists felt it was their responsibility to establish themselves - '*instead of waiting for the moment, creating the moment,*' whilst others found that '*if your work isn't of good quality then no money or marketing will help it*'.

## Q3. Who are the decision-makers that give you access to the marketplace?

All the Artists interviewed recognised that there were a variety of decision-makers who influence their opportunities for sales and career development. For instance, Artists found that the '*the marketplace in terms of Galleries is the people who programme the Galleries,*' and '*as far as public collections go it's down to the person you see - the curator for print or librarian for books.*'

Although these people were identified as having responsibility for the control of the marketplace, most Artists felt that the public were also instrumental in their success as Artists.

*If something doesn't sell I stop making it, therefore the public are the main decision Makers.*

Jeweller

Several of the Artists referred to the part that they must play in this process of trying to understand their own market and promote their own work.

*'in terms of selling finished products you have to identify who you need to sell to and then get them to buy.'*

MultiMedia Artist

Other Artists took this further, pointing out that *'you have to look after yourself – no-one is going to discover you - you have to promote yourself all the time.'*

The other area of influence in Artists' work was the media who could be influential in offering PR opportunities.

*Often decision-makers can be magazines.*

Ceramicist

#### Q4. What do you feel are the gaps in your or most Artists' knowledge of the marketplace?

This question highlighted several key points which will later be reflected in the analysis for the marketplace interviews, but the main point was that the more experience an Artist has, the fewer gaps they have in their knowledge.

*It's your life experience which brings most knowledge.*

Painter

It raised important issues such as a lack of business skills and the difficulties involved in trying to acquire these. Several Artists felt that *'people don't realise how hard it is to sell your work'* and that these skills are the ones *'that need to be taught - organisational skills, professionalism such as properly presented CV's, slides and websites.'*

71% of the Artists, (10 out of 14), complained about poor access to marketing and selling skills, while a couple of Artists went further and said that if you are a maker you cannot be expected to have a business aptitude as well.

*The making and the marketing don't mix.*

Ceramicist

#### Q5. What are the main networks that are important to success?

The purpose of this question was to identify how 'word of mouth' could best be promoted. It was an area that people found hard to pin down. Most Craft workers felt that tradeshows and fairs were most effective in promoting word of mouth.

Others felt that word of mouth worked best via articles in the media and this was especially important for Craft Artists, as they felt it represented a sense of recognition and achievement.

*In a way word of mouth is the most important network. Articles in magazines can work because you are seen as being at a high standard - it is important for your image - it gives you credibility.*

Ceramicist

The main networks for the future in relation to Artists succeeding in the marketplace were seen as the internet and also the main databases such as Axis which is now on CD ROM.

*The future lies in the internet and Axis database - they get your work in the public domain which is what is needed.*

Painter

## **Conclusion to Artists Interviews**

- From the initial research several strong themes came through such as the need for training in business skills and the importance of good presentation.
- Word of mouth was the key method for promoting work.
- Many Artists felt that the internet will be influential in the future.
- One area of consensus was that the public were just as influential as any main decision-maker in the marketplace.
- Artists should be aware of the instrumental part they must play when trying to access the marketplace.

## Section 3 - Results of Marketplace Interviews

In the main phase of the research we spoke directly to a broad spectrum of people who make the decisions which give Artists' access to the various markets.

This involved conducting 39 telephone and 7 face to face interviews. The purpose of this was to obtain information about how selection and buying decisions are made in the various areas of the marketplace so that Artists and Makers can improve their marketing to these areas.

The response rate was 70%. The range of people interviewed was sufficiently broad for us to feel confident that it is representative of the significant marketplaces for the work of Artists.

The structure for this section of the report follows a logical pattern from identifying the variety of products and services used by organisations, through bidding for new work and opportunities to maintaining a successful business relationship.

Guide to sub-sections

**Section 3.1 Who Buys What and When?**

- Who Buys
- What they Buy
- When they Buy

**Section 3.2 How the Buyer Finds the Artist**

- Tradeshows
- Magazines and Newspapers
- Networking and Personal Contact
- Websites, Slide Libraries and Databases

**Section 3.3 Selection Criteria**

- Quality of Work
- Professionalism and Quality of Presentation
- Appropriateness
- Experience and Reputation
- Price and Saleability
- Location
- Fashion
- Previous Contact or Personal Recommendation
- Services?
- Versatility
- Personality

**Section 3.4 Common Reasons for Rejection**

- Inappropriate work or failure to research the organisation
- Poor Quality Work
- Poor Presentation or lack of Professionalism
- Lack of Commitment
- Lack of Originality
- Excessive Prices or Costs
- Competition

**Section 3.5 Researching an Organisation**

**Section 3.6 Contractual Issues**

**Section 3.7. Approaching an Organisation**

- Researching the Organisation
- Preparing a tailored proposal
- Follow up

**Section 3.8 Sustaining the Relationship**

- Professionalism
- Personality and Attitude
- Communication

## Section 3.1 - Who Buys What and When?

The purpose of this section is to help Artists understand the scope of work commissioned by various sectors of the marketplace, to gain an insight into the type of people that are involved in decision-making and to understand the buying cycles of different sectors.

We found that there are few patterns with regard to who buys, what they buy or when they buy. This highlights the need to research individual organisations when preparing a submission.

Note that the term 'buys' refers here not only to buying products but to 'supplying' opportunities (e.g. its Galleries selling on commission and Arts Council's awarding travel bursaries).

### Who Buys

The decision process for selection and buying decisions varies widely from organisation to organisation. The only real distinction was between the 'commercial sector' and the 'public' or 'not for profit' sector.

In the commercial sector, the majority of decisions were normally taken by just one person whereas in the 'public not for profit' sector, over half of all selection, programming or buying decisions involved selection panels.

*For the Chelsea Craft Fair we have two Makers every year and we also have what is known as an opinion former and that might be a curator or a gallery shop type outlet Director and also one Journalist who is familiar with the contemporary Crafts and writes about contemporary craft.*

Sales Development Manager - National Craft Development Agency

The commercial world of interior design illustrated how the process can vary from situation to situation.

*...clients work in all sorts of ways, sometimes a big client will have an art consultant but I once commissioned an Artist to do a mosaic mural in a building and that was me instigating it and finding her and asking her to do something to a brief and then us presenting it to the client directly.*

Interior Designer - International Design Company

In most cases, people on selection panels had some professional involvement in the artform but this was not always the case, as in this City law firm which hosts exhibitions in its offices.

*Yes I do all the work but I regularly meet one or two of the lawyers and we agree in principle what the exhibition subject is going to be and I show them some photographs and we talk about the invitations. I do most of the work but I liaise with them so that they are involved.*

Freelance Arts Consultant

This is also true of major commissions which may come from all sorts of sectors, both public and private, although lay selection panels would normally be guided by professional advisors.

*They vary from private sector, people who are from large computer companies, property developers, architects to public sector people like local authorities, in their many different departments – highways, housing and housing associations. We work with crematoriums, hospitals, the whole gamut of people who might be involved in landscape or building work.*

*. . . at least 50% of the time their final say will be entirely influenced by what their advisers say. So I think the notion of people having a kind of ignorant final say probably isn't the case.*

Director - Regional Commissioning Agency

One regional/national craft gallery allocated types of different media to different members of staff.

*Everyone here is involved [in programming/buying decisions]. We have five staff each one having what we call 'a stable'. We break the Artists into groups, with one staff member taking responsibility for an individual Artist and his or her development. The overall direction would be from either myself or my Sales Manager to help in that development.*

Proprietor - National/Regional Craft Gallery

Non-Gallery situations such as curating exhibitions or selecting for commissions of new work to be displayed in hospitals or schools might involve a wide spectrum of people in the selection process.

*. . . a selection committee which will include members of medical staff and possibly patients and members of the steering group and other appropriate people. If the work involved a lot of long term maintenance or a lot of structural work in a specific area, we get people like service managers involved . . .*

Co-ordinator - Hospital Arts Project

## **What they buy**

The kind of products and services bought by the respondents was extremely diverse, however, it did appear that the 'not for profit' sector undertake more commissions than the commercial sector. The 'not for profit' sector also tended to be more specific in the categories of work with which they are involved.

