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**WORKING PAPER**

**FINE ARTISTS AND INNOVATION**

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## **Executive Summary**

This Working Paper is the first publication of a nine-month study into the working lives of fine arts graduates and the ways in which they contribute to innovation, both within the arts and in the wider economy.

The study itself consists of a literature review, which is included in this paper, a questionnaire survey, and a number of face-to-face biographical interviews. The full report will be published later this year.

The literature review is necessarily wide-ranging, covering detailed work on artists' working lives, studies of the wider cultural and creative industries, and the literature on innovation.

The starting point for the literature review is the broad and by now familiar argument that, in a knowledge-based economy, innovation is increasingly responsible for economic growth and moreover, that the type of innovation advanced economies require demands what are sometimes called 'creative' skills.

It can reasonably be argued that these creative skills are highly developed in fine arts graduates (though they are by no means exclusive to this group of people) and moreover there has been a large increase in the number of people studying fine arts in the UK in recent decades. By exploring their working lives we hope to shed some light on the ways that fine arts graduates are absorbed into the economy, the transferability of their skills and the mechanisms by which their creativity contributes to innovation.

Aside from the general increase in numbers in higher education, there are three primary hypotheses that may account for why the economy is absorbing higher numbers of fine arts graduates:

- Cultural products are becoming more widespread, not only in themselves, but in a variety of creative services from branding to advertising, design to architecture. Art graduates can thus be seen as a sort of seedbed for a range of activities across the cultural and creative industries.
- The skills of artists – critical thinking, communication skills, aesthetic understanding – are in demand across a range of economic activities. The question is, where and how are these skills learned, what role does an art school education play in their development, and how are they deployed in the working lives of art graduates?
- The attitudes of artists – flexibility and adaptability, entrepreneurship, self-exploitation and tolerance of risk – are in demand in an economy which is both more flexible and more insecure. The attitudinal aspects would include what some would describe as an artistic ‘lifestyle’, including the value placed on unconventionality or bohemianism. Again, we are interested in where and how these attitudes are developed and deployed and in the way that individuals manage these pressures and risks.

The first part of the review considers the relationship between the fine arts and notions of innovation, particularly concentrating on policy approaches and classification systems. This helps us to locate the arts within a policy context, which is necessary if we wish to understand how innovation policy might be enhanced by a stronger understanding of the way that artists work.

The second part considers the literature on the cultural and creative industries. Recent classification systems have sought to place the fine arts and other ‘cultural’ activities at the centre of the wider cultural and creative industries, and it is clear from the literature that these sectors are an important destination for many fine arts graduates – the links between art school, popular music, fashion, film and TV are strong. This literature is thus important for its discussion of work

organisation, how ideas move between cultural sectors and the importance of tacit learning.

The final part of the literature review returns to the study of artists in particular – looking at what the existing literature (much of it within cultural economics) tells us about the education, skills and career paths of arts graduates as well as their attitudes towards issues like reward and risk.

Each section ends with a short series of questions that we explore in the survey and in interviews, and which will be discussed in the final report.

## Introduction and methodology

The aim of this project is to investigate how the changing work practices of fine arts graduates have impacted on innovation. We look at the changes that have occurred over a 70-year period and the extent to which those changes provide a greater understanding of their role in innovation, both in the arts and in the wider economy. The research is based on a cohort study of fine artists who have graduated since the 1930s from the University of the Arts in London (and its constituent colleges). This interim report sets out the key research questions, outlines the methodology we are taking, and surveys the relevant literature.

The University of the Arts London (UAL, previously known as the London Institute) was awarded degree status in 2004. It has six constituent colleges: Camberwell College of Arts; Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design; Chelsea College of Art and Design; London College of Communication; London College of Fashion; and Wimbledon College of Art. As the largest university for art, design, fashion, communication and the performing arts in Europe, it has approximately 28,000 students.

Our goal is to understand any changes in working practices of artists since the 1930s, and to ask what those changes tell us about the way fine artists and their skills are being absorbed into the wider economy.

Here, we define as artists those who pursue an artistic practice, paid or unpaid, full or part time. As we are studying *fine arts graduates*, not artists, this definition is less important to us than to some other studies (Throsby and Hollister, 2003) which look solely at artists in the professional sense. Yet while we are focusing on fine arts graduates – who may be working in very different fields and may not practise any art form – the majority of those we sample do define themselves as 'artists', and we have accepted this self-definition.

The Cox Review into creativity in business (Cox, 2005) defines creativity as the generation of new ideas. While not claiming that culture and the arts are the sole source of these 'new ideas', Cox does suggest that they are an important source by which the UK and other developed economies can maintain economic competitiveness.

In addition, Cox and others (Bakhshi, McVittie and Simmie, 2008) suggest that the 'creative' elements of innovation are underestimated by our current innovation framework, which is based largely on science and technology.

This makes our models of knowledge transfer (Crossick, 2006) of what constitutes research and development, and of how innovations take place, of only limited use beyond the science sectors. These 'first generation' innovation policies are based on a linear process. But subsequent generations, particularly 'third generation innovation policy' (Lengrand, 2002) display a more complex, non-linear picture, not least in the close relationship between production and consumption, which prevails in the cultural sector.

Venturelli (2000) argues that culture is the key to contemporary economic success because: "the ability to create new ideas and new forms of expression forms a valuable resource base of a society" (2000:12). In other words, both previously produced and contemporary cultural content acts as a resource from which new content is developed. A similar claim is made by a recent report for the European Commission (KEA, 2006) which argues that cultural heritage can provide 'elements of creativity' to other economic sectors, such as when:

"a piece of music is "sampled" to create a new one, or when old images or famous characters of our literature are used to create multimedia artworks or entertainment" (2006:36).

The difficulty with much of this literature is that it relies on assertion, rather than evidence, to make a link between

culture, creativity and innovation. The arts are undoubtedly a source of ideas, stories and images that are reproduced in other forms in other parts of the economy. But, the mechanisms by which this happens remain frustratingly elusive.

### **Focus on artistic labour**

The focus of this study is on the absorption and use of *artistically trained labour* and on the production, reproduction and distribution of artists' tacit knowledge. By taking this artist-centred perspective, we hope to understand more about how their particular forms of knowledge are produced and distributed. Our task is made a bit more difficult by the fact that artists' knowledge is sometimes not reproduced in books or journals, but may be present in:

“a performance, an installation, an exhibition, a new form of digital content, an animation, a design”  
(Crossick (2006:4).

Philosophers of knowledge (Ryle, 1949) have long distinguished between knowledge that could be expressed using symbolic forms of representation – explicit or codified knowledge – and that which defied such representation, so-called tacit knowledge. Polanyi's famous statement that “we know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1966) encapsulates the idea of tacit knowledge. He cites psychomotor skills such as swimming or riding a bike, but tacit knowledge also covers those things that we instinctively know, but cannot always explain easily, such as how to use a software package.

More recent work on innovation (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and particularly on the geography of innovation (Gertler, 2003) has used this concept of tacit knowledge to investigate why proximity remains so important in a global economy with widespread digital communication, including to the cultural and creative industries.

The argument here is that tacit knowledge matters because, as Maskell and Malmberg (1999:172) argue, when everyone has relatively easy access to codified knowledge, value lies in the use of tacit knowledge:

“The fundamental exchange-inability of this type of knowledge increases its importance as the internationalisation of markets proceeds.”

As increasing numbers of people study arts and design, we therefore ask:

- What – if anything – is useful about the knowledge and skills that they are acquiring?
- What can we learn about how ideas move within the ‘creative arts’ (Throsby, 2001) and into the wider economy?
- What are the policy implications, if we are seeking to promote knowledge transfer ‘without widgets’ (Crossick, 2006)?

## **Methodology**

Using a realist model, our study combines quantitative (extensive) and qualitative (intensive) methods. It consists of a literature review, an online survey completed by over 500 members of the University of the Arts alumni association, and 40 face-to-face life biography interviews.

Alumni are selected on the basis that they have studied fine arts, either at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Fine arts are chosen both as a ‘core’ educational qualification for practising artists and in some ways the most ‘abstract’ part of the art school syllabus. While one might reasonably expect those who study design to pursue careers in design, or those who study fashion to seek to enter the fashion industry (or related areas like retailing), the less obviously ‘vocational’ nature of a fine arts education means that it is easier to focus



on the core skills base. Choosing fine arts as opposed to 'all the subjects that arts schools teach', means that our sample has a common educational basis which allows us to define which UAL graduates we survey.

Throughout the report, we use the terms 'fine art' and 'fine arts' interchangeably. We recognise that the first term is more common in the UK and the second, which has broader applicability, is more common in the US, but the distinction is not relevant for the purpose of this study.

By using a questionnaire followed by interviews, we can look for patterns and regularities through the quantitative data and *causes* through the qualitative data. This also enables us to explore what innovation looks like *in situ* rather than testing an *a priori* model.

## Literature review

The aim of the literature review is to provide a narrative context, not an exhaustive survey, of all the relevant work in the field. We are thus interested primarily in four areas:

- **The role of the arts within innovation:** particularly concentrating on policy approaches and classification systems. This helps us to locate the arts within a policy context, which is necessary if we wish to understand how innovation policy might be enhanced by a stronger understanding of the way that artists work.
- **Creative and cultural industries:** with a focus on their organisation and geography. While fine arts are only one part of the overall creative and cultural sectors, many debates that have characterised this area – about proximity, and the importance of tacit knowledge and spillovers between culture, the creative industries and the wider economy – are of relevance here.

- **Artists' careers and labour markets:** how these are defined and what has emerged from recent studies of artists' employment, income and career development, including multiple jobholding and spillover between arts and non-arts sectors.
- **The training and education of artists:** the skills and attitudes which shape artistic practice, professionalism and ways of working both inside and outside of the arts.

## Online survey

We use an online survey for several reasons: speed of response makes a postal questionnaire impractical; we believe response rates would be lower in a postal survey; and the data are considerably more difficult to analyse. Online surveys enable more answer options, permit more interaction, and facilitate skip patterns with questions – all of which are particularly useful for a complex, biographical approach.

There is some evidence (Markusen, Gilmore, Johnson, Levi and Martinez, 2006) that response rates for online surveys are higher than for postal surveys and yield longer and more original answers to qualitative questions. A telephone survey is more costly, and does not allow the respondents to answer 'in their own time'. We were initially worried that we might not reach as many older respondents, or that they may be less willing to fill in an online survey, but these concerns have proven to be unfounded.

For this project, the research team has negotiated unique access to a previously unused database of UAL alumni who have studied fine art at one of the University's constituent colleges. The database includes those who have studied painting, sculpture, fine art photography, fine art film and video or combined arts as undergraduates or postgraduates.

The survey has been initially emailed to 8,005 addresses via the alumni association. We believe this route engenders

greater 'buy-in' and helps boost response rates. Given the complexity of some of the questions and length of the online questionnaire however, we have expected a response rate of between 5 and 10 per cent.

We received 338 responses to the first email survey in October 2007. A second wave, sent out in November, elicited a further 170 responses. In total, we had a response rate of around 6.4 per cent.

### **Life biography interviews**

We have asked online respondents if they are willing to be interviewed in person for further research. From positive respondents, we have eliminated overseas residents, for reasons of cost and practicality.

