

# STANDARD

What is the value of artists' work?

## DEVIATION

How do artists define their own labor?

### DEAR READER

What you have in your hands is a collection of thoughts, questions and tools which I hope will move you to consider the complex relationship between art and labor. My own experience has been one of steep learning curves and delicate balancing of idealism and practical realities. Public dialogue is needed in order to improve and find alternatives to the systems in place. Art can not be standardized, but as artists we can each set standards for ourselves. It is through our stand as individuals that we enable the health and survival of all artists. – Helena Keeffe

*There seems to be a growing consensus among both artists and curators that the new set of relations [emerging around project work] needs clarification, while curators are increasingly interested in asking artists to produce work in response to specific existing or constructed situations, the labor necessary to respond to those demands is often not recognized or adequately compensated. Conversely many curators committed to project development are frustrated by finding themselves in the role of producers for commercial galleries or a "service department" for artists. (Andrea Fraser, How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction, 1994)*

"There are, of course, those within this art world who disagree with the positioning of art as work or as a job; however, because the notion of art as work is so tightly bound up in what being a serious artist means, those who object to professionalization or thinking about art as work are forced to advocate not for hobby or amateur status but for total revolution (e.g. Castle 1969; Lozano 1969)." (Alison Gerber, Payment for Services: From Market to Professional Logics of Valuation in Contemporary Artmaking, 2011)

**SPECIAL CUT-OUTS:  
VOLUNTEER CURRENCY  
5 FINGERS MNEMONIC**

*We increasingly question the fact that, though we have the greatest role among all who work with exhibitions, our work is still not paid. Everyone else – directors, curators, technicians, guards, art handlers – who is a part of the work of an exhibition sees it as obvious that they should be paid for their work. Why is our work not valued in the same way? (Backman 2006)*

### THE MYTH OF THE STRUGGLING ARTIST

"You don't have to be struggling and poor to make good art. While destitution and anxiety can generate creativity, so can comfort and tranquility. You're not going to lose your inspiration because you took a day job and can suddenly afford health care. The point isn't that you should strive to make a lot of money; it's that whether you do or not is unrelated to the quality of the art you make." (Bhandari & Melber, ART/WORK, 2009)

### PAYMENT FOR ARTISTS' SERVICES

*The fair-exchange principle is one which society already acknowledges for its multitude of dealings, and is simply understood as payment for services. Everyone performing a service in our society is paid in return. The cultural basis for society is created by artists; and we are agreeing with the rest of organized society that services do in fact require payment. (Chambers 1973:38).*

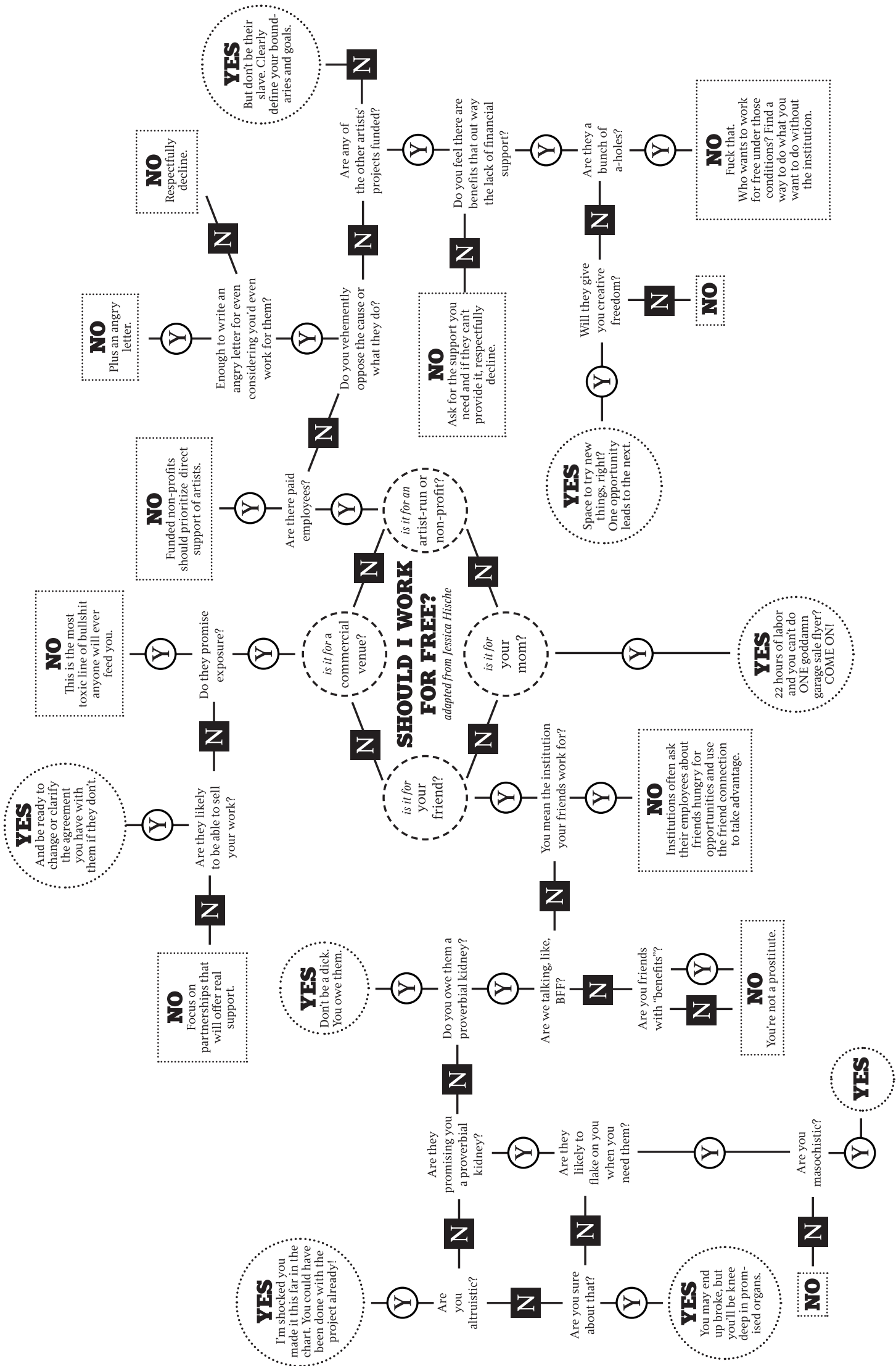
"I was invited to sit in a meeting with big funders from the Netherlands, and I was not sure why. Most people there were being funded or asking for funding, so it was kind of an invitation to apply. It made us think maybe an interesting thing to do would be to write a Call For Funders, instead of the other way around. Write the guidelines and the deadlines and say "opportunity of a lifetime". (Gabi Ngcobo, Creative Director, Center for Historical Reenactments, UC Berkeley Lecture, October 22nd, 2012)