*One of the architectural firms I worked on was doing a building in Canary Wharf and for this atrium space they made a giant chess board out of the floor and they commissioned a furniture craftsman to make giant chairs that were like the pieces of the chess set. A lot of times in architecture you will use furniture designers to commission a bench outside or a boardroom table.*

Interior Designer - International Design Company

For a comprehensive table outlining the products that organisations buy, see Appendix B.

### **When they buy**

As would be expected, the planning process for each sector varied enormously.

*You get so many calls in January when you get back to work. I am convinced it is New Year resolutions, I must get more out of my book! – we get so much stuff sent in. Loads and loads of Illustrators then.*

Art Editor – National Glossy Magazine

Here is a summary of the different sectors and their planning processes:

### **Exhibitions & Galleries**

Most Galleries presented between 4 and 16 shows a year with the length of each show ranging from 2 to 8 weeks. The decision process for these shows ranged from 6 months to 3½ years in advance of the show.

*We programme 3½ years ahead. Any Artist takes 2-3 years to work towards an exhibition.*

Director - Local Gallery

### **Tradeshows**

It was apparent that to get a good stand at these fairs an application should be made early. The planning process for the major shows normally began one year in advance.

*The earlier the approach the better - if they want a very small stand they might have to wait a couple of years. For others who submit we can complete in a couple of weeks. A specific requirement can mean them waiting a lot longer.*

Manager for Arts and Crafts- National/International Craft Tradeshow

### **Magazines**

The majority of magazines plan all year round and are prepared to receive submissions from potential Artists/suppliers throughout the year. They try to plan well in advance to allow for all aspects of the magazine's work.

*We try to have a long lead in, partly because we have to commission writing and partly because we want to get the best out of people.*

Editor-National Magazine

### **Art Consultancies**

These organisations had a year-round programme of Artist recruitment and a variety of decision processes. The time between a successful submission and an opportunity to work or

exhibit could be anything from weeks to years. It all depended on what projects they were asked to do.

*The decision process can be as short as one day – ie, you just go on a studio visit and like someone whose work you can place straight away. On the other hand it could be 2 years down the line.*

Art Consultant-Art Consultancy

### **Retailers**

There did not seem to be any pattern or times to their planning process. Each retailer was prepared to look at work as it came in, but the decision process was approximately one month.

*Not really any set time - on going - we take a submission and a month later give an answer.*

Contemporary Craft Buyer-National Retailer

### **Publishers**

These organisations tended to look for Artists between 3 and 4 times a year and one of the Publishers said their decisions coincided with the major tradeshows.

*There are three main times of the year that we look for new work. This corresponds to the three main tradeshows that we go to.*

Art Director-National Publisher

### **Multimedia-Film**

The process for multimedia organisations that we spoke to was ongoing with the planning of Artists' work taking place 6 months to 1 year in advance.

*There are not really fixed points to our programming of events and venues. Our length of planning is a minimum of 6 months - most often 6 months to 1 year.*

Director-National Film and Video Agency

### **Artist-in-Residence**

Most residency posts are advertised once a year and quite often are planned 8 - 18 months in advance. For other use of Artist-in-residence services, the planning and decisions seem to be ad hoc.

*We constantly have a group of Artists here. We are trying to lengthen the period of time from publishing the residencies and people starting work. It could be 8 months to 18 months.*

Director-National Sculpture Park

## Section 3.2 - How the Buyer Finds the Artist

The purpose of this section is to provide Artists with an insight into the actions that organisations take to find Artists. Such an understanding will be particularly useful in planning how to promote work to different types of organisation.

Most of the organisations interviewed said that they sought to develop a general awareness of 'who is doing what'. Their methods varied but most organisations employed at least four or five different methods. These might include: visiting Degree shows or exhibitions, visiting Open Studios, reading magazines, using image databases or through word of mouth. Some organisations advertised posts, exhibition or commission opportunities. They also made a point of saying that they considered submissions direct from Artists.

*It is a continuous research process.*

Editor - Independent Photography Magazine

In most cases, the reputation of the organisation questioned depended to a large extent on the quality of the Artists it engaged. For this reason many people put considerable effort into locating appropriate Artists.

*Every week-end I get in the car. I go to studios all the time. I go to all the degree shows or as many as I can – I go to all the London ones and I go to all the Scottish ones where possible, I mean as much as I can possibly afford, time is limited. So I do a lot of research. If I see someone interesting in a magazine I will try and track them down and then all the time Artists get to know about me so they send me slides and I do actually encourage it, I mean a lot of Galleries throw them in the bin straight away but for me it is important because as I say I am always looking for new Artists.*

Art Consultant

Most organisations maintained some kind of record or database of potential Artists/suppliers.

*When we run projects which are publicly advertised we use that as the way of actually building on our database.*

Director - Regional Commissions Agency

### Tradeshows

These were of importance to the Craft sector of the marketplace and included 'Top Draw' and the 'Chelsea Craft Fair'.

*Chelsea Crafts Fair is publicised in Crafts Magazine we always publicise the deadline for applications but that is Chelsea, we don't advertise anything else formally as such apart from the export opportunities go through Makers' News and the DTI Business Newsletters.*

Sales Development Manager - National Craft Development Agency

---

Another good source for information is 'Makers' News' published by the Crafts Council. It is free and is sent to all the Makers on the Council's non-selective list (join by telephoning the Crafts Council its free and open to all).

*Certainly there are trade fairs that we all go to . . . There is 100% Design, London, then there is one called Spectrum, London, there is Orgatec in Germany and there is Neocon in the States and then there is more decorator type ones like Decorex.*

Interior Designer - International Design Company

Other methods used to source Crafts suppliers and Public Art suppliers were slide libraries and databases as well as consulting the officers of Regional Arts Boards.

Degree shows and other college shows were a very popular form of finding new, up and coming talent. These were used particularly by Fine Art Galleries, Publishers, Art Consultancies and National Film and Video Agencies.

*We are very proactive - we go to degree shows.*

Partner - Art in Workplace Consultancy

## **Magazines and Newspapers**

Magazines and newspapers were very important tools in the search for Artist/suppliers. Magazines used ranged from the newsletters of Regional Arts Boards to Artists' Newsletter where opportunities might be advertised. Other media research tools included national and international glossy magazines, where a feature might bring an Artist to the notice of a potential client.

For Photography it might not be the content of an article that was of interest but the name of the Photographer who did the job.

ArtEast and other trade magazines relevant to a particular discipline were also of value when looking for Artists. The use of agencies proved to be helpful when looking for Illustrators. For Photographers, magazines, newspapers and trade publications were the main source for research.

*We look through magazines, newspapers and trade publications - we track down Photographers that way.*

Creative Researcher - International Photo Library

## **Networking and Personal Contact**

Networking and personal contacts were among the most important methods of finding new Artist/suppliers. It was a continual process for all organisations, where word of mouth was used within the industry to gain new Artists' names. Also Artists helped other Artists using word of mouth.

*Word of mouth - Artists talk to other Artists.*

Artist Agent

The continual process of contacting potential clients could be approached in many ways.

*They should get out there and come and show us their stuff because as Interior Designers we love to see things that inspire us, you know we'd far rather see a rug designer's brochure come across our desk than another carpet manufacturer!*

*. . . In our offices we have a little gallery space where we have all kinds of textile shows and stuff and people come and speak to the librarian and say can I put some of my work up for a month. It is outside our in-house cafeteria and people see it as they are walking down to collect their mail and make themselves a cup of tea. I would think that Artists could approach all sorts of people to say can I hang my rug up in your lobby for a while.*

*. . . A lot of times in the company I work for, people come and do lunchtime presentations. I can remember a number of furniture Makers or furniture Craftsmen coming to do presentations at lunchtime, bringing in lunch sometimes or sometimes not and doing a slide show and a talk. It would probably be something that was more informative rather than a sales push. For instance one particular guy I remember giving a presentation on wood and how furniture is made and what types of wood are suitable for what' and then saying 'by the way here is our furniture brochure on what we can do for you'..*

Interior Designer - International Design Company

Film is an example of an industry where word of mouth was the most important method of hearing about potential Artist/suppliers.