We have drawn up the rest of the sample to achieve a mix of:

- decade of graduation;
- art form specialisation (if working primarily as an artist);
- gender; and
- employment primarily as an artist/not as an artist (embedded versus specialised).

Our interview sample does not exactly represent all respondents, for several reasons:

- The majority of respondents have graduated since 2000, so we have 'over sampled' those from previous decades to achieve a better mix and get more extensive biographies.

- There are more painters than any other group (38 per cent of those who replied on primary artistic practice), so we have over-sampled those who work primarily in other media, to get a better mix and to pick up differences in changing technology and links to other sub-sectors.
- The majority of respondents work at least some of the time as artists. We have many of these in the sample, but we want to investigate how fine artists contribute to innovation in other cultural sectors. We have thus over-sampled those who work in fields such as film and TV, theatre and advertising.

We also want to use the interviews to examine other issues, such as patterns of formal and informal learning and their relationship with types of innovation; and the attitudes that promote innovation, including resilience, risk-taking and a willingness to learn. Our interview sample mixes those who work primarily with others and those who work alone, enabling us fully to explore the issues around collaboration.

The interviews are semi-structured, relatively lengthy and conducted face to face. They are using biographical research methods (Gill, 2007), focusing on key events that interviewees identify as turning points. They are being taped and we will use content analysis software, ATLAS.ti, to help structure the interview material.

It is worth reiterating that our study uses quantitative and qualitative techniques to investigate how the working practices of fine arts graduates contribute to innovation and how this has changed over time. It does not aim to quantify *how much* innovation in the UK is accounted for either directly or indirectly by the work of fine artists. As such the sample of fine arts graduates we study need not be *representative* of the UK fine artist population, nor for that matter of the alumni population of the University of the Arts, London.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is both to set the wider context in which this study is taking place, and to help us outline the key hypotheses that the study is seeking to investigate.

The notion of the 'knowledge economy' rests on the idea that developed economies need to compete on ideas and innovation, not low-cost labour, and that education at all levels is essential to the success of this type of economy (Leadbeater, 1999). Recent knowledge economy rhetoric has moved away from the digital technology-inflected 'new economy', to stress the need for what might be called 'higher order' notions, such as creativity (Cox, 2005).

While the role of innovation in driving economic growth is widely acknowledged (NESTA 2006a), more vexed is the relationship between creativity and innovation; though recent thinking suggests that innovation may be closer to a cultural activity than a science (Lester and Piore, 2004).

Thus the contemporary focus of economic policymakers across the world on all things 'creative' is driven by essentially three separate, but interlinked, factors:

- The growth of the creative and cultural sectors themselves.
- Creative inputs – the ideas and images that materialise as advertising copy, product design, brands or other commercial manifestations of creative culture – as a part of wider innovation policy.

- Skills, aptitudes and ways of working – the value of the ‘artistic mentality’ to other economic activities.

The focus of this study is on the absorption and use of *artistically trained labour*, particularly whether there is any evidence that the importance of ‘creativity’ in innovation has led to an increase in the demand for that labour, or a change in how that labour is deployed.

The first part of the review thus considers the relationship between the fine arts and notions of innovation:

- Are artists natural innovators or do the demands of cultural form and heritage also constrain innovation?
- Where do the arts fit within the creative economy?
- And how do the arts, particularly the fine arts, contribute to innovation – through ideas and images, through the particular skills of artists, or through their attitudes and ways of working?

The second part of the review briefly considers the literature on the cultural and creative sectors – a much wider category than the fine arts – but useful particularly for its discussion of tacit knowledge exchange and work organisation.

The final part of the literature review returns to the study of artists in particular – looking at what the existing literature tells us about their education, skills and career paths as well as their attitudes towards issues like reward and risk.

## **Section 2: Art and innovation**

### **2.1 Are artists innovators?**

Every arts work creates a world in some respects unique, a combination of vast amounts of conventional materials with
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some that are innovative. Without the first, it becomes unintelligible; without the second it becomes boring and featureless..." (Becker, 1982:63).

Artists may seem like natural innovators: they work in highly uncertain, inherently risky markets where originality is prized and 'imitation' often disparaged. But discussions of cultural production are rarely that simple. As Castañer and Campos (2002:32) point out: "in the arts world, there is no perfect substitution". In other words, a living painter or poet does not supplant his or her predecessors; old plays and dramatic styles are regularly performed and rediscovered, often forming the majority of the repertoire for some theatre companies.

This does not mean, however, that production techniques cannot be innovative – a production of *Henry V*, even if it is faithful to the text, may well be staged or cast in an innovative way. Equally, existing works in art galleries may well be displayed or interpreted in innovative ways.

Castañer and Campos (2002) distinguish three forms of 'artistic innovation': new to the world (what they call 'cosmopolitan'); new to the local market; and new to the artist or arts organisation itself. As they point out, art critics often use cosmopolitan or local perspectives to determine innovation, whereas the artist or arts organisation may tend to take a more self-referential approach (2002:31).

Their own definition of artistic innovation as something that is 'new to the field', however, ignores the artists' own viewpoint. Thus, they argue that a new piece of music by John Cage is not an innovation in the musical world, as minimalism is already a well-known musical form.

This rather strict definition however suggests that one cannot innovate within a genre or form, something that most people would find puzzling. The Beatles' '*Sergeant Pepper*' may have been innovative in musical arrangement, use of recording technology and even cover art work, but it was still

recognisably within the genre of popular music; it did not create an entirely new field.

At the same time, few would be comfortable with the notion that every 'new' cultural product – each book, film, song or videogame produced – is an innovation<sup>1</sup>. Michael Palin's 'New Europe', is one of a series of books he has written to accompany his BBC TV programmes. The book may not have been written before, but it uses a well-known format and very few would regard it as an 'innovation' in travel writing.

Innovations in the arts do not necessarily make existing products, processes or organisational forms obsolete. Shakespeare would recognise much about the day-to-day work of a repertory theatre company today; and while most contemporary authors use a computer rather than a pen, Dickens would not think the work of a modern author unrecognisable.

### **2.1.2 The role of consumers**

Nor should innovation be seen as a cultural product's *only* desirable quality (Bunting, 2007): tradition, heritage, memory and ritual influence the value that consumers get from cultural products, even in popular culture. Few fans at a Rolling Stones concert want to see the Stones take an entirely new musical direction; most come to hear old favourites and relive youthful memories. They are taking part in a communal ritual, not seeking novelty.

So, while consumers are generally seen as promoting innovation, as discussed below, they can sometimes restrain innovation. Indeed some artists complain that audiences want the same old favourites while they may be interested in pursuing a new direction. Remember the now-infamous fans' reaction to Bob Dylan's first experiments with an electronic guitar.

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<sup>1</sup> As argued by Paul Stoneman (2007) in his NESTA Working Paper, 'An Introduction to the Definition and Measurement of Soft Innovation.'



Similarly, critics or other artists can resist artistic innovation. Becker (1982) reminds us that contemporary popular musicians found the Beatles 'incompetent' because of their apparent inability to write songs in eight-bar sections, as popular music had hitherto often been written; it simply did not occur to them that Lennon and McCartney were creating nine-bar phrases deliberately.

Others argue that producers reflect existing tastes simply to fit in with the environment and ensure success. From an evolutionary perspective, Casserta and Cuccia (2001) argue that the success of an artistic product depends on the degree to which it reflects the 'identity' of its consumers and their values.

Originality and novelty are thus highly prized in many arts forms (Galenson, 2000). But, as we have seen, understanding the role of artists in innovation, both within the arts and the wider economy, requires a much broader notion of innovation than one which simply focuses on novel products or services.

Innovation should not only be always equated with new activities; old activities can be and often are transformed by innovations. The UK Community Innovation Survey (DTI, 2006) suggests that while most businesses of all sizes are 'innovation active' at all size bands, less than half of innovation active firms have introduced new products; with the rest having taken part in broader innovation including process innovation, spending on R&D, or strategic changes to the organisation of the business or its functions.

Other innovations are what Bruce Tether calls 'concept-based innovation' – a new idea or way of *using* something that does not necessarily involve new technology or significant product modification – the Sony Walkman, the mountain bike, the snowboard or Apple's iPod (Tether, 2005).

Viewing the arts as a source of innovation is thus a complex and sometimes paradoxical endeavour. In particular, the study seeks to understand:

- How fine art graduates understand 'innovation'.
- The role of consumers, critics or peers in driving or retarding innovation.
- The links between innovation, novelty and cultural value.

## **2.2 The creative economy – where do the arts fit?**

The term 'artist' may be applied to anyone who works in the arts. But most people's definition would embrace the fine arts, painting and sculpture, personified in the painter or sculptor, with or without a garret.

A variety of classification systems have emerged from recent attempts to study the cultural sectors, particularly within a policy context. The DCMS's thirteen 'creative industry' sectors include 'arts and antiques markets' and 'crafts' although they do not include a category specifically for the production of visual arts.

While some critics (Heartfield, 2000) believe this over-emphasises the market-oriented nature of the creative industries notion, the production and support of the visual arts have often been included within 'creative industry support measures', particularly at a regional level.

Indeed, Knell and Oakley (2007) have argued that it could hardly be otherwise, given the dense interlinkages between subsidised and non-subsidised cultural activities. A list of projects funded by the London Development Agency's Creative London programme<sup>2</sup> would include support for the extension to the Whitechapel Arts Gallery and the proposed

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<sup>2</sup> A support programme for the 'creative industries'. See [www.creativelondon.org.uk](http://www.creativelondon.org.uk)

extension to Tate Modern, as well as other subsidised cultural venues such as the Young Vic theatre, Laban Dance Centre, the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith or Rich Mix arts centre in Tower Hamlets.

Or as Becker (1982: 36) puts it: "art worlds typically have intimate and extensive relations with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves". In other words, they recruit the same talent, look for the same audiences and shares idea and sources, such that: "art worlds and worlds of commercial, craft and folk arts are parts of a larger social organisation".

### **2.2.1 Models of the arts within cultural industries**

Rather than simply listing activities as the DCMS does, other categorisations have tried to place cultural activities in relation to one another. David Throsby (2001:112) describes the cultural sectors as a concentric circle model with the arts at the centre. His 'centre circle' includes: music, dance, theatre, literature, the visual arts and crafts, as well as newer art forms such as video art, performance art, computer and multimedia art. This model, used by several federal and state agencies in Australia (O'Regan, 2001), sees the creative arts as the source and generator of ideas that are later picked up by other cultural industries such as the media industries (film, TV and radio), and then dispersed by 'related' industries such as advertising, architecture and design.

It is worth noting that Throsby makes no distinctions between subsidised and unsubsidised cultural activities; the classification is not based around business models or funding, but around the idea of the 'creator' as a source of ideas and images that are: "taken into a wider production context". (Throsby, 2001:113).

A similar notion of the arts at the centre of the cultural and creative sectors is elaborated in 'The Economy of Culture' (see diagram below), a major report for the European Commission produced in 2006 (KEA, 2006). This puts the visual

arts at the centre of what it describes as 'core arts fields' along with the performing arts and heritage and, as in the Throsby model, it sees the cultural industries (essentially media, publishing and music) and the creative industries (design advertising and architecture) as subsequent concentric circles. 'Related' industries in this categorisation are essentially concerned with the manufacture of hardware such as personal computers and MP3 players.

