

IG BILDENDE KUNST
Union of Visual Artists, Austria

Report for the IAA Europe meeting, Nov 5th, Berlin

Dear colleagues and friends,

Since the last meeting of IAA Europe in fall 2015 our organization has been working intensely on two topics: "Kunst und Kind" (Art and Parenting) as well as "Kunst und Geld" (Art and Money), related to the question of artist and exhibition fees.

In the following I would like to present you some information concerning our activities.

Art and Parenting

After a successful series of workshops with different speakers on topics around being a professional artist and parent in the same time, in 2016 we conducted a series of interviews with artists, who shared their experiences about raising children and working as (freelance) artists. The interviews portray artists in different stages of their careers, female and male artists, single parents and couples. Meetings with higher employees in the Department of Art and Culture within the Austrian Federal Chancellery related to the artist-in-residence programs for parenting artists have been initiated, in order to raise awareness and secure the possibility for such artists to attend artists-in-residence programs without stigmatization and obstacles.

Our long term goal is to establish artists-in-residence programs in which parenting artists could obtain support in children's daily care and additional financial support in order to pursue their projects during the residency.

Art and Money

The executive board of our organization pursues the implementation of the 'artist fees' as well as the 'exhibition fees' within the different public art and culture institutions in Austria. As a first step we started an evaluation in our own organization and exhibition space, so that from 2017 on we will establish a scheme for artist fees payment which we will publish on our homepage. By doing this we hope to start an intense public debate about the necessity of regular payment of artist fees by the public institution here in Austria. After a few well attended open discussions on this topic together with curators, artists and other figures from the field, we will go more into action by launching a campaign in the spirit of other Paying Artists campaigns.

In the Spring/Summer of 2016 we organized a series of breakfast events under the title "Geldfrühstück". Together with representatives from local artists associations such as Tiroler Künstler_inenschaft and Galerie 5020 Salzburg, we discussed about the artist fees and the policy

they implement and fight for. Another event was dedicated to the work in art collectives. The last event dealt with the question about the different ways of earning money as an artist and the way how to deal with additional jobs. These event series became very popular among our members, who were invited to give their input and share their experience.

60 Years Union of Visual Artists

In 1956, practising artists founded the “free professional association of Austrian visual artists for the promotion and protection of economic and social interests” (BVÖ). The history of this self-organising collective began two years earlier, when the development of the General Social Insurance Act and the contributions stipulated in it, which for artists were unaffordable, had led to protests. Visual artists formed an action committee and caused the first amendment of this act.

In the course of the subsequent decades, the interest group dedicated itself to the improvement of the social and working conditions of artists, political representation and lobbying, counselling, as well as mobility and visa-related issues. A gallery was opened to present the work of BVÖ (currently IG Bildende Kunst) members and special exhibitions.

To date, the organisation has been run and sustained by practising visual artists, their voluntary commitment and their professional experience.

Members of the executive board organised an exhibition in order to mark this event but also to tackle the topic of artist fees. “Pay the Artist Now!” 60 Years Community of Interest – 60 Years of Fighting for Social Rights of Artists” presented various archive materials as well as feminist reading corner, a performance and video works dealing with the questions of social security for artists and the working conditions.

Social Security issues

2015 marked the launch of the so called ‘supporting fund’ for artists in emergency financial need. It is part of the Artists Social Security Fund and operates with an annual budget of up to 500.000 Euro. Artists can submit their applications and an expert jury decides upon the amount of support. As a part of Cultural Council Austria our organization has the right to nominate one member for the expert jury.

Acceptance of IAA card

At the beginning of 2016 the executive board sent information to all the major art museums and institutions in Austria about the IAA card and a kindly reminder to inform us whether they accept it in their institution and under which conditions. We were happy to welcome some new art institutions on our list, such as Universal Museum Graz with all its venues.

Still we have to do some more work convincing big art museums as Albertina and Belvedere to start accepting the IAA card. The new executive board will continue to pursue this goal.

Personal agenda

New executive board from July 2016

On July 26th the general assembly elected a new executive board. Alexander Jöchel was elected to be the next president of the Union of Visual Artists in Austria (IG Bildende Kunst). Vasilena Gankovska remains as a board member and vice president. Iris Christine Aue remains treasurer, Eva Dertschei is the new secretary. Elke Smodics and Paula Pfoser have been elected as board members.

Kind regards,
Vasilena Gankovska
(Vice President of IG Bildende Kunst)