*The grapevine is the most important thing in an area like this.*

Director - Regional FilmMakers

## **Websites, Slide Libraries and Databases**

The role of websites emerged in our preliminary research as an issue of current concern to Artists. Should they spend their scarce promotional resources on websites? How effective would they be? For this reason, we specifically asked the decision-makers in the marketplace about how they use websites.

Around 60% of decision-makers that we asked said that they did sometimes look at the websites of Artists and most of the 40% who didn't said that they expected to start in the near future.

*We haven't up to now, but in the last 3-4 months we have gone on line - it will be something which will be used in the future.*

Arts Co-ordinator - Church Commission

However, when asked how the websites influenced their decision the majority of those who looked at them said that they did not influence their decision much at all. They were used mainly for providing context and background information. They

were an easily accessible way of finding out about Artists but few people had the time to plough through hundreds of Artists' sites looking for possible suppliers.

Most of the Artists' websites that they looked at were those of Artists with whom they had an existing or developing relationship or from whom they had received an approach in another form.

*Yes we do use the web but it does not influence us, it is just a very handy tool to use.*

Creative Researcher - National/International Photo Library

*We haven't really trawled through the websites because it is time consuming and I do not have the time for that – it is best to use agencies that know what they are doing and know the Artists.*

Co-ordinator - Hospital Art Project

Most of the organisations were quick to emphasise that, apart from digital art created specifically for that media, viewing on screen was a very poor substitute for seeing work in the real world.

*Seeing something in the flesh is the best - something on screen will never replace this.*

Shop Manager - National Museum Shop

There was only one instance where websites would significantly influence programming or buying decisions and this was where the company was looking for MultiMedia work.

*If an Artist seems to have technical sophistication for the web and we need something in line with the web then this will be influential.*

Director - National Film and Video Agency

*I can never really judge an Artist's work by slide or website. I find something fantastic on screen or on slide and you see the real thing and you think 'oh my goodness' and the other way round. Things look quite dark and whatever and then you see them and you get very excited so I mean it points me in a direction. For example recently I went to Liverpool and I thought whilst I am there I will see as many people as possible so I checked on the web, you know for things that are going on. I mean it is a great communication but I need to see the original at the end of the day. I cannot choose anything without actually seeing the artwork so it's a starting point.*

Freelance Art Consultant

Slide Libraries were used by approximately half of all the companies interviewed. Several organisations maintain their own slide libraries or databases and therefore do not feel the need to use others.

*No we never use slide libraries or databases - we have our own.*

Director - Local Commercial Gallery

The most regularly used slide library was the Craft Council's Photostore and this was held in the highest esteem due to the quality of the Makers in the library and the ease of using the system. Other slide libraries mentioned were Commissions East and Eastern Arts Board.

*We do use the Craft Council slide library - it is very easy to use and is selective so you get good quality.*

Education Officer - Regional Fine Art Gallery

Databases are not so widely used, but the main one mentioned was Axis, and again this would be used for research information.

*Yes we do use databases such as Axis - not for selection but for information to inform us on what is happening.*

National Slide Library

### Section 3.3 - Selection Criteria

We asked each organisation about the criteria that they used when making selection decisions.

Although criteria are often published in formal selection procedures, many decisions are made on a more informal basis and it will be helpful for Artists to understand the criteria by which their submissions are judged. It was a question which many of the decision-makers found surprisingly difficult to answer.

*I would say that in a vast majority of times when you receive a commission it is because the person who is giving you the commission trusts you to deliver it. They like you, they think there is something interesting about you and it is about that as much as it is about the idea because there are hundreds of ideas. It is about making personal contact.*

Series Producer - Regional TV series featuring films by new Directors

Naturally, the detailed criteria varied dramatically from organisation to organisation and from job to job. However, there were several common themes.

The criteria for Artists' 'services', such as residencies, followed the overall pattern of 'products' although more emphasis was given to areas such as communication skills, self motivation, a sense of humour and good organisation.

*We look for someone who will get on with people and excite the kids as well as being able to get on with their own work.*

Art Director - Independent Secondary School

### Quality Of Work

Some organisations had very limited criteria. One Gallery couldn't expand more than to say 'Contemporary work of living Artists'. Whilst others had very specific detailed criteria against which submissions were judged. 'Quality, subject matter, medium and consistency. Work which shows quality of professionalism'.

*Quality of their work is very important - I don't have to like the work but I have to see validity in it.*

Art Director - Independent Secondary School

Respondents found it hard to discuss creative quality of work. Perhaps because of this they quickly moved on to other criteria. Perhaps it may be assumed that a high artistic quality was 'taken as read' and they particularly wanted to emphasise other criteria which are important to them but the importance of which may not be fully appreciated by some Artist/suppliers.

### Professionalism

As might be expected, good quality of work was common to all. However, evidence of professionalism was also high on the list. A high priority was also given to being satisfied that the Artist understood what was required.

*I think on occasions it is looking at previous projects and how those have been dealt with. It is looking for, I suppose, an understanding of the kind of nature of public or private space because I suppose what is critical to our work is that we are concerned that Artists should be partners in a development project. We are very rarely involved with projects which are just about putting a piece of Sculpture in front of a building. So it is a potential for someone to collaborate with other people*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

*It changes with every single project, if you have got somebody working in a maternity unit it is going to be a very different criteria from somebody working on the kids ward. It's going to be somebody who's really different who is producing work to go on the ceilings of the radio therapy treatment rooms. Its going to be ultimately somebody who is going to have the appropriate work – it's going to be somebody that is capable of being able to work within the hospital way of working – it's somebody that gets on with the staff and patients – if you have got somebody who does not get on with the staff or patients then it's pointless, it's not going to work.*

Co-ordinator - Hospital Art Project

People making selection decisions made many judgements based on submissions made by Artists. Quality of work was never the sole issue. Even for the Chelsea Crafts Fair where decisions are made purely from four slides, the condition or quality of slides also sometimes influenced the decision.

*The only thing that gets shown is slides and so the standard of Photography is the most important element in the selection process really and that is where the majority of people let themselves down.*

Sales Development Manager – National Crafts Agency

*If slides are really bad you don't look any further.*

Director - Sculpture Park

## **Appropriateness**

By 'appropriateness' we mean that the work or proposal was appropriate for the job in hand. This was always of key importance and is discussed further under 'Reasons for Rejection' below.

*I think it is so obvious when people come in and the work is the right type of work, you know it is really obvious, whereas a lot of people come in and when I say it is really not our style of work, it is very hard. And they always say Oh no! but I can do that sort of thing and you think well I cannot see it and I cannot see that you can do that.*

Art Editor - National Glossy Magazine

This implies that organisations like Artists to research their organisation before making a submission, in order to ensure the appropriateness of their work.

## Experience & Reputation

Although they are not strictly the same thing, reputation and experience were used interchangeably by many people.

In general, experience was more important to people buying an Artist's services than for those buying products. However, most organisations wanted Artists to show a degree of professionalism which was often demonstrated through experience.

*Experience is quite useful especially for the kind of companies I work for. High profile people like Walt Disney. You are not going to give them some student who has never done it before. It would have to be someone who has done cool things before and maybe has been published. Maybe you have seen their work before or if you really like it and you think that they are together and can do it. You would put them forward.*

Interior Designer – International Design Company

*The biggest difficulty in a way is that with the very big commissions there is a lot at stake. The commissioners are very reluctant to actually work with someone who has absolutely no experience at all and probably quite reasonably so.*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

Some local Galleries specifically liked to have different exhibitions using both new and well known Artists. However, Artists with no reputation would rarely be offered a solo exhibition.

*Reputation does help to sell a show but we do consider those that no one has heard of.*

Manager - Local Commercial Gallery

The areas where experience and reputation seemed to be quite important were normally the service orientated ones such as Film, Media and Magazine Photography.