Figure 1: EU Cultural and Creative Sector<sup>3</sup>

Circles	Sectors	Sub-sectors	Characteristics
Core Arts Fields	Visual Arts Performing Arts Heritage	Crafts Painting Sculpture Photography	Non industrial activities  Copyright may apply but is not always exercised
Cultural Industries	Film & Video TV & Radio Videogames Music  Books & Press	Recorded and live music, collecting societies  Book and magazine publishing	Industrial Sectors aimed at massive reproduction  Copyright important
Creative Industries and activities	Design Architecture Advertising	Fashion design Graphic design Interior design Product design	Sectors described as 'non cultural' although they employ creative skills and creative people, i.e. people who have been trained in the arts
Related industries	Manufacture of PCs, MP3 players, mobile phones etc.		

Source: KEA

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from 'The Economy of Culture in Europe.' KEA (2006).

The study differentiates between what it describes as cultural activities – the arts and media industries – and creative activities – design, advertising and architecture. It argues that the ‘creative’ sectors are where culture acts essentially as an *input* into the production of non-cultural goods. In other words, creative activities incorporate elements from ‘culture.’ Not all design applications have a cultural output – car design is a good example - but the design is a creative activity whose input is undoubtedly cultural, based in this case on visual arts.

Cunningham (2006) objects to what he sees as the attempt by Throsby and others to place the creative arts at the *centre* of the wider creative economy. Simply because the creative industries produce ‘non-cultural’ outputs, he believes there is no reason to suppose they are less ‘core’ than other sectors.

However, a modified version of both Throsby and the KEA model, with a series of concentric circles, has been adopted by the DCMS as part of its creative economy review (Andari et al. 2007). And many European policymakers are particularly interested in the links between (subsidised) cultural activities, creativity and innovation. Whether or not this suggests a centre-periphery model is another matter.

One model of the cultural and creative sectors which seeks to break away from the core/periphery model is that produced by Burns Owens Partnership (BOP) and the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC) for NESTA (NESTA, 2006b). Unlike either the DCMS or Throsby/KEA models, this reflects differences in market structures, distribution mechanisms and consumption patterns between different cultural and creative industries.

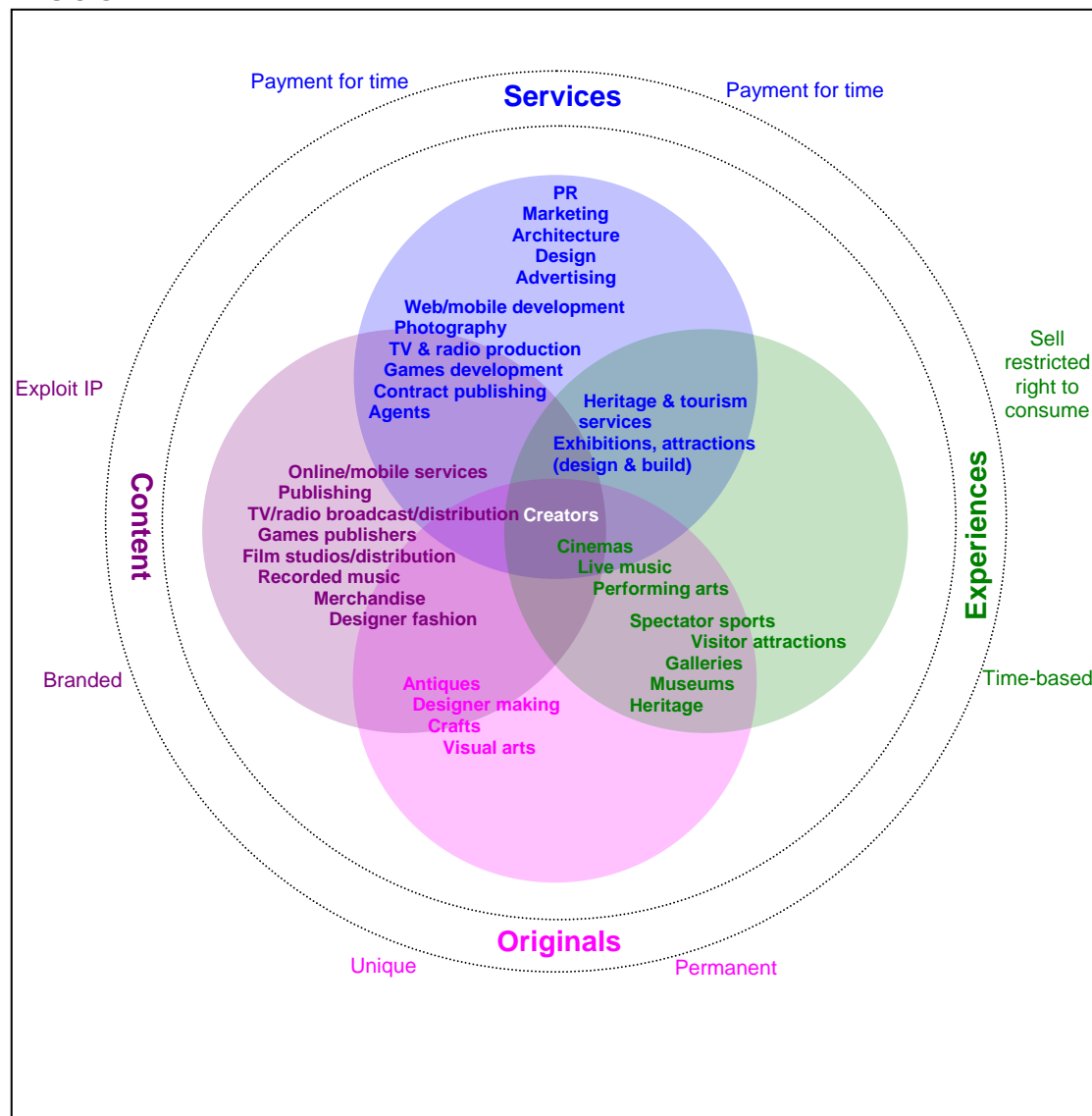
It differentiates between four types of business or institution:

- Those producing **originals**, including the visual arts, crafts and *haute couture*. Based on the manufacture, production or sale of physical artefacts, their value

derives from their perceived cultural (or aesthetic) value and from their exclusivity – they are generally one-offs or part of limited production runs.

- **Content industries.** These are what some writers call the 'cultural industries' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002), as they are dominated by the media and recorded music. The business model is firmly based around Intellectual Property (IP), usually copyright, and products or services are distributed to customers or audiences through sales, advertising or subscription.
- The sector entitled **experiences** includes the performing arts, which other models put at the centre, but the distinctive business model here involves selling the right for consumers to witness or experience specific activities, performances or locations. As well as the performing arts, this sector includes heritage, with strong sectors such as cultural tourism and sport.
- **Creative services**, such as architecture, design and advertising, are what some models describe as the 'non-cultural' creative industries. But the BOP/MIPC model does not recognise a cultural/creative distinction. Nor does the model assume that all cultural and creative industries are based on intellectual property or copyright – these activities earn revenues in exchange for professionals' time and often involve the surrender of copyright.

Figure 2: Definition of the creative industries by business model



Source: NESTA

As the diagram shows, this model accepts considerable overlap between different cultural and creative industries; it also tries to describe a value chain of activities. A similar, but not identical, approach is taken by Bates and Rivers (2007) in their taxonomy which categorises enterprises as creative content (replicable products), creative process (professional service firms) or media businesses.

Such classification systems are largely policy-driven – an attempt by policymakers to delineate policy objectives and activities, but also increasingly to understand the links



between the cultural sectors and other parts of the economy. However, such systems do not articulate a mechanism or mechanisms by which ideas move from one set of activities to another.

Our study seeks to try and explore these mechanisms and understand:

- The ways in which fine artists, as 'core creators,' link to other parts of the cultural and creative industries.
- How and why ideas and people move between these sectors.

### **2.3 So how do the arts contribute to innovation?**

Systematic attempts to understand links between culture, the creative industries and the wider economy are very much in the early stages (see Bakhshi, McVittie and Simmie, 2008 for one approach). One difficulty with work in this field is its imprecise and often slippery terminology. While 'culture' is itself widely acknowledged to be a hugely problematic term (Williams, 1976), 'creativity' is no more straightforward, as it sounds evaluative rather than descriptive when applied to particular economic sectors. Thus the question: "but aren't other industries creative as well?", has always dogged the creative industries debate.

Classification systems put 'culture' back into the picture and champion the particular role of the arts as a source of creativity. But, having appropriated the term 'creative' from other parts of the economy, cultural policy and analysis must now show how cultural creativity is different from other kinds of creativity, and the basis for any claims of prominence in the debate.

The Cox Review (Cox, 2005) defines creativity as the generation of new ideas. While not claiming that culture and the arts are the only source of these 'new ideas', Cox does suggest a privileged role for design, defined as the link

between creativity (the generation of new ideas) and innovation (the successful exploitation of those ideas).

In similar vein, Potts (2007) argues that economic growth comes from the origination, adoption and retention of novel ideas, with the arts plainly having a role in all three stages. However, in describing that role, he focuses on the role of creativity and on creative services such as design and advertising, rather than on the arts.

Potts argues that the creative industries form part of a broader 'creative system' – an adapted version of what is sometimes called an 'innovation system' (Freeman, 1995). Potts's creative system is concerned with the adoption of *social* as well as physical technologies (how people use the Internet, rather than just the Internet itself). He is concerned with how innovations are adopted and retained in the economy, as well as how they are generated.

For Potts, creative services such as advertising or marketing are thus very important. For Cox it is design, to make products and services more usable. But neither argument gets us any closer to the role of the arts – particularly the fine arts – in innovation.

We have seen that researchers have argued that culture provides raw material for other sectors to be creative (Venturelli, 2000 and KEA, 2006). But while it seems entirely plausible that the arts are a source of ideas, stories and images that are reproduced in other parts of the economy, the mechanisms by which this happens remain elusive.

The focus of this study on the absorption and use of 'artistically trained labour', allows us to begin to think about the mechanisms by which the fine arts, as embodied in the work and skills of artists, link to creativity and innovation.

There are at least three ways why artistic labour seems important to the process of innovation. These are discussed below.

### 2.3.1 Culture is everywhere

The argument that culture is becoming a more important part of all production is increasingly familiar. Knowledge economy advocates (Leadbeater, 1999) stress that products are distinguished by their 'knowledge' component, including cultural aspects such as design or branding. Most cars will get one from A to B; the difference between a Mercedes and a less expensive model is less about utility and more about intangible aspects, often the product of cultural labour.

Others argue that cultural objects themselves proliferate in a variety of forms:

"As information, as communications, as branded products, as media products, as transport and leisure services, cultural entities are no longer the exception: they are the rule" (Lash and Lury, 2007:4).

In this argument, cultural products are no longer primarily symbolic, but have become 'things' when:

"for example movies become computer games; when brands become brand environments, talking over airport terminal space and restructuring department stores, road billboards and city centres; when cartoon characters become collectibles and costumes; when music is played in lifts, part of a mobile soundscape" (Lash and Lury, 2007:8).