"Artistic labor supports a multi-billion dollar industry and yet there are no standards, conventions or regulations for artist compensation. We sometimes receive artist fees if we ask for them, or they're dispensed at the discretion of the institution as compensation for the work that we're asked to provide: preparation, installation, presentation, consultation, exhibition and reproduction. That sounds a lot like charity to us." (W.A.G.E. presentation for MMK, Frankfurt, March 1, 2013)

"The assumed mutuality between the artist and the dealer, based on a shared love of cultural production, masks a set of questions about the value of art: how is it created and how is it shared? If artistic practice is caught in a catch 22 with the market on which it operates, can we think of alternative tactics or counter moves within the system? Where do conflicts emerge when trying to put this into practice? Should this relation come to an end or are there ways to build new forms of alliances between all parties involved?" (JUBILEE, Introduction for debate "The Value of Our Love, Artistic Practice and its Economic Reality," April 20th, 2013)

### LIBERATION FROM WORK

"The crash in the global economy is not only an effect of the bursting of the financial bubble. It is also and primarily an effect of the bursting of the work bubble. We have been working too much during the last five centuries, this is the simple truth. Working so much has implied an abandonment of vital social functions and a commodification of language, affections, teaching, therapy and self care. Society does not need more work, more jobs, more competition. On the contrary: we need a massive reduction in work-time, a prodigious liberation of life from the social factory, in order to re-weave the fabric of the social relation." (Bifo, The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy, 2009)



“5 FINGERS MNEMONIC”

# SHOULD I ACCEPT THIS OPPORTUNITY? 5 KEY QUESTIONS...

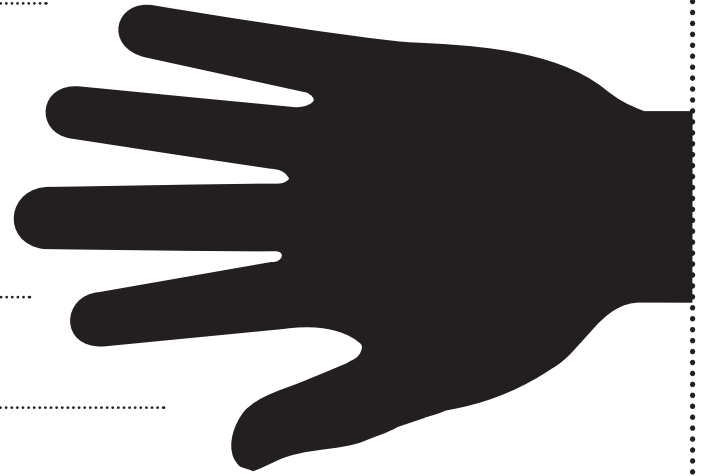
1 .....

2 .....

3 .....

4 .....

5 .....



Select 5 questions from the list below (or create your own) that will help you establish a conditional relationship to opportunities sought or given. Carry them in your wallet.

## STANDARD QUESTIONS FOR ARTISTS

### GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY...

Do I believe in what this institution does/stands for? Is this the ideal venue for this project/my work? Does my work feel alive in this context?

Does this project require funding? Am I willing to ask my friends and family to fund it? Is there a version of it I can propose if funding is not available?

Am I comfortable volunteering my time/money/energy? Is exposure compensation enough?

Does this opportunity help me

meet or get to know people I may want to work with in the future? Will it enable conversation with people I want to be in conversation with? Is this opportunity helping me reach the audience I want to reach?