*Experience counts for a lot - we would not commission someone who was inexperienced in this area.*

Director - National Film and Video Agency

The organisations which particularly mentioned experience and reputation were Art Consultancies, Photo Libraries and Commercial Publishers.

*The role of reputation and experience is important so you know what you are getting.*

Editorial Director - Commercial Publisher

---

Experience was also key to securing export opportunities.

*For Chelsea it doesn't make any difference at all. Experience is irrelevant because selectors don't know the experience when your slides are projected. But for America it is very important because it would go against the mission of promoting good business relations from the British creative industries and contemporary design if we send out somebody who doesn't know how to fill out an order form, cannot price their work, doesn't understand the technicalities of thirty days invoicing and pro-forma invoicing and export terminology really. Basic business formatting. So experience there would play a big part.*

Sales Development Manager – National Crafts Agency

### **Price and Saleability**

Pricing or the saleability of goods was another criteria which was mentioned on several occasions as a criteria within both commercial and non-commercial sectors.

*We don't chose the cheapest, we choose the design which demonstrates best value for money.*

Director - Regional Film Development Agency

*The standard of work has to be high because we have to sell.*

Manager - Local Commercial Gallery

### **Location**

Geographical proximity was only ever a primary issue to local and regional organisations actively seeking to support local Artists. No one said that they would encourage the use of local Artists if they were not *'the best for the job'*.

*Geographical proximity is a factor - we try and promote the work of local Artists.*

Co-ordinator - Artist Led Gallery

### **Fashion**

Although there was a general tendency to try to resist the vagaries of what is fashionable at the time, many decision-makers were aware that what was current did sometimes influence their decisions. On the other hand, for some organisations fashion definitely played a role as they tried to stay abreast of trends. This was more true of commercial organisations than non-commercial.

*We are keen to show we are responding to a National trend in art.*

Co-ordinator - Artist Led Gallery

*Fashion trends do influence, that is the trick of buying. If you are not aware of what is going on in terms of movements then you are not buying astutely.*

Shop Manager - National Museum Shop

Though not strictly fashion, it was interesting that the rapid production and distribution cycle for magazine Photography meant that it is generally obvious if a particular Photographer was 'going through a particularly good phase'.

*It is not so much who is in fashion it is more who is really going through a good patch. With Artists and everybody it is like he is just doing brilliant work at the moment and two years later he has gone slightly down hill.*

Art Editor – National Glossy Magazine

### **Previous Contact or Personal Recommendation**

Responses to the role of previous contact or personal recommendation were highly polarised between those who were adamant that it played no role in selection and those who said that they were hugely important.

Previous contact or personal recommendation was noticeably more important for organisations engaging Artists' 'services', such as commissions or magazine Photography, than for those buying or promoting products such as an exhibition gallery or Artist agent.

*It is not important. Not important at all.*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

*It is important – it's very risky opening yellow pages and speaking to all those in commercial design. You need to use those used by others. There's a sense of accreditation.*

Director - Regional Film Development Agency

*Personal recommendation helps if it is someone I know in the craft industry or from the Craft Council – a recognised body – I wouldn't need to look at the work too deeply due to their reputation.*

Organiser - National/International Crafts Fair

*2 on a scale of 1 to 10. It really isn't important.*

Independent Photography Magazine

Just short of half of those interviewed thought that a previous contact or personal recommendation was of no importance because it was the Artists' work that counted.

*Not at all - it is the Artists' work that counts and what we feel we can sell.*

Exhibition Manager - Regional Fine Art Gallery

Although the importance of previous contact or personal recommendation varied between organisation, many people mentioned that they were influenced by reputation. For instance if they had heard that a potential Artist/supplier had a poor reputation. Word of mouth could therefore work in a negative way as well.

*Very important - I think a past relationship can be very important.*

Shop Manager - National Museum Shop

## Versatility

Versatility was particularly important to those engaging Artists' services. For instance, an Artist who makes paintings and ceramics might be more attractive to a school recruiting an Artist-in-residence than one who only makes paintings.

*It has got to be a whole package, for instance Photographers who just send in a book of black and white photographs, and I think this would be true for most magazines, are not conveying that they can do colour as well and their book would not, therefore, be relevant.*

Art Editor – National Glossy Magazine

Once the organisations had described their selection criteria in response to an open question they were asked to rank three criteria for selection, in order of importance. The three criteria were Quality, Originality and Artist's Reputation. The results were as follows:

	Number of Firsts	Number of Seconds	Number of Thirds
Quality	35	11	0
Originality	18	25	3
Artists Reputation	0	5	41

## Personality

Many people mentioned personality as being an important criteria for selection. Even if their work was brilliant few people wanted to work with people who were difficult or even offensive. On the contrary, under 'Sustaining the Relationship' towards the end of the document, it may be seen that being a pleasure to work with was a major factor in sustaining repeat business.

## Section 3.4 - Common Reasons for Rejection

The decision-makers were asked to give the three most common reasons why submissions from Artists would be unsuccessful. This is the area in which we found most common-ground between the various marketplaces.

Although it may make rather negative reading, we believe that this section might be the most valuable to Artists seeking to improve the success rate of their submissions for work opportunities.

Poor presentation suggesting lack of professionalism and quality of work were both the most talked about reasons for rejecting an Artist's work. Most of the time they were raised together but some organisations only mentioned one or the other, particularly where they had a specific problem with them.

### **Inappropriate work or failure to research the organisation**

Failure to research the work of the organisation to which Artists are making an approach and therefore putting forward inappropriate work was one of the most common reasons for rejecting proposals.

Organisations continually expressed astonishment at the frequency with which it was clear that Artists approaching them had not even done the most basic research.

*Inappropriate style - something that could be researched beforehand - this happens all the time and is very infuriating because they haven't bothered to find out anything about us.*

Art Director - National Publisher - Cards and Books

*I go to talks and nobody has watched any of the series or they do not know anything about the slot, they give me a proposal for a half-hour programme and in my tender I say I am looking for a ten minute Film. They just don't do their homework.*

Series Producer - Regional TV series featuring films by new Directors

*Don't waste your time coming if your work is not relevant to the specific magazine or your illustration work or Photography or whatever craft you do is not relevant and surely people who are in that visual side of working can work that one out.*

Art Editor – National Glossy Magazine

Inappropriateness would not always be due to failure to adequately research an organisation.

*Anyone who approaches us, we ask them to send information which shows us their trade prices, illustrations of their work, a statement about their work and a statement of where they already selling in the UK. This is based on the view that if you are not selling or have not exhausted your market in the UK, or at least fully researched your market in the UK, then you are not really ready to export.*

Sales Development Manager – National Craft Agency

*Because I work, you know in the City, in awkward settings in a working space, things that are very political or you know sexually depicting might be great elsewhere but not here, so there is no point in anyone working in that field really approaching me.*

Freelance Arts Consultant

### **Poor Quality Work**

Poor quality of work was frequently cited. Few people were able to provide a very clear definition of what they meant by this. For Fine Arts it might just be work that did nothing for the selector, for Crafts it might be as straightforward as poor build quality.

*Work that just doesn't turn you on, it's not good quality or leaves you feeling dead.*

Director – Regional Film Development Agency

*Work that is badly painted or shows no skill.*

Director – Art in Workplace Agency

### **Poor presentation or lack of professionalism**

Many organisations also expressed frustration at the number of submissions from Artists that were poorly presented, for example with unlabelled slides or out of date documentation.

*Poor print quality - people who send pictures out of the blue nearly always send poor quality prints.*

Editor - Independent Photography Magazine

Two problems arose from poor presentation. In some cases it was impossible to assess the Artist's work because the images were poor or they had forgotten to include their name and address.

*Terrible slides where work cannot be seen. This does not reflect the actual quality of work but we won't even consider the Artist if we cannot see their slides.*

Director - Local Fine Art and Craft Gallery

*Well the primary reason for rejection for Chelsea is slides. Poor Photography and it is unbelievable across the board, even people that are regular exhibitors and have shown before, who submit poor slides and they find it very shocking that they get rejected.*

Sales Development Manager – National Crafts Agency

In other cases, poorly presented submissions indicated lack of professionalism which was given as a key criteria in the section above 'How they find Artists'.