So, not only are traditional 'cultural products' – books, music, films – increasing in number, but cultural ideas and images are also increasingly a part of non-cultural products and services. And this is true from retail environments to running shoes. In this way, cultural labour provides content that requires 'artistic creativity' as a knowledge-based and labour-intensive input into a whole variety of goods. As Menger (1999) points out, these goods can also include

public goods, such as local economic development or urban regeneration, which, at least in Europe, has increasingly required a cultural 'input' through iconic buildings, public art or content for galleries.

A second, subtler and less quantifiable, argument is that, as Ruth Towse (2001:477) puts it:

"The Beatles didn't just create pop music; they played a leading role in a cultural, social, political and economic revolution."

In this argument, what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) call the 'artistic critique' – the bohemian spirit derived from nineteenth century attacks on perceived bourgeois conformity, hierarchy and oppression – is the real contribution of artists to contemporary society.

While this critique may have lost force as an anti-capitalist argument (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Heath and Potter, 2005), the 'bohemian' lifestyle, celebrated by Richard Florida (2002) and others, has itself become a source of new goods and services.

In this version of Bohemia, the desire to 'stand out from the crowd' or express one's individuality is often articulated through consumer purchases. As in Apple's iconic '1984' advertisement for personal computers, the 'rebel' individual is the one who rejects the 'big' brands (at the time symbolised by IBM), in favour of another product; in the process they help to turn the 'rebel product' into a big brand. As Heath and Potter (2005:101) argue, in this way:

"the critique of mass society has been one of the most powerful forces driving consumerism for the past forty years".

Whatever accounts for the growth in differentiated consumer products, it is clear that we are a long way from the 'any colour, as long as it is black' world of Fordist

production. What is less clear is the role of artists themselves and to what extent it has changed the demand for their labour.

### **2.3.2 The culture of innovation – the relevance of ‘artistic’ skills**

The notion that creativity is linked to innovation is becoming a staple of both business and policy literature. Cox (2005:10) argues that:

“the ability to innovate depends on the availability and exploitation of creative skills which are taken to include...communication and cross-cultural understanding”.

Meanwhile the UNESCO Director General recently declared: “creativity, imagination and the ability to adapt competencies which are developed through the Arts are as important as the technological and scientific skills” (KEA, 2006).

In their book, ‘Innovation: The Missing Dimension’, Lester and Piore (2004) argue that artists are particularly important in ‘third generation innovation’ due to their particular training, their disposal towards critical thinking and their close understanding of consumer needs.

“The capacity to experiment and the habits of thought that allow us to make sense of radically ambiguous situations and move forward in the face of uncertainty” (2004:5), are associated with artistic creativity, and are important for innovation, particularly where science and technology are not the central drivers.

Lester and Piore suggest that innovation depends on two processes: analysis and interpretation. While analysis is essentially rational decision-making, familiar from science and technology, it works best when the alternative outcomes are well understood and can be clearly defined.

Interpretation, on the other hand, is a process of mutual understanding arrived at through exploratory conversations with a variety of collaborators. It is less about solving clearly defined problems than initiating and guiding conversations. Others find similar processes to be important in design, with Verganti (2003) arguing that: "design is the brokering of languages".

Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotake Takeuchi have looked at the innovation process in Japanese manufacturing industry, though their findings have a wider resonance. According to Nonaka, making personal or tacit knowledge available to others is the central activity of the 'knowledge-creating company'. But this process of converting tacit knowledge into explicit or codified knowledge resembles creative practice rather than an analytical approach, where alternatives are well understood and clearly defined.

"First by linking contradictory things and ideas through metaphor; then by resolving these contradictions through analogy; and finally, by crystallizing the created concepts and embodying them in a model, which makes the knowledge available to the rest of the company" (Nonaka 1991:101).

Similarly, attitudes to risk (Bryce et al., 2004) and tolerance of ambiguity appear to be essential to the interpretative mode of innovation, whereas a more analytical approach would proceed by reducing ambiguity and eliminating risk. Lester and Piore (2004) go so far as to claim that: "ambiguity is the critical resource out of which new ideas emerge". It is this ambiguity that makes 'the conversation worth having', not the actual exchange of information. If the conversation is narrowed or closed off too soon, and the ambiguity eliminated, potential innovations can be lost.

This matters for contemporary studies of innovation because it recognises that innovation is not solely the province of the firm or the inventor, but is a collective process. Recognising the scope and potential of cross-sectoral industry learning

and technology transfer is sometimes called third generation innovation policy (Lengrand et al., 2002).

As Lester and Piore argue:

“Cell phones merged out of a conversation between members of the radio and telephone industries; medical devices emerged out of a conversation between academic scientists and medical practitioners with clinical experience; fashion jeans emerged out of a conversation between textile companies, manufactures, laundries and fashion designers.”

Increasingly, that conversation also involves consumers. As Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi has commented (in Pope, 2005:67):

“(W)hat we call creativity is a phenomenon that is constructed through an interaction between producers and audience. Creativity is not the product of single individuals, but of social systems making judgements about individuals’ products.”

Von Hippel (2005) has demonstrated the importance of users in innovating and shaping new products and services. Indeed, Lester and Piore (2004) observed the closest connections between consumers and producers in the fashion industry. Traditional analytical innovation suggests understanding the customer’s needs as a pre-requisite to developing suitable products or services. But few fashion items respond to *need*: they tend to be positional or symbolic goods. In understanding clothing only partly as utility, and in their close observation of how clothes are interpreted and customised, the fashion companies seem closest to consumer attitudes.

In the cultural and creative industries, Caves (2000) believes that innovation is often driven by consumers simply changing their minds. The effect of the rise of television, he claims, was to change the audience for cinema from families to teenagers; this change in audience resulted in the

continuing dominance of heavily-promoted blockbuster action films at multiplex cinemas.

Unlike pharmaceuticals, where developing a new drug requires a detailed formal knowledge base, systematic experimentation and extensive clinical trials, sectors like the cultural industries have often relied on a more informal knowledge base, a 'feel' for what people might want, partly based on the creators' own experience as a consumer.

### **2.3.2.1 Does art education produce innovators?**

The literature on arts education offers some insights into why artists' training is particularly useful for producing such innovators. Owen et al. (2006) note that one of the central features of the teaching of most creative practice is the 'crit' – discussion between peers, where work in progress is exposed for developmental discussion.

Lampert (2006) argues that because art students practise reflective thinking and aesthetic inquiry, both when they create artwork and when they discuss their own and others' work, there may well be a link between arts education and critical thinking. Few empirical studies have tested this link, although Lampert refers to one, by Burton, Horowitz and Abeles (2000), which found that students with high arts exposure showed a greater understanding of 'multiple or alternative vantage points.' Her own empirical study, albeit involving only 141 undergraduates, also indicates that exposure to learning in the arts positively reinforces students' ability to think critically.

Lampert compares arts and non-arts undergraduates using the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI) which is intended to test the extent to which people are motivated to frame or solve problems using thinking and reasoning. While there was no significant difference in overall scores between the two groups, the arts students had significantly higher mean scores on several of the CCTDI sub-scales: truth-seeking, maturity, and open-mindedness.



Lampert argues that these categories are closely aligned with creative exploration and the analysis of difficult problems.

Willingness to put one's work on show, to accept constructive criticism and to let that feed the development of future ideas, are obviously part of this process. But critical to its success is the community of practice (Wenger, 2000) where it takes place. Communication skills, teamwork and emotional intelligence, which some argue are developed in arts programmes (Bryce et al., 2004), are invaluable in forming and sustaining such communities. Lampert's findings may also explain why the process of socialisation (who you know, rather than what you know) is more important in many creative and cultural industries than formal education (Bathelt et al., 2004).

### **2.3.3 Artists as workers – the organisation of cultural labour markets**

The argument above is that it is the *skills* of artistically-trained labour that are useful in promoting innovation. Critical thinking and the ability to deal with ambiguity and to participate in a community of users and producers are all seen as legacies of an artistic education. As Menger (1999:558) puts it: "talent may be conceived as embodying not only artistic abilities and technical skills, but also behavioural and relational ones".

In this short section, we will consider the argument that it is *the attitudes* of artistic workers and the *way artistic labour is organised* through networks rather than firms – as well as the less desirable aspects of cultural work, such as self-exploitation – that make them a prototype not just for work organisation, but for innovation in the rest of the economy.

The creation of new cultural products usually occurs in flexible networks and temporary, project-based co-operations (Caves, 2000), and creators' labour markets are

extremely flexible and volatile (Benhamou, 2003). Most cultural product life-cycles tend to be short, while creative industries exhibit intensive user-producer interaction. The importance of entrepreneurship in these sectors (Oakley and Leadbeater, 2000) and the impact of rapid technological change on the industrial structure of sub-sectors such as the music industry (Hesmondhalgh, 2002) have attracted both academic and policymakers' attention.

As Ruth Towse argues (2001), typical features of artistic labour markets – casualisation, self-employment, the project-based company – are becoming more widespread in the economy as a whole. This justifies renewed attention to the organisation of work within the cultural and creative sectors. In addition, artistic labour markets appear to display some marked differences from traditional labour markets – in particular, they do not conform to human capital models which justify investment in training and learning in terms of higher earnings (Towse, 2001).

Throsby's work (1992) suggests that earnings for artists do not necessarily rise in line with formal training, nor with years of experience; 'experienced' cultural producers do not necessarily earn more than their younger counterparts. Despite this, as Towse notes, artists are not deterred from undertaking formal training and education, not least because training in the arts equips them for work in other occupations, without any notable earnings penalty.

However, the willingness of people to undertake artistic training continually leads to what is viewed as an oversupply of artists, leading to lower earnings than similarly-qualified professionals (Towse, 1995; Menger, 1999). Nevertheless, people continue to want to enter cultural labour markets for intrinsic rewards and job satisfaction or perhaps because they believe they may be among the minority that 'makes it' (McRobbie, 2002).

This willingness to work for low pay in relatively insecure conditions underlies what some commentators see as the

attractiveness of cultural workers to employers in other parts of the economy. As Andrew Ross comments, in his study of artists-turned-new-media-workers, 'No Collar' (2003:142): "Artists (in the broad sense of the term) come with training in what could be called sacrificial labor".

This, he argues, makes them 'predisposed' to accept non-monetary rewards such as the gratification of practising their art. They are therefore valued by dot-com firms, seeking long hours, ideas and emotional commitment from their workforce. For Ross's 'net slaves': "it was cool to be addicted to overwork" (2003:143). But, as Ross himself notes, this may have as much to do with artistic 'traditions' of self-exploitation as it does with the requirements of their bosses.

The degree to which these attitudinal factors act as a spur to innovation is difficult to determine. Caves (2000:204) argues that it is possible that the relatively low pecuniary rewards of an artistic career may spur artistic innovation: "The Abstract Expressionists claimed that their early efforts were spurred by the attitude that nothing they made was likely to sell, so they might as well pursue symbolic rewards on the frontier".

