

REPORT

Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece

Speaking of Culture, we do not mean Art ONLY. We speak about life, in all meanings, about labor, about environment...

IN OUR DAYS, under the treatments of Maastricht and Lisbon, all labor rights are taken away by the direction of the European Union, in order to serve the economical circles, the big enterprises. So, instead of the right in work, in life, in culture, we have the so called "mobility", the new "elastic" labor relations, part time jobs for part time insurance or even without any right in insurance. Artists are included in these kinds of "jobs", especially teachers in public or private education, or when they work on artistic "services"... These directions of the EU follow the status in education, in social security etc. Everything is in economical exchange, and the sense of the public interest, the interest of the community does not exist. Everything is to be sold, everything becomes private.

In the field of the education and the "labor rights" the sense of the "artist" changes and as all graduates have to prove again and again their existence, in order to keep the right to work or to teach. Seminars replace the state Art Education.

We claim: Artists with their collective voice have to be in all points of the political decisions in art, in all cultural committees that take political decisions about culture.

We also claim: all artistic events of the state or of the Community have to give the possibility to each artist to show his proposals and to be selected for this. We claim artists to be represented in all artistic juries –by the elected jury of the artists' union, our chamber- in majority.

A. Who is the artist??

IN GREECE, The official title of the artist is given by the membership in the **Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece/CFAG**.

Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece: Profile

The Chamber was founded in September 1944, after the Nazi occupation, by the first Government of free Greece and its founding Law changed in October 1981.

It is self- governed, under the financial supervision and the auspices of the Ministry of Culture.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHAMBER OF FINE ARTS OF GREECE IS THE RESULT OF A LONG STRUGGLE OF THE ARTISTS IN GREECE

The Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece is a Legal Person of Public Law. It is a self-governing body of fine artists, governed by an 11-member Board of Directors, elected every two years, which represents it.

All Chamber members have the right to vote and to stand as candidate.

CFAG membership is available either to graduates of Greek Fine Arts Schools or of any foreign corresponding or equivalent school (after a decision of DOATAP – National Academic Recognition Centre) or for those who do not hold a degree in art, after an examination of their artistic creation and activity by the **CLASSIFICATION AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE, which is elected every year. Members of this committee cannot be elected for two periods in continue.**

Criteria for admission: At least five years of artistic experience and creative artwork.

The Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece includes approximately 6000 members.

The Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece includes the following sections:

a) Painting, b) Sculpture, c) Printmaking and d) Decoration.

Visual artists, who create their works using various techniques and materials of the visual arts cycle, whether independently or in reference to architecture or interior space (as murals, sculptural compositions on buildings, mosaics, stage designs, etc.) are registered in the Decoration section.

The purposes of the Chamber are according to its law:

- To promote artistic creativity in Greece;
- To ensure the right to free artistic expression irrespective of aesthetic opinions and expressions;
- To look after the interests of Greek artists as regards conditions of work and social insurance;
- To advance artists' issues with the relevant governmental bodies;
- To study matters of public art education and aesthetic training and present proposals to the appropriate agencies;
- To contribute to the aesthetics of the environment and to the preservation of our artistic monuments;
- To organize artistic events and collaborations with Greek and foreign art organizations

B. Members' BENEFITS:

1. There is a law (no 2676/99, article 71) that all self-employed in Greece have to pay each month for the Fund of freelancers, in order to have the right to have officially a studio or an atelier. **Members of the Chamber do not have the obligation to be in THIS FUND and to pay monthly for their insurance** as other freelancers do, for any of their **creative** activities, unless they themselves **desire** it. This is very important, after a big struggle, because we did not accept self-insurance. We believe that artist's insurance has to be responsibility of the state. It is also very important, because an artist has the right to have an official studio or an atelier (a base for his work officially) even if he does not have any income from art activity. ART IS A SRIRITUAL CREATION, NOT A COMMERCIAL AFFAIR AND WE ARE AGAINST TO CONSIDER THE ART CREATION AS A "PRODUCT".

2. AFTER STRUGGLES OF THE ARTISTS, only regular members of the Chamber may undertake to execute commissions of paintings, sculptures, prints and decoration on behalf of:

a) State services, b) local government organizations, and the associations and institutions affiliated with them, c) public benefit foundations and legal persons of public law, d) fund-raising committees, e) public benefit organizations, f) churches, and g) cemeteries.

Information

The artists pay 29% income tax and 23% VAT on artwork sales .

There is not a specific fiscal system for artists in our country.

Artists fiscal obligations are based on revenues minus expenses.

There are no deductions authorized for the first years of activity.

BECAUSE of the general political direction in working rights, generally speaking, and in arts, the Governments and the state, considering art as a commercial affair, keep away all responsibility to create the so-called necessary environment to protect the independence in art creation.

Since 1994, most of the public organizations relevant to the evolution of the arts, have become private and the state helps them financially, spending 0,51% maximum, in total for them, of the national money which is given to culture. This means that artists are not at all independent. They cannot be free to create when they have not at all public opportunities. They are obliged to survive, to work in cooperation with the private enterprises, or with individual managers. In our days the art commerce not only holds most of the public money for its own interest, but, intervenes more and more in the art area, gives the aesthetic direction, it's own values, in cooperation with the media ...The private interests manage also the public aesthetic. The state makes activities in cooperation with private enterprises. Public space has been reduced due to privatization.