*Given the number of courses run by RAB's and everybody else, I continue to be amazed at how badly some people present their work and unfortunately because it is competitive, you need to actually – you*

---

*cannot just rely on the fact that you are an Artist and that you are living in Bungay.*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

Some good Artists were simply poor at presentation or communication and when people used the opportunity of a presentation to complain about their situation they sometimes lost the work.

*I mean one of the things I notice is important still in doing this kind of work is actually the ability to talk to people and to discuss what you want to do and to discuss it in a very clear way. One of the things that I think rather naturally happens – it is quite sad in many ways – the Artists who are able to do that often succeed more easily than people who find it very difficult to communicate for whatever reason.*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

*People whining all the time about why aren't we getting money for this, why aren't we getting money for that, like people owe them a living and it is not like that at all. People are fighting for tiny amounts of money for short slots and you have to really persevere at it, you have to make friends and you have to just do a lot of personal work.*

Series Producer - Regional TV series featuring films by new Directors

*We do ask ourselves to be humble, we ask Artists to be humble and mindful of their place in the history of art. We might find it difficult to cope with someone who was rather arrogant and felt that this was the right place for their art or this has to be the price and this is what he or she wants to do.*

Proprietor – National/Regional Gallery

### **Lack of commitment**

In some cases, poor presentation included not demonstrating a commitment to the project. Alternatively it was clear that selectors were impressed by passion and enthusiasm.

*Many times you get people in and they go “mmm” you know I have got this fantastic idea for a sitcom and here it is. And I say, we have got half-an-hour can we just talk about something that you really want to do. Well I have got this idea and then I have got this proposal here for this Film and there is also this and they give you four. Well that to me means you are not passionate about anything. You know you have got to be passionate about one thing and really, really flog it.*

*. . . we are inundated with scripts from people from London and we are inundated with London production companies and it is a real fight not to give them the work frankly, because they are better organised, they are more experienced and they're hungry for it.*

Series Producer - Regional TV series featuring films by new Directors

### **Difficult to work with**

In some cases, a reputation for being unpleasant to work with was given as a reason for rejection. People also commented that it was off-putting when prospective suppliers used presentation opportunities to complain about their situation.

*If an Artist is quite difficult to work with then this will mean rejection. Sometimes an Artist will continually get work due to a pleasant nature but those who are 'prima donnas' will not be used.*

Director - Art In Workplace Agency

### **Lack of Originality**

The desire to see the artform move forward was almost universal amongst the decision-makers that we spoke to.

*Their work is unoriginal - there is still the case that people think they are having original ideas but others are having the same ideas.*

Director - National Film and Video Agency

*Work that we feel doesn't push the boundaries of contemporary practice.*

Director - National Arts Organisation

*In the very first month or so that I started here I gave a talk at Luton and in the next bunch of applications I got like fifteen films about living in Luton and people just had not grasped what I wanted, you know, and I had made a point of saying we reflected the nature of the region but they are not necessarily films about this or about that.*

Series Producer - Regional TV series featuring films by new Directors

### **Excessive Prices or Costs**

It was surprising that high price or high cost was rarely put forward as a reason for not choosing to work with a particular Artist. This supports the argument that Artists should not be reserved about asking a fair price in the fear that they may not be awarded the opportunity they are seeking.

On the other hand, inappropriate pricing where for instance work priced in £10,000's is submitted to a gallery that only sells in £100's was a sign that a prospective Artist/supplier had failed to adequately research an organisation.

*Pricing is too high. Occasionally you will get a quote which is so outlandish that it will rule them out.*

Director - Regional Film Development Agency

*Certainly again in the kind of work I am doing in London, fee probably isn't the biggest issue it's getting the right person for the project.*

Interior Designer – International Design Company

## **Competition**

There is no doubt that tough competition was a characteristic of all the markets we considered. This means that there will always be many more people disappointed than successful. Such competition may be seen as both a challenge and a consolation. In many cases work is turned down just because there is one other submission that is just slightly more appropriate.

*Sometimes work may not be that bad but we already have something like it that is better – or we have too much of a certain type of work – this will mean rejection. Again no reflection of quality just too much of the same thing.*

Director – Art in Workplace Agency

## Section 3.5 - Researching an Organisation

Failure to adequately research an organisation to which an Artist was making a proposal was by far the most common complaint amongst the organisations interviewed. They felt that Artists needed to do much more research themselves into the work of the organisation they are approaching, so that they could present a relevant proposal.

*Lots of applications are based on what we have done in the past. They must keep up to date with the organisation to understand what they are doing at that moment in time. Make sure you know what is happening with the organisation and make sure your work fits in with this.*

Director – National Sculpture Park

The first task was clearly to identify relevant organisations.

*It is really easy, they can get a list from the RIBA or from the Institute of Chartered Interior Designers or just from yellow pages and they can call up and speak to the receptionist and ask who makes decisions regarding interior furnishing or who would make decisions about the arts and they could just write a letter.*

Interior Designer – International Design Company

Nearly all the organisations were happy for Artists to either call or write in for general enquiries about the organisation or to obtain relevant material. Some were also happy to arrange appointments so Artists could come in and meet them.

*They can book my time to answer questions.*

Director - Local Non-Commercial Gallery

The only organisations expecting Artists to submit their work rather than make an initial phone call, were the National Magazines. Photographers and Illustrators were expected to research a prospect and demonstrate within their submission that they knew what the journal or magazine was about. This is quite a standard requirement throughout all the organisations, but was particularly significant to Photographers and Illustrators.

*They need to be skilled and understand what the magazine is doing. They need to be able to find subject matter for the magazine. Often they come with ideas and suggestions and that is how we know whether they will be suitable or not - we have a particular decorative style and are aiming for a particular market - they need to research our magazine and come up with ideas for us.*

*. . . It completely depends on what the story is because there are certain people that I would not send off for certain stories. It depends on whether they are going to have to go and do portraits, whether they are doing it inside or outside, what the subject is; people who build houses, still life; really good at black and white or colour, you know and whether they are good with people because there are certain people that you just know can bring out the best in people.*

Art Editor – National Glossy Magazine

**Tradeshow** organisers also felt it was in the Artists best interest to visit these fairs and talk to others in their discipline. This was also true of most Galleries.

*The primary source is the building itself.*

Arts Co-ordinator - Church Commission

*They should come and see what sort of stuff is here.*

Head Of Education - Regional Non-Commercial Gallery

*The key is to talk to others who sell a product similar to them so they know how well their product will do.*

Exhibitions Organiser - National/International Craft Fair

Many organisation had either a website, literature or recommended a visit by the Artist. Literature was by far the most popular, with 58% of those interviewed having literature ready to send out.

*Contact the staff for discussion. We would send out past brochures and a letter with background information.*

Education Officer - Regional Non-Commercial

*Through asking for corporate literature - this would be handed out quite happily.*

Director - Regional Film Development Agency

50% of organisations interviewed had their own website which was seen as the best source for information. Several other companies said that they were investing in a website which would available soon.

*It is sensible for them to acquaint themselves with our web pages.*

Dean of Faculty of Art and Design - University

Applicants for specific opportunities might be expected to research around the subject as well as about the organisation.

*Reading about arts in hospitals, being aware which is a natural thing, being sensitive to the environment in which we are working.*

Co-ordinator – Hospital Art Project

## Section 3.6 - Contractual Issues

Besides fulfilling certain creative and skills based criteria, we wanted to learn if there were administrative criteria such as minimum quantities, public liability insurance, equal opportunity policies, etc, which would be a pre-condition to success in any of the markets we explored.

We found that there were very few common factors and it appears that administrative criteria could be met on a case-by-case basis. We also sought to explore the issue of price and fees.

Every organisation had its own policy with respect to contractual issues even to the point that some did not set contracts at all. For others, there was no single contract but different ones depending on the nature of the work.