But Menger (1999: 551) argues that uncertainty *attracts* the kind of people to cultural work who would be put off by routine or predictable work; those "committed to impermanence, to cumulative learning and exploration, rather than tied to external career markers". He also argues that they manage their financial uncertainty through multiple jobs and higher hourly wages than those in full-time employment. However, the growth in the number of unemployed or under-employed artists threatens this compensatory mechanism (1999:550): "as hourly wages are not higher for greatly under-employed workers, than for their more successful colleagues".

Others (Ross, 2003; Gill, 2007) argue that those who have already been 'trained' as risk-takers and see themselves as able to absorb change are particularly attracted to other fast-moving sectors, such as new media, which are

perceived as both risky and at the forefront of a change. As Ross comments, the 'mentality' of artists has simply become too valuable to be left to artists alone; it is instead increasingly in demand in the contemporary knowledge and service sectors.

This study will thus seek to understand:

- Where are the new markets for cultural labour and how do fine arts graduates access them?
- What is distinctive about arts school education that may produce these sorts of skills or attitudes?
- What are the personal strategies that fine arts graduates adopt to manage risk and cope with uncertainty?

### **Section 3: The cultural and creative industries**

#### **3.1 The geography of the cultural industries**

There is a large literature on the geography of the cultural industries (e.g. Scott, 2000; Pratt, 2002; Markusen and King, 2003; Mommass, 2004). Our interest is primarily in what the literature tells us about the geographical determinants of cultural innovation, particularly the relationship between innovation outcomes and the interaction of artists and other workers.

Recent economic geography (Knudsen, Florida and Stolarick, 2005) has focused on the inter-related concepts of proximity, face-to-face interaction and knowledge spillovers; in this respect the cultural sectors exemplify many of the factors that promote growth in a knowledge-based economy.

The ability of expensive, inner-city neighbourhoods to retain their productive employment in the cultural industries puzzles many, who are perplexed by why creative and cultural

workers remain bound to place, as distance work becomes technically easier. But, as much recent research has demonstrated (Pratt, 2005a and b; Neff, 2005; Storper and Venables, 2004), even new digital technology firms have a surprising tendency to co-locate, generally in major cities, and often within the same neighbourhood or building.

The explanations are often mutually reinforcing. Pratt (2005b) has examined the importance of personal communication, particularly at the early developmental stage of projects, when uncertainty is high and negotiations are complex, in his discussion of the London film industry. This constant exchange of information, together with informal information exchange, such as rumour or industry gossip, are the 'untraded dependences' seen as crucial to individuals' and firms' ability to innovate in fast-changing markets.

What Knudsen, Florida and Stolarick (2005:4) call "learning and returns to one's skills and creativity" are facilitated by the density of urban environments and city neighbourhoods. As Athey et al. (2007) point out in their discussion of London's fashion industry, the city's fashion designers are aided not only by the critical mass of people and businesses working in their own area, but by access to specialist media and the related sub-cultures of design, music and the visual arts nearby.

In some cultural sectors, such as the media, the structure of the sector – a few large players, surrounded by much smaller companies and a large pool of freelance labour – means that information exchange often happens beyond the boundaries of the firm. This increases the importance of close, often social settings.

Gina Neff's work on digital media in New York's Silicon Alley (Neff, 2005) demonstrates the importance not only of social ties, but of places where these social ties could be formed. Thus the 'night time economy' of Lower Manhattan – its parties, bars, clubs and informal gatherings – plays a crucial part in enabling exchange between the large number of

small new media firms in the city. The leisure infrastructure is not just about consumption, but enabling firms and freelancers to be more productive by giving them somewhere to tune into industry 'noise' – rumours, impressions, recommendations, trade folklore and strategic information (Grabher, 2002).

For individual artists, these structural issues may well be less important – most are not working for large firms. But their need for access to ideas and inspiration, often in a social setting, is no different.

The places where these meetings take place can also be invested with 'symbolic capital' – the association of warehouse spaces with artists, or former industrial areas with creativity, gives them a particular value (albeit sometimes a problematic one, where gentrification is perceived to have driven out artists or other low-paid groups).

In advertising, film and design, Soho has symbolic value, which is as difficult to replicate as to quantify. 'Having the right address' remains important in these sectors, if only in the hope that the symbolic association will rub off on the artist or firm. Thus neighbourhoods with a reputation for fostering creative production provide creative firms with both material (access to networks and freelance labour) and symbolic resources that facilitate creative activity.

A less recognised but important aspect of the city's leisure infrastructure is the opportunity it offers for multiple job-holding to artists who are unable to make a liveable income from artistic work alone. In his ethnography of the Wicker Park area of Chicago, Richard Lloyd (2006) shows how many young creatives subsidised their unpaid artistic work through a variety of service sector jobs particularly in bars and restaurants. He argues that the 'performative' nature of cultural work often serves workers well in service industries which require "the mastery of hip social codes" (2006:181).

The existence of a large service sector and a buoyant consumer economy to sustain it, characteristic of urban environments, is therefore part of the mix that enables the cultural sectors to function. These factors are often mutually dependent, reliant on the combination of access to labour pools, tacit information, 'the right address' and the cultural consumption preferences of workers.

We will seek to explore issues of place, both via the questionnaire and in interviews. In particular:

- Do fine art graduates 'cluster' in particular neighbourhoods and what benefits do they derive from doing so?
- What role do informal, leisure and night-time economies play in the work of fine art graduates?
- Is multiple job holding simply a response to economic insecurity or does it bring other benefits?

### **3.2 Networks and work organisation**

This need for proximity and the importance of personal contact in cultural work helps explain the continuing importance of dense urban environments in the cultural sectors. It also helps to explain the importance of the network, both as an organisational form for creative and cultural firms, and for groups of individuals such as artists.

Generally, networks are viewed in two dimensions (Bilton, 2007): horizontal peer to peer relationships; and vertical supply and distribution chains. This is sometimes overlaid with the notion of strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), with strong ties being particularly important at the early stages of work, where trust is crucial and reputation important (Grabher 2002), and weaker ties exposing people to different perspectives later on (Dal Fiore, 2007).

Close or strong networks seem particularly important in the early stage of an idea, where intense experimentation and collaboration require close contact and constant communications. Ideas at this stage are often not properly formulated, much less written down; risk is high and rewards uncertain. The supportive environment and local, tacit knowledge are vital in helping with everything from finance to premises or staff. Once ideas are more developed and can be 'coded', loose international networks and peer review become important. Supply chain networks, often more 'visible' than peer to peer relationships, take ideas or concepts through a series of phases, drawing on different resources at each stage.

From the outside, the networking involved in cultural activities often seems incestuous and exclusive, posing a problem for public policymakers keen to open up the cultural sectors to a more diverse range of producers (Oakley, 2006, Andari et al., 2007). In addition, there is often a tension between the trust needed in the risky, experimental stages of creation and the need to be sufficiently porous to allow new talent into the system (Bilton, 2007).

In the next section, we will look at the literature, both on artists' working lives and on their training and education. In doing so, we are trying to consider artists both as individuals and to the extent they form a definable 'community' of practice (Wenger, 1998).

As Gertler (2003) argues, while the 'communities of practice' school of thought stresses community knowledge and norms as conditions for knowledge exchange, it sometimes neglects the social context and the relationship between tacit and codified knowledge. In other words, the ability of workers to absorb and deploy tacit knowledge may depend *inter alia* on their level of education and the common socialisation processes that have produced them.



- To what extent does the type of education our groups received at arts school affect their absorptive capacity, resilience or adaptability?
- If we accept that knowledge is at least in part socially constructed, how does education and training systems shape this knowledge?

## Section 4: Artists' careers

### 4.1 Defining artists

The past 40 years have seen a number of studies published on artists' lives, both inside and outside the UK. Butler's working paper, 'Studies of Artists: An Annotated Directory' (2000), lists over eighty studies published around the world since 1966, the year of Baumol and Bowen's 'The Performer, the Composer, the Playwright and the Choreographer', a landmark study based on data from the 1960 US Census.

Phyllida Shaw's more recent literature review focuses on publications from the past fifteen years and "the ways artists earn a living, the conditions in which they work and the laws and systems that support (and sometimes hinder) them..." (2004: 1). Both Butler and Shaw discuss the challenges in defining 'artists'. As Butler notes, such definitions demand value judgements on both artists and art; the act of defining carries a philosophical burden while identifying a group of artists requires a degree of technical precision in determining the boundaries of a population (2000: 3).

A number of writers, including Butler, Shaw, Ruth Towse (1995), and Rhys Davies and Robert Lindley (2003), reference Bruno Frey and Werner Pommerehne's eight criteria for determining who is an artist. These are listed in the original publication in the following order (Frey and Pommerehne, 1989: 146-47):

1. The amount of time spent on artistic work.
2. The amount of income derived from artistic activities.

3. The reputation as an artist among the general public.
4. The recognition among other artists.
5. The quality of the artistic work produced (which means that artistic 'quality' must be defined somehow).
6. Membership in a professional artists' group or association.
7. Professional qualifications (graduation from art school).
8. The subjective self-evaluation of being an artist.

Butler adds a ninth methodological criterion to this list, drawing on a number of studies published since Frey and Pommerehne: the presence in a directory of artists (2000: 4). This review focuses on studies in two main categories: artists' employment, income and careers; and studies of graduates in creative art and design.

Our focus is on 'artistic trained labour' (as defined in Section 2.3 of this review). Butler notes that some studies which define artists by professional qualifications or graduation from art schools "filter out alumni who have given up art for other fields" (2000: 4). Our study elects not to employ this filter, and specifically includes those who have 'given up art' in order to probe their reasons and to determine the extent to which their formal (and informal) fine art training has affected their economic, social and cultural experiences in these 'other fields'.

#### **4.1.1 UK studies of artists' employment and careers**

Recent studies of artists' employment, income and careers in the UK include a wide variety of artists, primary focuses, data sources and quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

In her review, Shaw differentiates between studies of artists based on census data, Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories and Labour Force Surveys, and independent studies commissioned to a brief. She argues

that the latter “are more likely than official surveys to provide an accurate picture of the different dimensions of artists’ working lives” (2004: 2).

O’Brien and Feist’s (1997) study, ‘Employment in the Arts and Cultural Industries: An Analysis of the Labour Force Survey and Other Sources’ is the final report in a series of three published by the Arts Council of England (following O’Brien and Feist, 1995 and Towse, 1996). This report recognises the limitations of relying solely on census data: respondents self-define their ‘main job’ in terms of income generated or time allocated; the self-employed are excluded; there are limited standard occupational categories (SOCs); and only the time and income outputs of the week before the census are included. Two additional surveys are used to provide a more complete picture of employment in the arts during the decade between the 1981 and 1991 censuses.

O’Brien and Feist examine five of the largest groups of cultural occupations in the 1991 survey; fine artists were included as part of the ‘artists, commercial artists, and graphic designers’ category. As with many other reports, it includes authors, actors, producers and directors, musicians and technical audio-visual operators. By looking at these additional data, they were able to look at variations in weekly hours (or job flexibility), multiple job-holding and the nature of second jobs held. They also considered the attrition rate for arts occupations and the concentration of people working in the arts and cultural industries in the South East and London.