So very few competitions exist for public artworks in public buildings and places, as the sense of the public space becomes less. Art education is not any more a right for each pupil in the public education system, in the two-speed school which is day by day created. Art, insurance, environment and education become commercialized. The only public possibilities given to the artists are the activities of our union, which are open to all, but without the financial support of the state. Besides, each artist is a citizen and in everyday life has all problems of the today workers and employments: high bills to pay for all necessities, he uses an invalid health system, obliged to go to private health enterprises, he works part time, as most of the workers do, to survive, he works without social security, or he is workless. In any case, the majority of the artists are kept out of their studio, they become either “producers” for the commerce, or they are obliged to spend most of their time in jobs who keep them away from their studios, they are no more active artists. In conclusion, **the so called Free Market is a prison for the expression and the creativity, commercializes Art and destroys the relation between the artist and the community.**

Issues that the Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece is concerned with

THE PERCENTAGE OF 1% FOR PUBLIC BUILDINGS

The Law 2557/1997, article 2, paragraph 5, which provides that 1% of the budget of the contractual expenditure of Public Buildings shall be allocated to their artistic decoration, exists since 1997. The Ministerial Ruling relevant to its application was published in 2001. The Realisation Committees of 1% per Administrative Region were formed in 2002, upon another Ministerial Ruling.

Unfortunately, until today, the Ministerial Ruling has not come into force and the committees have not held a meeting, due to the complexity of the procedure. The Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece has elaborated and submitted a proposal to amend the Ministerial Ruling, which provides the deposit of 1% for the issue of the construction permit.

The Chamber of Fine Arts believes that a central control as far as responsible authorities are concerned (Ministry of Culture, Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Chamber of Fine Arts (CFAG), Technical Vocational School) as well as the representation of local administration for school buildings, would contribute, in a decisive way, to the law's application and would create, in this domain as well, conditions of total transparency.

THE PENSION SCHEME AND HONORARY PENSIONS

The problem of the pension scheme of visual artists is still unsolved. It has been pending for decades. CFAG has codified proposals relevant to the legislative regulation of collective and proportional insurance and pension and has submitted them to the Ministry of Culture on various occasions. These proposals guarantee a basic insurance-pension, regardless of the artist's turnover. The contribution will be collective and proportional to the artists' annual income, while we propose that the employer's subscription be covered by the State and a percentage by all those involved in the distribution of works of fine art. These contributions should be added to the price of the work of art and should be certified by a stamp. They will also further increase the basic pension.

CFAG demands the removal of the article in question and has petitioned the amendment of the Law and the rise of the age limit for retirement.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Since 1989 the members of CFAG who are not insured are entitled to a booklet of medical, pharmaceutical and hospitalization care from public hospitals.

The Ministerial Decision which determines the prerequisites, criteria and access procedures to the system of hospitalization, medical and pharmaceutical care of not insured and financially weak citizens is also valid for the members of CFAG who are not insured.

Certain problems arise, with the application of the above Ministerial Decision for the foreign artist-members of CFAG coming from countries outside the E.U. The Administrative Council of CFAG has submitted relevant proposals to the Minister of Health, seeking the equal insurance of all members of CFAG, Greek or foreign.

Claims:

The last four years our **Financial Situation is bad, and year by year our financial condition is getting worse, so we cannot make a real big program of activities.** On the other hand the bad working conditions of visual artists, especially the enormous taxes that the artists are obliged to pay (29% (income tax) plus 23% (VAT) also 650,00 euros each year and all the other taxes the citizens in Greece pay every year, besides the lower salaries of the artist-teachers, the bad conditions in public health, the new law that considers art as a document of a rich life, all these make more and more difficult for artists to live from their job. The State and the Government, refuse to consider culture as a social good. We demonstrate continually for the solution of our big permanent problems, such as insurance, pensions, Public Artistic Competitions and financial condition of our Chamber.

We make struggles against the commercialization of art.

- **For the presence of Arts in the Public Space**, according to the law that the 1% of the cost of public buildings must be given to create Art in them, by competitions.
- **For the Public Education**, demanding art course as basic in the 12 years Education.
- **For the insurance and the pensions of the artists**
- **For the strengthening of our role towards state Cultural Affairs.**

Activities 2011-2015:

- A big historical Exhibition, “Visual Arts and Resistance 1936-1949” , that was presented in different cities in Greece, with 200 very important artworks of that period.
- Big exhibition (240 artists) of Greek artists “Resistance Now”, in Athens.
- Big exhibition criticizing the economical crisis
- Presentation of films and lectures with artistic interest.

International Relations 2011-2015 :

- Big exhibition of Hellenic Modern Fine Art in Shanghai (China) (100 artworks)
- Big exhibition Contemporary Art from Shanghai (China) in Athens
- 8 Greek Artists to China Next December

Website/ Archives

Our chamber from 1944 has a big history and files which shows the history of Visual Arts in Greece.

We have worked on a program (ESPA) and turn all our files to digital, so that they will come out on our website, mentioning “the social role of the artist”.

At the same time we renew our website. We have already present 700 artists in our website in Greek English and French and continue to work on it.

Congress:

In 2014 we had organized a “preparation Congress” in order to organize the 4th Congress of Visual Arts in 2016. This “preparation Congress” suggested on all basic items of Art life.

Future Plans

Exhibitions :

- Transport in many cities in Greece, the big historical Exhibition, “Visual Arts and Resistance 1936-1949” (200 very important artworks of that period)
- Organize the second part of a big historical exhibition, “Visual Arts and Resistance 1950-1974”
- Organize in several cities of Greece an exhibition of contemporary art, presenting the artists who live in each region.
- Continue working on our files and new website.

ALSO

- Struggles for the solution of our big permanent problems, such as insurance, pensions, Public Artistic Competitions and financial condition of our Chamber.

**For the Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece
EVA MELA, artist**