*Terms are very specific to each exhibition and Artist.*

Education Officer - Regional Fine Art Gallery and Education Service

*Wherever I work it is always the Artist's responsibility to deliver the work to the space and so long as they can afford to deliver it then that is fine.*

Freelance Art Consultant

The Contractual Issues to be aware of were:

Work could either be bought outright or supplied on a sale or return basis. When pricing work, most organisations were happy for Artists to set their own prices but if an Artist was unsure of pricing then advice could be given.

*Some Artists set their own prices because they know what they want, but if not we advise.*

Director - Local Commercial Gallery

Many retailers and galleries commented that price setting was a process of negotiation between themselves and the Artist and this was important for both parties.

*It is agreed by both us and the Artist.*

Director - Local Commercial Gallery

*I think it is very important to price at a certain level so it is the same. So they come to me and say OK my painting is £200 or my painting is £2,000. It is very important that the Artist gets the price that they are happy with. So often I am guided by the Artist and what their market price for their work is anyway.*

Freelance Art Consultant

The Craft Council has published a book called "Running A Workshop" which includes a useful section on pricing your work.

*The Crafts Council has published a book called Running a Workshop which is basically business advice for Craftspeople and it gives there the formulas that we publish as being an appropriate consideration, cost of*

---

*timing, cost of materials, cost of overheads that would come into a pricing equation for a Crafts person.*

Sales Development Manager - National Craft Development Agency

Some organisations such as Book Publishers worked to a budget and therefore saw the whole process of pricing as a delicate discussion between themselves and the Artist.

*Negotiation - we have a fixed amount in mind which relates to the budget for a book.*

Editorial Director - Commercial Publisher

However in the case of Photography for magazines rates might be more formalised but individuals were expected to be flexible.

*We do have set fees and they are adjusted depending on how many pages there are in the feature – like a very standard is £450 a day which seems just beautifully high to me, although everyone complains about it. That is for Homes and Gardens, but it is because they run to a lot more pages, whereas features is slightly less and it just all depends on how much effort the Photographer is going to have to go to get all those pictures - whizzing around all over the place in a car, if it is going to be hell. But if it is literally going to be in the house for half a day then we do pay half day rates - but a lot of Photographers don't work on half day rates. It's that sort of thing with somebody being really flexible about things that makes you a lot keener to commission them, if you know that they want to work and they are prepared to kind of give and take a bit.*

Art Editor – National Glossy Magazine

*It varies enormously. We cover basic costs for producing images but the fee paid to the Photographer is extremely negotiable.*

Independent Photography Magazine

One Card and Calendar Publisher interviewed felt that it was better for themselves and the Artist to offer two choices.

*We offer them a choice between a flat fee or a royalty payment with an advance - most go for the latter because if it is good work they will earn a lot more if it sells.*

Art Director - National Publisher - Artists' Card and Books

Commissions on the other hand usually have a set price written into the specification.

*The price is always part of the specification so as not to excite anyone - that way they know the amount of money for them to spend. They then present their submission from this.*

Town Centre Manager - Local Authority Public Arts Commission

*What happens is that an Artist is actually presented with a budget and they have to work out how they are going to break down that budget and we might help them with that. You know, you are presented with a*

---

*budget with a commission of £20,000 – you have got to work out the cost of the commission and also your personal costs and the biggest danger in many ways is that people are so keen to do the work they actually spend too much on the realisation of the work and not enough on actually paying themselves.*

*. . . Our position is that it is down to the Artist to actually say what their fees are. I think that we would certainly expect the very very minimum that someone might charge would be £160 – £170 a day. People quite often come to us and ask our advice on what fees they should be charging as part of their commission. I think it varies depending on what your circumstances are – what your overheads are - but I think it is not unreasonable that it should be in the £200 to £400 a day mark. It tends to be somewhere in the middle. I mean I think the big problem is – people actually spend more time than they calculate so we always suggest that they actually put in a higher fee for themselves than they think they might need because we know damn well that it will take longer than they think.*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

Public liability insurance was normally a prerequisite for commissions of art in public places and in some cases for specialist restoration work on buildings.

*We always recommend they have their own insurance.*

Director - Art In Workplace Agency

None of the organisations we spoke to set minimum quantities for the supply of Craft products although several Galleries said that Artists had to be able to fill a required space for exhibitions.

*They have the dimensions of the space and we expect them to provide enough work to fill it.*

Co-ordinator - Local Arts Organisation - Public Art Commission

The main requirements were that Artists kept to their deadlines. For Public Art and commissions this was of paramount importance.

*The deadline is not negotiable. We often have a major dignitary to do a public opening and the date is fixed well in advance.*

Project Architect – National Heritage Organisation

## **National Rates**

Those engaging the 'services' of Artists were asked about their awareness of nationally agreed daily fee rates.

Within the Film and Video industry approved national rates were recognised, and the organisations interviewed said that they were used.

*Yes there are fixed rates through the Arts Council and we adhere to those.*

Director - National Film and Video Agency

However this was the only example where national rates were normally applied. The minority of organisations who were aware of national rates mentioned those published by ACE or the RAB's but most of these said they rarely used them.

It was noted that in some residencies part of the benefits package was in kind.

*They get paid in kind by having their own studio and facilities. Various places offer various packages.*

Art Director - Independent Secondary School

## Section 3.7 - Approaching an Organisation

In order to help Artists to improve the success rate of their approaches to potential clients, we asked each organisation to describe the ideal submission. For the most part they spoke about unsolicited proposals although several described their formal submission process.

As was to be expected the ideal submission varied enormously from organisation to organisation and from situation to situation.

*I think the ideal submission is a clearly written letter specifying exactly what it is that that person wants from us. A clearly labelled and identified set of slides and an ideal submission would also have a catalogue as well.*

*. . . I think that beyond that the important thing is, whoever is making submissions, actually researches and actually understands what we do and feels that what we do is relevant to what they do and I mean, you would be surprised at the number of people who write to us who really have no interest in doing commissions or who appear to have no interest in doing commissions or are completely inappropriate for whatever reason.*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

*CV's, letters and appointments are fine and one must allow this approach if the Artist is living far away and it's difficult to come here on the 'off' chance. The most direct way and the way that we relate to is probably somebody just turning up and saying 'I've got my art - can I show you?' and then being patient enough to wait around just for a little while and then to interact with us in a positive way.*

Proprietor – National/Regional Craft Gallery

In a formal selection process where the organisation makes clear what a proposal should consist of, the ideal submission will reflect this whilst also being well researched, clearly presented and labelled.

Unless otherwise directed, the ideal submission from an Artist should be along the following lines:

### Step 1. Research the organisation;

- Telephone to request literature, find out the name of the person who makes programming or buying decisions, and ask about their submissions procedure.
- Look at their website if they have one.
- Look at their products (e.g for a publisher) or pay them a visit if they are open to the public (e.g. a Gallery).

*I like them to ring and talk and ask questions. I believe when they come to interview they should know already that this job is for them.*

Art Director - Independent Secondary School

**Step 2. Prepare a tailored proposal including:**

- 6 to 10 clearly labelled, good quality slides of work relevant to that organisation, or Video/tape etc
- printed images that they can keep on file e.g colour photocopies or postcards.
- A typed or clearly written covering letter explaining clearly what you are proposing and if possible an indication of price or fee range.
- A typed and up to date CV giving your contact details, training, experience, including who you have worked with and where your work has been exhibited, sold, etc.
- Other clearly labelled supplementary material such as editorial press, catalogues, Videos, etc.
- A stamped addressed envelope for the return of your slides.
- A business card if you have one.

*Think yourself into the position of the person opening the envelope - try to anticipate what the person is going to need to know rather than blanket mailing. This happens all the time with no thought to the organisation. It is very unfocused and does not do their career any good - shows no real commitment.*

Head of Programming - National/International Craft Gallery

**Step 3. Follow-up**

A telephone call about 2 weeks after sending to ensure that the proposal has arrived and to ask when you may expect to hear from them, etc.