Within an overall incidence of multiple job-holding in cultural occupations twice as high as in other industries, O’Brien and Feist find that artists, commercial artists and graphic designers work longer hours on average than authors, actors, musicians and photographers. This, they argue, partly explains the relatively low levels of simultaneous multiple job-holding, and they suggest that “thus it would seem that alternating job-holding is a more accurate term”, a reference to working in the cultural industries and then

switching to another occupation rather than doing both at the same time (1997:14).

By including the longitudinal or 'one per cent' survey which tracks one in a hundred PAYE employees over ten years, O'Brien and Feist identify and isolate three groups of workers and alternating job-holders within the field: 'stayers' (who remained in the cultural industries); 'changers' (who switch between cultural and non-cultural industries; and 'entrants' (new employees in the cultural industries who may have been previously in formal education (1997: 29).

Overall, they identify a high attrition rate for the cultural industries, with 46 per cent leaving the cultural industries; although this does not, as they point out, account for those who may have become self-employed, and an overall net gain in the number of those working in cultural occupations in London (1997:48).

More recently, Higgs, Cunningham and Bakhshi (2008) use census and LFS data to map where a wide range of creative professionals work in the UK economy and their work patterns, including the extent of multiple jobholding, self-employment rates and average income levels.

Unlike these quantitative approaches, Honey, Heron and Jackson (1997: vii) focus on a 'carefully selected, but small' sample of visual artists. They interviewed this group of painters, sculptors, photographers, video and film artists, installation, mixed media and new media practitioners. Through this qualitative approach, the authors probe the artists' childhood practice and early education, their formal training and higher education, and their first year out of school and working lives.

Honey, Heron and Jackson find that most of these artists attended art college, and that many considered the years spent there as a 'special time' during which they could dedicate many hours to artistic practice (1997: viii). They had mixed views about the content of the degree courses

themselves, with some citing the need for balance between teaching and learning, the technical aspects of art and the philosophical thinking behind it. Artists who studied before the 1980s also experienced difficulties in crossing over into different media (for example, from painting to sculpture) during their degree.

Many artists considered the first year after school the most difficult; overall they equated success with the quality of the work produced, rather than earning income from the work (1997: 49). This is one of the findings which led Honey, Heron and Jackson to conclude that artists' careers are different from others in that it is psychic income, rather than monetary rewards, which drives artists. Indeed, most visual artists follow a haphazard career path which the authors refer to as a 'career matrix' (1997: xii).

Davies and Lindley (2003) undertake a quantitative study of a wide range of artists, identifying an increased pool of cultural labour in the UK between 1993 and 2000, up from 610,000 to 760,000 people. Half of this group consists of those in the SOC categories of authors, writers and journalists; artists, commercial artists and graphic designers; and actors, entertainers, stage managers, producers, and directors.

Of these (widely-defined) artists, over half have further or higher education qualifications (as compared with 25 per cent of those working outside the cultural industries) and 39 per cent are self employed (as compared with 12 per cent outside the industries).

While Davies and Lindley cite higher-than-average gross weekly earnings for employees in all cultural industries compared to the non-cultural average, they also note that this difference is less than it was in 1991 and that there is a relatively high incidence of unpaid overtime. While they consider self-employed artists in this survey – and acknowledge “the greater incidence of, and a continuing movement towards self-employment among those who are employed in cultural occupations” – they also recognise

gaps in their knowledge and the limitations of quantitative data. For example, they are unable to include or assess the income of self-employed artists or accurately to reflect the number of artists who work a combination of PAYE and self-employment (2003: xvii).

#### **4.1.2 Art and design in UK higher education**

According to the most recent figures from 'Higher Education & Research Opportunities in the United Kingdom' (HERO, 2007) over two million students in higher education in the UK are studying at over 170 universities and colleges. Their number has increased from just over 1.6 million students in 1996. In 1960, there were 270,000 students at just 20 universities. The expansion of higher education and government efforts to widen participation and reduce social inclusion in the UK are well documented, exemplified in the Government's target that 50 per cent of people under thirty should participate in Higher Education by 2010 (DfES, 2003).

The annual Students and Qualifiers Data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for 2005/06 reveals more than 156,000 students in creative arts and design, an increase of over 60 per cent in the past decade. Looking specifically at the figures for fine art programmes, there were just under 40,000 in 2005/6 (HESA, 2005).

The annual 'Pattern of Higher Education Institutions in the UK' report published by Universities UK (Sixth Report, 2006) finds a consistent increase in enrolments in medicine, biological sciences, business and administrative studies, and creative arts and design. This report also notes a 5.8 per cent increase in the number of creative arts and design students from the previous year (2003/04-2004/05). Between 1996/97 and 2004/05, Universities UK identified a 42 per cent increase in the number of fine art students, a 15 per cent increase in the number of higher education institutions teaching fine art (from 72 up to 83), and a 23 per cent increase in the average number of students at each institution.

Compared with some European countries, such as Italy or France, the history of formal art and design education in the UK is relatively short. Yet art and design was also the first area of education to receive public funding. Design Education was funded by Parliament in 1837 to improve the knowledge of art and design principles in the manufacturing industry, in order to improve competition with European exports after the passing of free trade agreements (Bird, 2000). By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, national diplomas were awarded in painting and sculpture.

The Coldstream Report on Fine Art Teaching (Ministry of Education, 1960) had a major impact on the formal structures of art and design education, provisions for study and the curriculum. After its publication, the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design (NCDAD) was established to validate art and design courses. In 1974, the CNAA (Council for National Academic Awards) assumed responsibility for art and design courses, overseeing the awarding of Honours and Masters degrees in art and design by schools around the UK.

While the Coldstream report also mandated a component of historical and contextual study in fine art degrees, it also supported what has been called the 'open model' (Mulvey, 2006) of fine art teaching based on the concept of unstructured time for studio practice. If creative practice was conceived of as discrete from theoretical study in the 1960s, by the 1990s theory was well established within fine art in higher education, as exemplified by practice-based fine art doctorates.

#### **4.1.3 Studies of fine art students and graduates**

A series of research projects into the careers of art and design graduates was launched at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (BIAD) in 1996. The pilot project took the annual Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) 'First Directions Statistics' survey (FDS) of graduates six months

after graduation as its starting point.<sup>4</sup> Jane Aston studied the career patterns of the Institute's first degree recipients and postgraduates who graduated between 1991 and 1995 in a bid to gain a fuller picture of art and design graduates than that provided by HESA after six months, when they cited the highest overall unemployment rates as being among Creative Art and Design graduates.

Aston (1999) concludes: "the career paths of Art and Design graduates are worthy of special attention". She focused on two patterns in particular: the graduates' propensity to remain in art and design and the extent to which they became involved with teaching. She cites recent Higher Education and the Labour Market (HELM) reports which suggest that the FDS findings do not reflect the full picture: HELM found relatively high unemployment for art and design graduates during the first year after graduation (30 per cent) but this fell to 7 per cent after three years. Aston notes the HELM data do not include all self-employment or work experience.

Aston reports high rates of paid employment (81 per cent), further study (45 per cent), including Masters Degrees and PGCE, and self-employment (32 per cent). Self-employment is important to BIAD graduates as it keeps them working and making contacts within art and design.

'Ambitions and Destinations' (Aston 1999) provides the springboard for further research into the careers of art and design graduates. Blackwell and Harvey (1999a) argue that, by the mid-nineties, UK employers were more concerned that graduates possessed a core set of interactive and personal skills and attitudes than about the subject of their degree. This pre-empted the question of 'oversupply' of art and design graduates and focuses on the value of art and design education both within the arts and crossing over into 'a wide range' of other sectors/occupations (Blackwell and Harvey, 1999a: 1). The report challenges the stereotype of

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<sup>4</sup> Until 2004, the *First Directions* survey followed degree graduates in all subjects six months after leaving university. The survey now looks at graduates two years after graduating.



unemployed or unemployable arts graduates. The findings show that most art and design graduates work in this field after graduating; just 20 per cent of respondents undertook work unrelated to art and design and fewer than 5 per cent were unemployed. Of those working, 52 per cent were working full-time and a further 16 per cent part-time (Blackwell and Harvey, 1999a: 2).

Like Honey, Heron and Jackson (1997), Blackwell and Harvey note the unique circumstances of transitioning to employment after graduation for art and design (and especially fine art) graduates; they often experience a difficult 'first year' out of school as they struggle to make contacts, organise a portfolio, and negotiate (often multiple) work contracts. They also note the high rate of self-employment established by previous studies (42 per cent self-employed in some format at one time after graduating, including 10 per cent who have set up their own business, and 20 per cent who are freelance). Blackwell and Harvey's fine art graduates support Aston's conclusions, with these graduates reporting the lowest incomes overall (less than designers). Similar percentages of art and design graduates in the collaborative study went on to further study, including PGCE training, as reported in the pilot report. A new finding of Blackwell and Harvey (1999) is that a majority (67 per cent) of art and design graduates work for small firms.

Blackwell and Harvey note the: "initiative, creativity, independent judgement, oral communication skills, flexibility, adaptability, self-reliance, self-confidence, analysis critique and synthesis" of art and design graduates, attributes which their respondents valued from their education.

However, they did cite the lack of other skill development as part of their training, including teamwork, interpersonal skills, written communication, numeracy, self-promotion and entrepreneurial skills (1999a: 4). They also isolate the gender bias in incomes revealing that male art and design graduates, though significantly outnumbered by females by

a factor of 2:1, earn a much higher average income (Blackwell and Harvey 1999b).

Building on the literature on artists and art graduates, we want to know:

- Is there any evidence from our sample that fine arts graduates prefer to work within the arts, and does this attitude restrain crossover into the wider economy?
- Are high levels of self-employment a response to lack of 'employability' or a positive career choice?
- How and in what ways has the experience of arts education changed over the decades for our sample?

## **4.2 Review of recent studies outside of the UK**

### **4.2.1 Australia and New Zealand**

'Don't Give Up Your Day Job: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia' (Throsby and Hollister, 2003) covers 120 artistic occupations spread over 11 groups, including visual artists, writers, actors, singers and composers, and community (cultural development) workers. Throsby and Hollister view artists' working lives alongside broad trends in the political, social, and cultural environments. This places artists' employment, income and career paths in the context of globalisation, with the emergence of the 'knowledge economy' and current debates about the 'creative class' and the cultural industries.

'Don't Give up Your Day Job' is notable for its methods of selecting artists: 'practising professional artists' are self-defined and must have been artistically active in the past 3-5 years. They are not, however, required to have earned income from this practice. This allows for the inclusion of a wide range of full-time, part-time and self-employed artists.

In Throsby and Hollister's study, 91 per cent of visual art respondents had undertaken formal training, while 41 per cent said that they had participated in some form of self-learning or learning on the job. A majority (67 per cent) had considered formal training to be the most important factor in becoming an artist. Over half of 35-54 year-old visual artists were still engaged in some form of training at the time of the study. Throsby and Hollister divide the typical artists' career into four stages: an early stage of uncertainty; becoming established; the central stage of established practice, and a later period of committed but less intensive work.

Established practice is not defined by income, but rather by the artist's 'commitment' and 'achievement' as defined by artists themselves (2003: 33). The moment of establishment or 'big break' is most often identified as the first solo show or publication (42 per cent); only 6 per cent see it as the completion of training. Around 43 per cent of artists had already earned some income from their practice before they finished training. Throsby and Hollister find that artists consider three factors to be most important in their professional development: talent; training; and support from family, friends, teachers or peers.