What are all of the benefits of working with this institution? Am I providing a service and if so, how do I expect to be compensated?

Do I have time to do this well? Will this opportunity help me sustain myself financially? Do I need it to?

Am I clear what kind of support is being offered? Have I asked for what I need, even if it has not been offered? Who benefits from my labor?

Is there enough freedom in this opportunity? Would saying no to

this opportunity be saying yes to something else I care about more? Is this the best artworld for my work? Is it the most effective use of my time/money/energy?

Am I willing to go in to debt for this opportunity? Have I already amassed too much debt?

Am I being instrumentalized?  
Am I okay with that?

Am I happier making my living separate from making my art?

*The resources presented in this publication are the result of a semester of deep inquiry facilitated by Julia Bryan-Wilson's graduate seminar, Art and Labor, Art as Labor, at UC Berkeley. I am also indebted to the friends and colleagues who share my interest in this topic and who contributed their thoughts and concerns: Heidi de Vreis, Patricia Maloney, Packard Jennings, Amy Trachtenberg, Eleanor Hanson-Wise, Oliver Wise, Lucas Murgida, Cassie Thornton, Stijn Schiffeleers, Valerie Imus, Joseph Del Pesco and Sean Tally.*

# REQUEST FOR FUNDERS

\_\_\_\_\_ seeks funders interested in supporting \_\_\_\_\_

Funders can find current projects in production at [www.\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](http://www._____).

Priority will be given to funders who demonstrate a commitment to supporting \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. performance, socially engaged art, temporary public art)

Finalists will be selected on the following criteria:

1. Successful track record of \_\_\_\_\_
2. Demonstrated ability to effectively \_\_\_\_\_
3. Proven integrity when it comes to \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ experience is helpful but not required.

The following materials must be received by \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Mission statement including sources of revenue and contact info
2. Letter of interest

Why does this project or practice interest you?

Describe your funding priorities.

Speak specifically to how your contribution could support this project/practice.

3. Up to 15 images of projects you've funded, with project descriptions and budgets.

Up to 3 funders will be shortlisted based on qualifications.

Finalists will be asked to give a presentation followed by an interview.

\* During a recent talk at UC Berkeley, artist and curator Gabi Ngcobo suggested that she might put out a call to institutions to apply to fund her projects, rather than the other way around. Use this template to create your own RFF.

# STANDARD BIBLIOGRAPHY

Backman, Camilla, Kajsa Dahlberg, Emma Reichert, and Isabell Dahlberg. "Ett gemensamt ansvar- ett inlägg i debatten om avtal," 2006.

Ngcobo, Gabi. UC Berkeley Lecture, October 22nd, 2012

Berardi, Franco "Bifo." *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, 2009.

Sosklone, Lise. W.A.G.E. presentation for MMK, Frankfurt, March 1, 2013

Bhandari, Heather Darcy & Jonathan Melber. *ART/WORK*, 2009.

## RELATED PROJECTS & RESOURCES

ART WORK  
Temporary Services  
[www.artandwork.us](http://www.artandwork.us)

Chambers, Jack. "Encounters." *Canadian Artists' Representation National Newsletter*, 1973, 38-46.

CARFAC Fee Schedule  
[www.carcc.ca/fee\\_schedule\\_2013\\_4\\_professional.html](http://www.carcc.ca/fee_schedule_2013_4_professional.html)

Fraser, Andrea. *How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction*, from speech delivered at the Depot, Vienna, 1994.

NON-PARTICIPATION  
Lauren van Haften-Schick  
[www.laurenvhs.com/2012/10/29/non-participation-call-for-submissions](http://www.laurenvhs.com/2012/10/29/non-participation-call-for-submissions)

Gerber, Alison. *Payment for Services: From Market to Professional Logics of Valuation in Contemporary Artmaking*, 2011

W.A.G.E.  
[www.wageforwork.com](http://www.wageforwork.com)

JUBILEE. Introduction for debate "The Value of Our Love, Artistic Practice and its Economic Reality," April 20th, 2013

E-FLUX TIME/BANK  
[www.e-flux.com/timebank](http://www.e-flux.com/timebank)

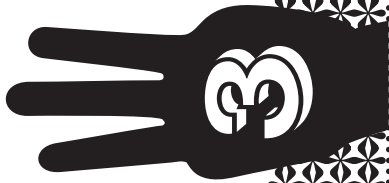
## HOURS



### FIVE HOURS VOLUNTEER LABOR

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND & THIRTEEN  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA, USA  
EXPERIMENTAL LOCAL CURRENCY

## HOURS



### THREE HOURS VOLUNTEER LABOR

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND & THIRTEEN  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA, USA  
EXPERIMENTAL LOCAL CURRENCY

## HOURS



### ONE HOUR VOLUNTEER LABOR

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND & THIRTEEN  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA, USA  
EXPERIMENTAL LOCAL CURRENCY

Use this symbolic currency to acknowledge volunteer labor. Trade it amongst friends and colleagues.

If you're working without payment, consider including your labor as an 'in-kind donation' line in your budget.