*They need to send in slides and photographs - also CV and prices as relevant information and an SAE for return of work.*

Exhibition Manager-Regional Commercial Fine Art Gallery

*We need a coherent lucid proposal with supporting material - previous works they have made, cv, video material and contextual material.*

Director - National Film and Video Agency

*Supporting information, yes they need to give a bit of background but not so much. In sales development we are not so much interested in where people are trained or any of that background but we are interested in where their work has been shown, where it has been promoted and where it has been either sold or been put up for sale, because that is the relevant information for us. If somebody's work is for sale in Liberty's and they tell us that, then it gives us some idea of what the market is and who they are appealing to and also it suggests that they are business-like in a way, that they could cope with demand from some of the large department stores in America. There are a lot of clues on peoples CV's and profiles that are relevant to us.*

Sales Development Manager – National Craft Agency

Magazine Photography has its own well known routine.

*Just from a time perspective they always drop their books off and that is what we encourage people to do, although if people are coming from a long way away, say if anybody comes from out of London, we make every effort to see them. And if the book is really good then, when they come and pick it up, we go and meet them.*

*. . . It is all horrible really because it is just so impersonal but it is just one of those things that you cannot see everybody –you do see a right old load of dross - so we just could not spend the whole day – basically there are a lot of people who approach the magazine and you just think – have you even looked at it? I think it is just a waste of their time – it is not so much my time it's, you know, why did you get on a train to come up here if it is plainly not the sort of thing we do?*

Art Editor – National Glossy Magazine

## **Presentation**

Good presentation is clearly essential. Poor presentation was one of the biggest complaints of organisations receiving submissions from potential Artists and suppliers (see 'Common Reasons for Rejection').

## Section 3.8 - Sustaining the Relationship

Once a new client has been developed, it is essential to sustain that business relationship so we asked the organisations what makes a good Artist/supplier - someone they would like to work with again.

There was one very regular response which was best summarised by a National Heritage Organisation, *'The best suppliers do exactly what they say they will, on time and on budget'*. This was said time and again.

Many people had stories of Artist/suppliers changing the work without reference to the organisation, delivering late or running significantly over budget. These were the people they just would not work with again.

*A good commissioner is someone who actually produces whatever they say they are going to produce at whatever cost they say they are going to. I think those are the two most important things and I think it is for very, very practical reasons. It's because often it is part of a big process and if it isn't produced on time there are all sorts of additional costs – big, big problem. The other thing is that usually there is no more money so if someone actually says I can't finish the job without more money you're stuck because there isn't normally anywhere to go for more money.*

Director – Regional Commissions Agency

### Professionalism

Many organisations also included other aspects of professionalism such as being organised and efficient. This made people easy to work with and organisations were therefore more likely to want to work with them again.

*That is quite important because I have worked with a lot of Artists who are very unprofessional and who have let me down. You know I have had Artists call me and I ask them to send slides and maybe they didn't get here or they are not very good quality. I don't really have time to nurse every Artist through.*

*I send them letters very detailed letters, for example, that they have ring hooks on the back and work has to be labelled and there is a large percentage that don't read the letters properly and Oh! we forgot. A lot of Artists who have worked for a while they do kind of get it.*

Freelance Art Consultant

*I suppose one of the big things would be someone who would be timely in meeting the schedule. I know that sounds like incredibly business like but you're not going to use somebody again who has let you down. When we work with say Furniture Makers they have to deliver a sturdy and very well engineered product with no flaws on time and budget. They cannot mess you about they can't just say no well this took extra time so we are charging this. It has to be very business like.*

Interior Designer – International Design Company

## Personality & attitude

We were surprised by how frequently people mentioned personality as an issue but it's not surprising that people were more inclined to work again with people whom they had enjoyed meeting and working with before.

*They were enjoyed by the staff and patients – they were sensitive to the environment that they were working with and thought about it as well*

Co-ordinator – Hospital Art Project

*Was just a lovely person to work with, very easy going, not precious about how you use things. I mean most Photographers are really happy with the way we use things we don't kind of change blue skies and take clouds out and things.*

*It is just sort of somebody who is lovely on the phone. It always helps doesn't it.. You are a lot keener to work with them next time if they seem as if they are madly keen to work for you and really would make a huge effort because they want to work with you.*

Art Director – National Glossy Magazine

*It is very important that there is ease in the relationship - you trust each other and get on as people.*

Partner - Art in the Workplace Agency

*Presentable in terms of their work and person.*

Director - Art in Workplace Agency

In this case a positive attitude was key. Most organisations want to work with Artists they feel they can trust, those that are pleasant and are committed to their work.

*Doing everything wholeheartedly not half-heartedly.*

Creative Researcher - National/International Photo Library

*They have a real passion and purpose in what they are doing.*

Artists Advisor - National Arts Organisation

## Communication

Good communication was clearly essential to sustaining relationships. At the most basic level this meant keeping in touch with organisations you have worked with in the past to remind them of your existence. Sending invitations to openings, screenings and writing or telephoning occasionally to tell people what you've been working on.

*You know there is that thing where a lot of people send cards in or ring up and say they have not heard from you for a long time and the odd time they have phoned up and I have thought Oh I have got a job that you can do because they are brought to the front of your mind.*

Art Director – National Glossy Magazine

In the case of Galleries good communication might be about helping them to do their job more effectively.

*In the situation of a maker in a Gallery, if the Maker's got the right product for the gallery to sell, the Gallery will only be able to sell it if the maker gives the gallery the right information about the product, has priced it correctly, delivers it on time to meet the Christmas market, Valentine's market, Summer tourist market whatever. It has got to be one of reliability, it has got to be one of contact, regular contact keeping in touch, telling the gallery if they have just had a feature in World of Interiors or their work mentioned in Homes and Gardens giving the gallery that information, giving the gallery something to pass on to their potential customers.*

Sales Development Manager – National Craft Agency

At its most basic level, keeping in touch may be a way of ensuring that you get paid!

*Artists don't collect their work, they disappear off the face of the earth and I don't know how to get it back to them. Sometimes we have occasions where we want to pay Artists and we can't because we don't know where their roof is so they have let people know they have moved.*

Freelance Art Consultant

## Section 4 – Notes

### Who Buys What and When

- The selection process varies widely from organisation to organisation so researching each one is important. Understanding their process assists in making a better submission.
- The markets for products and services are diverse. It is important to think laterally about potential markets.
- Correct timing is one of the big secrets to successful sales – It is essential to research the organisations being targeted and note their dates.

### How the Buyer Finds the Artist

- Publicly active Artists and Makers are more visible – it's the only way to be picked-up on the radar of most programmers and buyers.
- Most organisations maintain database or manual records of Artists they might like to work with. It is important to research the organisations you want to work with and make an appropriate submission. Ask to go on their database and then find ways of staying in touch.
- Book for tradeshows well in advance – this gives time to apply for grants and build up stock and may secure a better pitch.
- Most buyers/programmers use the media to stay in touch so try to get press coverage whenever possible.
- Find ways to activate word of mouth – presentations, visits and invitations to exhibition openings or screening all help.
- Websites are becoming increasingly important. They should be of high quality but can not be relied on to do the promotion– the internet is only another tool.

### Selection Criteria

- The high quality of the work presented is not the only issue. Give priority to professional presentation as well.
- Research organisations to ensure that appropriate work is put forward.
- For services, give emphasis to skills and experience as well as the quality of work.
- Put forward work or services at an appropriate price level – research the prospect before making a submission.

- Though not always essential – personal recommendation is very useful – be publicly active and your name will get around.
- Personality was surprisingly important.

### **Common Reasons for Rejection**

- A poor understanding of the organisation being approached was the biggest reason for rejection so good individual research is essential.
- Organisations like applicants to show a real commitment to working with them.

### **Researching and Organisation**

- Most organisations were happy to speak to prospective Artist/suppliers on the phone prior to an approach to find out about price ranges, types of work, forthcoming projects, format for submission, etc.

### **Approaching an Organisation**

- The recommended structure for a submission is based on what the organisations described as the ideal submission.

### **Sustaining the Relationship**

- The key to sustaining a business relationship was to deliver what you promised when you said you would and at the price you said you would. Variations should be checked with the client.
- Staying in touch is also key – send invites to openings and a Christmas card.