The factors inhibiting artists are found to be: lack of work opportunities; lack of financial return; and lack of time due to domestic responsibilities. Three quarters of all artists interviewed were freelance or self-employed workers; this rose to 80 per cent for visual artists.

For the purposes of their research, Throsby and Hollister (2003: 37) define three types of jobs held by artists: Primary Artistic Occupation (PAO); art-related work, including teaching or studying; and non-arts work, including paid work outside of any artistic field.

The majority, 63 per cent of Throsby and Hollister's respondents, had held more than one job – 56 per cent had held two and 7 per cent had held three. Almost half, 43 per cent of artists worked in an arts-related field in addition to

their PAO; 32 per cent said they did at least some non-arts work. Looking at the preferred working patterns of visual artists, 41 per cent report spending less than 100 per cent of their working time on arts work; of those, 73 per cent say they would like to spend more time at arts work. Just 14 per cent of visual artists spend all their work time at their most desired art occupation. The overwhelming reason preventing artists from spending time at work is “insufficient income from that work” (63 per cent), followed by “work in occupation not available” (31 per cent) and “domestic responsibilities or childcare” (16 per cent).

Throsby and Hollister compare the percentage of time spent on PAO, arts-related and non-arts with the income earned from this work – for spending 81 per cent of their time working at all arts work, artists earn 66 per cent of their income. So working just 19 per cent of time on non-arts work generates 34 per cent of artists’ income.

‘Portrait of the Artist in New Zealand: A Survey of Professional Practising Artists in New Zealand’ (Creative New Zealand, 2003) is based on a survey of 1,000 professional artists (including writers, visual and performing artists, and musicians). With a similar focus and research methodologies to ‘Don’t Give Up Your Day Job’, the study provides a comprehensive overview of the status of the artists in New Zealand. It probes artists’ experiences moving from non-arts careers into the arts, how working overseas has impacted their practice, their career satisfaction and their sense of identity or professionalism as an artist.

In defining a ‘professional practicing artist’, the authors cite the parameters set out by UNESCO in the 1980 ‘Status of the Artist’ report. Under these guidelines, artists must consider “artistic creation to be an essential part of their life... [and is someone] who is or asks to be recognized as an artist, whether or not they are bound by any relations of employment or association” (2003: 6).

'Portrait of the Artist' finds that 50 per cent of artists switch from a non-arts career to an arts career at least once. Common reasons cited include a long-standing desire to commit to artistic practice, personal or professional satisfaction or sense of achievement or wanting to make a lifestyle change (2003: 16). Visual artists, at 30, are second only to writers in the average age at which their artistic practice becomes a paid role (compared with 34 for writers and 22 for musicians). On average, male artists first work in a paid artistic role at 25, five years earlier than women, at 30.

In terms of their professional development, the visual artists surveyed by Creative New Zealand (2003: 18) cite "finding a niche market" and "deciding to exhibit at an important time in their career" as especially important. Although driven by non-financial motivations to pursue a career in artistic practice, the most common factor inhibiting professional development is "lack of financial return", followed by "lack of capital to invest in materials/equipment/workspace" and "financial constraints" which restrict opportunities to practise.

The artists surveyed in 'Portrait of the Artist' value self-teaching and learning on the job or practical experience more than university study. The vast majority, 80 per cent, of visual artists consider themselves self-taught, and that includes those with formal qualifications. Artists' major career achievements reflect the degree of implicit professionalism encapsulated in the UNESCO definition of an artist; that is, they note achievements measured by practice or creativity (creating an original work of art) and professional peer recognition (receiving an award) or working alongside and being recognised by other professional artists.

#### **4.2.2 United States**

'Artists in the Work Force: Employment and Earnings 1970-1990' (Alper et al., 1996) presents an American perspective on many of the same issues raised in other surveys. It is notable because it independently defines four broad types of artists which are also compatible with census occupation

categories: authors; architects and designers; performing artists; and artists who work with their hands (including painters, sculptors, craft artists and artist printmakers). Each category is covered independently by data from both census and commissioned studies.

The authors take a broad view of artists' working lives, posing the question "Do they support their art or does it support them?" whilst maintaining the "underlying assumption...that the intrinsic rewards for artists in doing the work they do cannot be quantified" (1996: 1).

Contextualising the situation for visual artists in 1996, Alper et al. note that between 1970 and 1990 the total artist population of the US more than doubled (reaching over 1.6 million) and with that increase came a rise in self-employment (as similarly indicated by UK studies of the mid-1990s). The increases coincided with the growth of the not-for-profit sector during the 1970s and the art boom of the 1980s.

Joan Jeffri and the Research Center for Arts and Culture at Columbia University in New York conducted three studies which also sought to fill the gaps in census information: 'The Artists' Work-related, Human and Social Services Questionnaire' (1986); 'Information on Artists Survey' (1988); and 'Artists Training and Career Project' (1990-91). Jeffri surveyed a nationwide sample of artists randomly selected from membership lists of artists' associations and agencies; this means of selection privileges self-definition over occupational categories. The initial study was followed by a second survey ten years later which aimed to benchmark artists' financial and social situation between 1988 and 1997, and a parallel study which focused on artists who are members of ethnic minorities.

Alper et al. highlight the strengths and weaknesses of both census-based studies and independent reports; qualitative interviewing methods help to balance the problematic nature of fixed categories and self-identification. For

example, it may not be possible to know how many artists view their artistic practice as an occupation rather than a career, as these labels may not be how they identify themselves (1996: 63). Similarly, distinguishing between professional and amateur artists is complicated by the lack of a standard unit of measure – as the authors note: “Even the university degrees of fine arts are not a universally accepted standard for being an artist” (1996: 63).

‘Crossover: How Artists Build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofits and Community Work’ (Markusen et al., 2006) provides a starting point for our own survey. Markusen outlines the long-standing, prevailing attitudes both inside and outside the art world, which have compartmentalised artists and their practices into three spheres:

- 1) The commercial sector, which is driven by for-profit organisations that employ artists; this sector includes self-employed artists who market by themselves.
- 2) The not-for-profit sector, commissioned and/or largely supported by the public sector or not-for-profit organisations (including museums and not-for-profit foundation grants). This is roughly equivalent to the European notion of a public sector.
- 3) The community sector, in which artistic practice is often unpaid “but pursued for cultural, political and aesthetic reasons,” by “informal” forums or organisations, outside the spheres of both the commercial art market(s) and not-for-profits.

Markusen et al. believe that these three spheres have become so entrenched that they support stereotypes about many aspects of artists’ lives and practice, including their innovative capacity, thereby obscuring an accurate view of the real conditions and characteristics of these lives and practices.

Markusen et al. consider artists' identities to be largely self-defined. Status as an artist is flexibly defined as working as an artist, spending ten or more hours a week on artistic practice (whether or not this is remunerated) and sharing artwork beyond an immediate circle of friends or relatives.

Many of the artists surveyed by 'Crossover' practise in all three sectors; less than 20 per cent of artists do no commercial work or work in the not-for profit sector. Financial rewards or conditions aside, more artists would choose to work across multiple sectors.

In terms of artistic development, working in the commercial sector provides an 'understanding of artistic and professional conventions', broader visibility and networking opportunities – which positively impacts practice and delivers higher rates of return. The not-for-profit sector contributes to artistic development in terms of aesthetic and emotional satisfaction, and provides opportunities for explorative and collaborative practice. Working in the community sector leads artists to develop a positive community life, a stronger cultural identity and support for integrated social and political activism.

Many (45 per cent overall) are self-employed and are highly networked, incorporating multiple venues and organisations. Working in each of these three sectors poses challenges and consequences for artists. For example, Markusen et al. note that the commercial sector is by nature driven by 'bottom line concerns' and that this means an emphasis on carefully budgeted and time-managed 'virtuosity and skill', which can lead to little room for innovation. However, she notes, citing earlier work by Gilmore (1988), that:

“artistic products in the commercial sector can be...less innovative and distinctive but more lucrative, serving a mass market” (2006: 14).

In the community sector, there may be more room for artists to be “highly creative and innovative” (2006: 16), although



due to the informal organisation and infrastructure of many of these community outlets, this may mean that the artist works on a voluntary basis.

Markusen notes Becker's concept of art worlds (1982), which constructs a model of artistic creation as a series of relationships and negotiations rather than a single linear process (supply, production, distribution). She builds on the idea of a system of art worlds to propose that artists move between sectors more fluidly than originally thought and without realising that they are doing so.

'Crossover' takes as its starting point a series of expectations, which our interviews will explore, that artists routinely cross over for income purposes; that crossover may be sequential; it may be driven by artistic or creative goals rather than income; and that artists may seek to work in their preferred work style(s), which may be more commonly found in a particular sector.

'Crossover' finds that artists make more money working in the commercial sector in relation to the time spent there; working in the not-for-profit sector pays less money for more time spent there; and the same is true to an even greater degree for the community sector. The survey also finds that artists cross-subsidise work in the not-for-profit and community sectors with money earned from more lucrative commercial work. While 15 per cent of artists make a third or more of their income from community art, 45 per cent make no money at all in this sector. While 52 per cent of artists in the not-for-profit sector make no income from their work, 46 per cent make more than a third of their income working in this sector. In Markusen's words:

"Many artist respondents thus move among sectors to cobble together arts income" (2006: 37).

According to 'Crossover', male and older artists are more likely to earn money from commercial work than female and younger artists. Opinion is split amongst respondents as to

which sector contributes most to their artistic development – 36 per cent say commercial, 33 per cent not-for-profit and 22 per cent community.

However, the latter two rank higher than the commercial sector as the artists' second choice. Markusen concludes that the contribution that artists make to regeneration and their regional economic impact is underestimated, as their contract and non-arts work, and their work outside the cultural industries is often not considered: "nor is the work they do to stimulate innovation on the part of their suppliers who are in turn more successful" (2006: 59).

'Crossover' itself is marked by the spillover of 'skills and creations' between sectors. Its overall message is that more artists would work in more than one sector if financial concerns were not an issue. But barriers also include stereotypical attitudes toward the three sectors, including perceptions that the commercial world is only concerned with profit, the not-for-profit sector favours insiders, and the community sector funds mediocre events.

In our study, we will look at the degree to which:

- Fine arts graduates move into other fields primarily for economic reasons.
- There is movement between the commercial, publicly-subsidised and not-for-profit arts worlds.

### **4.3 Issues and the contexts for artists' working lives**

Throsby's work-preference model of artist behaviour takes as its starting point the idea that:

“workers are assumed to have a positive preference for leisure time and a negative preference or disutility for time spent working” (1994: 69).

It also accepts that artists are part of a select group of people – including academics, researchers and scientists – for whom the standard economic model does not work, and for whom satisfaction or a desire to work in their chosen field generally motivates them more than financial reward.

Citing the findings of Wassall and Alper (1992) and Filer (1986, 1990), Throsby maintains that normal human capital theory, by which formal education and experience correlate to higher income, does not apply to artists. His model of artists' human capital includes general education, arts training, experience, and importantly “the specific characteristic of the artist that could be termed creativity or talent” (2006: 2).

Robinson and Montgomery (2000) also argue that formal education does not determine the income of an artist, using their own analysis of ‘Information on Artists’ (Jeffri 1988), and the results of the labour and earnings surveys by Wassall and Alper, Filer, Throsby (1992, 1994, 1996) and Towse (1992) as evidence of an alternative to traditional human capital theory.

Throsby sees both a strong and a weak form in his work-preference model (1994: 74). Robinson and Montgomery outline the two widely discussed versions of Throsby's work preference model – first, the *strong* version:

“by which the driven artist's principal objective is to maximize the time he or she spends on art...[and] takes advantage of increased returns to non-art work to spend more time on art work.”.

And second, the *weak* version, by which:

“the artist, while receiving utility from doing art, responds on the margin to changes in art and non-art

income, substituting out of art work and into non-art work as the returns to non-art work increase" (2000: 525-26).

Towse (2004) agrees that formal education and on-the-job training are only part of the equation in artists' careers and earnings. She shifts her focus from artists' earnings and income to their training and career development, concluding that:

"human capital variables had only a very weak effect on earnings and that innate characteristics (talent and motivation) and luck...must play a considerable role in determining the earnings in the arts" (2004: 8).

Towse qualifies the weak version of Throsby's theory by pointing out that 'socialisation and professionalisation' are part of the formal higher education experience; and that for artists in particular, professionalisation involves:

"learn[ing] the ropes and networking – forming working partnerships, meeting with other artists and agents who may in future be in a position to offer work" (2004: 9).

This revised assessment of formal education as artists' human capital suggests that informal alternatives to a degree – such as prizes and awards – might be more appropriate for artists. However, given the prevalence of multiple jobholding, formal education cannot be completely discounted, as higher education qualifications (in fine art or another subject) do positively affect earnings for artists in non-arts jobs, as Filer suggested (1990).

Both Towse and Throsby pinpoint creativity as a key element within the broad categories of talent and motivation. Towse specifically likens the 'originality' of creativity to innovation and invention in science and technology, the "spark of novelty that comes to the artist 'out of nowhere' or from reworking existing ideas in new ways" (2004: 12).

The intangible spark that comes from 'nowhere' may be aligned to Bruno Frey's two types of motivation, extrinsic (or economic) and intrinsic (inner, psychic) rewards. From an economic perspective, institutional creativity produces extrinsic rewards (provided by the market or the state) and personal or individual creativity delivers intrinsic rewards, including peer recognition (Frey, 1997, 2000).

So, the ultimate dividends of an art school education may be a combination of human and social capital: artists' become more professional through interaction and practice, while the opportunity of time and space nurtures their creativity. As Towse maintains, social capital is likely to be formed 'side by side' with human capital, "and for both there is a private return to the individual that is an incentive to investment" (2004: 16).

#### **4.3.1 Artists and the boundaryless/protean career**

Bridgstock (QUT, 2005) has approached artists' careers from within the context of the 'boundaryless portfolio', or protean career, as defined by Hall (1996) and refined by Arthur (1994) and Arthur and Rousseau (1996). This portfolio worker is focused on employability rather than employment, following a flexible, non-vertical career path designed to enhance his or her human and social capital.

As Hall explains, the protean career is partly measured by psychological success, "the ability to be a continuous learner and to redirect one's life and career", which in turn motivates the individual (Hall, 1996: 6). Driven by the individual rather than an organisation, the psychological contract at the core of the 'boundaryless career' is made with the self, not [the] organisation, thereby producing a unique 'career fingerprint'.

As Arthur states, the boundaryless career is overall "the antonym of the 'bounded' or 'organisational' career"; it is independent from (as opposed to dependent on)

“traditional organisational career principles” (Arthur, 1994: 296).

Bridgstock (2005) notes that acquiring transferable skills, or ‘metacompetencies’ is important to the protean careerist, who must synthesise a series of discrete work and continuous learning experiences into a universally applicable way of working.

In her 2002 paper on employability in the creative industries, Ball has related the boundaryless career to changes in higher education and graduate employment. Noting the growing number of 21<sup>st</sup> century graduates working in small firms or as freelances (DfES 2003), Ball emphasises the competencies and components of a successful portfolio career as being particularly important for new graduates – these include problem-solving, decision-making and self-management (2002: 7). Jeffri’s survey of painters in New York supports the idea that these are familiar areas to artists: “Throughout our interviews, it became increasingly clear that problem-solving was at the core of many painters’ lives” (1991: xi).

Ball relates the ‘complex career paths’ of a number of art and design graduates to the unique working patterns of creative individuals with portfolio careers. She argues that the career path by which art and design graduates establish themselves takes longer than other professionals, yet ultimately achieves a high degree of satisfaction.

#### **4.3.2 Artists as risk-takers**

Rengers and Madden (2000) address the notion of artists as risk takers. They see psychic income as an incentive and multiple jobholding as a way of living and working. As Menger points out: “uncertainty acts not only as a substantive condition of innovation and self-achievement, but also as a lure” (1999: 541). For artistic careers, uncertainty is double-edged, attended by risk and necessary to creativity.

Along with Throsby, Rengers and Madden notice differences (or 'stylised facts') between creative and performing artists. While they have many similarities, the former are associated with 'creativity, innovation [and] topicality' while the latter are associated with 'craftsmanship [and] technical skills' (2000: 36). This creativity attends a higher rate of self-employment, high production costs and intermittent income; factors which contribute to the status of artists as risk takers. As Menger reminds us, these are not entirely negative factors; they are part of what helps to establish a successful career. By making increasingly strategic choices, artists can avoid the constraints of employment contracts, which might otherwise be a sign of stable employment (1999: 546).

Menger (1999) identifies another unique inter-relationship within artistic labour markets and careers, that of technical innovations and productivity. New technology can increase artistic production, but as with Duchamp and the introduction of the 'readymade', deskilling becomes itself another kind of artistic production (rather than a process of substitution).

Risk-taking may be involved in audiences' experiences with art as well as artistic creation; in a recent series of debates and events organised by Arts Council England (Bunting, 2007) innovation and risk together emerge as "some of the most important aspects of how people experience the arts today" (2007: 17). Artists' 'appetite for risk' produces not only new artistic work but also new ways of engaging with audiences; artistic practice is not a simple production process, but also part of an encounter with other artists and the public.

- Is there any evidence that fine arts graduates are motivated more by intrinsic than extrinsic rewards?
- What is the role of personal and social networks in career advancement and how do arts graduates view this?

- What is the role of informal learning in developing fine artists' careers?

### **Implications of the literature review**

This literature review is deliberately wide-ranging, covering detailed work on artists' working lives, studies of the wider cultural and creative industries, and the literature on innovation, particularly as it relates to the importance of tacit knowledge exchange in that process.

The work on the cultural and creative sectors reveals the paucity of research on the role of the fine arts within these wider sectors. Even where writers claim to be looking at 'the arts' and innovation (Potts, 2007), their work often focuses on creative services such as design and advertising, rather than on the arts *per se*. This exposes one of the problems of a policy approach which lumps the cultural and creative industries together, while the supporting academic literature either studies very specific industry sub-sectors (Neff, 2005; Gill, 2007) or generalises about the arts, cultural industries, creative industries or 'creative class' (Florida, 2002).

Beyond the usual plea for 'more research,' there is a specific need to better understand how parts of the cultural and creative industries fit together. The classification approaches discussed in Section 2.2 are largely policy-driven. However, such systems do not articulate mechanisms by which ideas move from one set of activities to another.

We believe that there is also a gap in the literature on artists themselves. While much of the existing research illuminates the patterns of artistic careers, their motivations and the details of their working lives (Frey 1997; Blackwell and Harvey, 1999a; Rengers and Madden, 2000), the fine arts are generally viewed as a self-contained world and the literature is rarely linked explicitly to that on the broader culture and creative sectors, let alone innovation.



An exception to this is the relatively small amount of work that looks at those with an art school training, and their influence on other areas of the economy, notably popular culture. Such work includes Simon Frith's book on art school graduates and pop music (Frith and Horne, 1987) or Michael Bracewell's recent book (Bracewell, 2007) on Roxy Music, which contains a detailed exploration of the role of art school education in producing this particular musical innovation.

However, the literature on artists does support one important finding of our survey – the degree to which these trained in the fine arts will endeavour to remain in them throughout their career (Throsby and Hollister, 2003, Aston 1999, Blackwell and Harvey, 1999a).

It has become clear, therefore, that if we are interested in how artists contribute to innovation, then our research should not only consider artists working *outside* the arts, but also how artists innovate *within* their chosen fields. In this respect, David Galenson's work (Galenson, 2006) on conceptual and experimental innovators in the arts, has been particularly helpful.

This point also brings into focus the recent debate about the need for a human capital, rather than a sectoral, support model for the arts (Cunningham, 2006). There may be more people working in creative occupations in the wider economy than in the cultural sectors (Higgs, Cunningham and Bakhshi, 2008), but without being able to assess their qualifications (not helped by the limitations of UK census data), it is difficult to say that those *trained* in particular artistic practices are increasingly opting to work outside of the arts. And where they are, the literature suggests this is more because of the difficulties in making a living in their chosen fields – or at least the desire for a more regular income and work pattern – than it is because of the positive attractions of other types of work.

It may be that those with degrees in fine arts regard their higher education as a form of vocational training; closer to a drama or music training than a generic arts or humanities education that prepares one for a wider range of careers (Gill, 2007). Such in-depth comparisons are limited by the literature, which does not often compare artists with other occupational groups; but, this is an issue we shall explore in the interviews.

The other key innovation hypotheses which we hope to test with our survey and interviews is the degree of formality or informality in both learning and work practice, and the extent of collaboration and networking. Both of these hypotheses derive partly from the innovation literature, which looks at the role of place, proximity and face-to-face interaction in promoting knowledge exchange.

Again, the notion of the 'fine artist' – whether painter, sculptor or working in another media – seems to present an alternative to the highly-networked, inter-dependent cultural worker familiar from studies of the media sectors (Randle and Culkin, 2007; Pratt 2005b). The degree to which networks matter, how they are constructed and whether they appear to differ from depictions of them in other cultural industries, is also something we shall be exploring. We will also consider the notions of 'horizontal' and 'vertical' networks (Bilton, 2007) in the art world, and the degree to which they operate simultaneously or sequentially. Of crucial importance is the degree to which they operate *outside the art world* and whether the interaction of disciplines provokes new knowledge (Crossick, 2006).

Similarly, conventional wisdom (Timms and Wright, 2007) suggests that people in the cultural sectors learn and progress through informal education, and that public policy should increasingly support an extra-curricular 'do-it-yourself' form of learning. But, the literature suggests that the distinctions between formal and informal education are sometimes over-stated – people often get informal learning from 'formal' education. Honey, Heron and Jackson (1997)

find that most of the artists they interview regard their time at art college as a 'special time' during which they dedicate a large amount of time to artistic practice, rather than to the formal content of degree courses. At the same time, this notion of formal education as 'a time to learn' is at odds with what is sometimes seen as the increasingly prescriptive content of courses and a generally instrumentalist turn with formal education.

We look forward to exploring these issues – using the results of our online questionnaire and detailed biographical interviews – in the final research report for NESTA later in the year.

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