## Appendix A – Artistic Disciplines

This list illustrates the breadth of Artistic disciplines covered.

Architects/Public Art	Live Art / Performance Art
Book Artists	Metal Artists
Calligraphy	Multimedia Artists
Carvers	Painters
Ceramics	Photographers
Furniture	Potters
Glass Artist	Printmakers
Graphic Designer	Puppetry / Toy Making
Illustrator	Sculptors
Installation Artist	Textile Artist
Jewellery Maker	Textile Crafts
Land Art / Environmental Art	Video/Film Makers incl. Animators

## Appendix B - Artist Marketplaces

This list illustrates the range of marketplaces interviewed and the products and services with which they were concerned.

Marketplace	Products and Services Used
Art in Workplace Agencies	Media, painting, sculpture, photography, glass, ceramics, textile design, relief sculpture
	Anything from fabric installations to paintings and sculptures - all mediums
National Interior Design Companies	Painting commissions, sculpture commissions,
	Contemporary art - painting, commissioned works, sculptures
Artist Agent	Reproduction poster prints through to limited edition original prints
Art School	Residencies, professional training, use them as Artists, assist in curating their work or the work of other people
Independent Secondary School	Painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles and printmaking
Church Commission	Pastels, textiles, sculptures, architects
Artist Led Gallery	All contemporary visual art crossing the media – sculpture, painting
	All readymade craft from local suppliers
Local Authority run Local Fine Art Gallery	Historic work - furniture , ceramics, textiles and costumes Also buy fine art work of living Artists - which have regional connections
Local not-for-profit Fine Art and Craft Galleries	Contemporary fine art - painting, photography, printmaking and sculpture. Also show applied Artists with a fine art bias. Complementary multimedia pieces in the gallery
Local Commercial Galleries	Sculptures, painting, drawings - anything that is art
	Any of the visual arts - paintings, sculpture, Ceramics, textiles. jewelry, photography.
Regional Fine Art Gallery	Contemporary art exhibitions - all kinds of visual arts - all media - painting, photography, Sculpture, textiles etc
	Artists in workshops, Artists talks, commissions for art works, for design, exhibitions, residencies and training – leading sessions for team building for business
Regional/National Gallery Education Dept	Artist consultancy scheme where there is an Artist on duty in the gallery once a week to be available to schools and is bookable to go into schools. Occasional workshops. Also members of volunteer guides generally from Furniture

	Makers, papermakers, painters, several book Artists, ceramicists, textile artists, sculptures, photographers, filmmakers
National/International Crafts Gallery	Craft and design - contemporary applied art for tours and exhibitions
National/International Commercial Fine Art Gallery	Original works of art, painting, sculptures, crafts handmade prints
Independent Photography Magazine	Photography
National Glossy Magazine	Photographers, graphic designers, landscape Illustrators
National/International Photo Library	Photography, moving footage - film and video, imagery on the web
National Slide Library Crafts Council	Craft objects - glass, ceramics, textiles and metals Architectural glass, etc. Education
National Commercial Publisher	Illustrators, designers
Regional Arts/Community Filmmakers	Actors, designers, artists as graphic/scenic Artists , writers, lighting
Regional Film Development Agency	Commissioning marketing material from commercial Artists
National Film and Video Agency	Artists who all work in film, video and moving image
Local Arts Organisation Public Arts Commission	Sculpture in metal
Local Authority Public Arts Commission	Fine art and craft mainly
Local Authority Public Arts Commission	Sculptures and Public Art
Bursary/Grants Provider	Various Decorative Arts - Ceramics, Textiles, Metal, jewelry, wood
National Arts Organisation Offering Bursaries and Exhibition Space	Live Artists, Performance Artists, Installation Artists, (new media) Artists and Time Based Artists, interdisciplinary Artists
National Heritage Organisation	Sculpture, picture conservation, Photographers
National Museum Shops	All ranges of Craft work - glass, ceramics, textiles Not specialist items such as musical instruments or Furniture
National Retailer	Mostly gift crafts- ceramics, metal work ie frames etc
National/International Craft Trade fair	Art and framing - design products as well
	Handcrafted products produced in the UK – handmade greetings cards, ceramics, jewelry - products can be contemporary or not Ceramics and printmaking - Artists in residence
Sculpture Park	Integrate Artists work into every aspect of the organisation - Letterheads, use Artists to provide tourist stuff - ie forest air freshener, sculpture trail, Use Artists' for graphics - website

## Appendix C - Artist Interview Topic Guide

Hello, My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling from Arts Marketing East, we have been commissioned by the Eastern Arts Board to conduct research to help Artists and Craftworkers more effectively market their work. Before we start talking to people in the market place we are speaking to a number of Artists and Makers in order to gain a better understanding of the range of marketplaces and the areas that you would like to learn more about. Would you have a few minutes to answer a few questions?

- 1 How do you promote your work/services and in what places? (only interested in income for Arts related work)**
  
- 2 What are the best ways you have found of learning about the market for your work?**
  
- 3 Who are the decision-makers that give you access into the market place?**
  
- 4 What do you feel are the gaps in your/most Artists' knowledge of the marketplace?**
  
- 5 We are interested in speaking to someone who has commissioned a piece of work valued £3,000-£5,000 approx. Have you recently completed a private commission where we could speak to the commissioner?**
  
- 6 What if any tradeshows are important in your market?**
  
- 7 What are the main networks that are important to success?**

Thank you very much for your help.

## Appendix D - Marketplace Questionnaire

This is the questionnaire that was used for 'products' A similar one was used for 'services' but the language used differed slightly.

### PRODUCT INTERVIEWS

#### Contact Details

Good morning/afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am phoning from Arts Marketing East. We have been commissioned by Eastern Arts Board to conduct research that will help Artists and Craft people market their products and services more effectively.

Could you spare a few minutes to answer some questions?

**1.a Do you ever buy or promote the work of Artists or Craft makers?**

If no – give details of correct contact and close call.

**1.b Are you the main person involved in programming/buying decisions – who else is involved?**

**2.a Why type of products are you involved with and how are they used?**

Get full range of kinds and types of products.

**2.b How would you describe the main purpose of your organisation? Is it mainly....**

1. Public not-for-profit
2. Personal not-for-profit (philanthropic)
3. For profit

**Now, could you think about the process of how you select work**

**3.a What actions do you take to find Artists and Crafts makers?**

**3.b Do you ever look at the websites of Artists and Crafts makers? – In what ways do they influence your decision. Do you every use slide libraries or databases?**

**4.a How do you prefer to be approached by Artists and Crafts makers? Describe the ideal submission from an Artist or maker.**

Be sure to cover

Method of approach

Essential content/support material

Optional content/support material

Is a supplementary call/visit a good idea – if so how long after submission?

**4.b What are the best ways for Artists' and Makers to research your organisation before making an approach?**

**4.c When do you buy/programme Artists and Crafts products?**

Be sure to cover      Timing – when (e.g. times of year etc.)  
                                    Frequency – (e.g. how many times a year?)  
                                    Length of decision process

**5 Thinking about a recent successful engagements.....**

Please describe the process of engagement. How was the introduction made?  
How did you first hear about them?

**6.a What are the criteria that you use when you make a selection?**

Be sure to cover (if relevant)  
    Role of portfolio  
    Role of reputation  
    Role of experience  
    Role of fashion  
    Is geographical proximity a factor

**6.b How important in the selection process is previous contact or a personal recommendation?**

**6.c Please could you rank the following factors when making your selection decision**

Quality                      Put 1, 2 or 3 (1 is top, 3 is bottom)  
Originality  
Artist's reputation

**7 What are the three most common reasons for rejection?**

**8 What makes a good supplier?**

**9.a What, if any terms or standards do you set?**

Examples include: Minimum quantities, Timetable, Warranty, Insurance, Sale or Return etc.

**9.b How are the prices set?**

**10 Is there anything that we haven't covered that you think might be of use to Artists' seeking to develop the market in which you work?**

Close the call with a big thank you!