

KAIJA RENSUJEFF

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The Status of the Artist in Finland
– Report on Employment and Income Formation
in Different Fields of Art
(English Summary)

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Kaija Rensujeff

The Status of the Artist in Finland – Report on Employment and Income Formation in Different Fields of Art

English Summary

Aims and Scope of the Research Project

The report presents the findings of a survey on the status of Finnish artists representing different art fields. The aim of the study project was to get actual and comparable information concerning demographic facts, incomes, impact of public support, and the labour market situation of artists.

The survey was carried out in 2001 by postal questionnaire. Besides demographic information the questions dealt with artistic occupation, length of career, standard of education and vocational training, labour market status, multiple job-holding, taxable income, grants, professional expenses, working hours and significance of grant income. The research covered artists from the following art forms: architecture, cinema, crafts & design, critique, dance, literature, music, photography, theatre and visual arts (painters, sculptors, graphic artists, etc.) as well as multidisciplinary artists. The classification of art forms is based on the art-form distribution used in Finnish art administration (The Arts Council of Finland (ACF)).

The 'artist' is defined in this research on the basis of membership in artists' professional associations and unions. In addition, state grant recipients were admitted to the research population, since they represent artists presently active in their artistic occupations. This group widens the research population to include non-organised artists and self-definition.

The original study population consisted of 17 919 members of 40 artists' professional associations and unions and 1 637 state grant recipients. After excluding overlapping memberships the total number of

the research population was 17 028, of which a sample of 3 627 was taken. Answers were obtained from 2 089 artists; the response rate for the whole sample of artists was 58 per cent and for the stratum of state grant recipients 71 per cent.

The sampling method used was stratified systematic sampling because of the heterogeneity of the artist population. The method ensured that artists working in various art forms and art occupations would be included. Artists were divided into 35 strata according to art form and artistic occupation. State grant recipients formed a stratum of their own. The frequencies and parameters in this report were weighted by a coefficient related to the sampling method. The following information is based on the results of the survey.

The Corps of Finnish Artists

The gender distribution of Finnish artists is relatively even, the proportion of females being 44 per cent and that of males 56 per cent. The share of females varies according to art form from 20 per cent (music) to 88 per cent (dance) (Table 1). The great majority of Finnish artists are Finnish-speakers (91 %). The share of Swedish-speakers is 7 per cent and "others" 2 per cent among all artists. The proportion of Swedish-speakers is highest in the fields of literature (14 %), theatre (12 %) and photography (11 %).

Table 1. Number of respondents, share of women and average age of artists by art form in 2000

Art form	N (respondents)	Women %	Age (avg)
Architecture	47	26 %	48
Cinema	147	36 %	40
Crafts & design	245	64 %	46
Critique	51	49 %	43
Dance	76	88 %	36
Literature	300	53 %	56
Multidisciplinary artists*	196	41 %	48
Music	422	20 %	44
Photography	77	49 %	46
Theatre	229	49 %	47
Visual arts	299	60 %	46
All artists	2 089	44 %	46

* Artists working in several fields of art. Frequencies and central tendencies are weighted except for N.

Half of all Finnish artists live in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The place of residence is not significantly dependent on art form. The centralised artist population is a common phenomenon in all fields of art

in Finland as well as in other countries. The age distribution of artists varies greatly according to art form. The share of artists under 35 years is highest in the fields of dance and cinema while the share of artists over 64 years is highest in the field of literature (authors, playwrights and fiction translators). The level of both general education and vocational training of artists is, on the average, higher than that of the whole workforce. Moreover, female artists have formal qualifications in the arts more often than male artists. All in all, the large majority (72 %) of Finnish artists have professional training in the arts.

Changes in the structure of the Finnish corps of artists are mostly connected to the share of female artists and the level of education. The number of female artists has increased, particularly in the fields of visual arts and cinema. The upward trend in the level of general education and vocational arts training is proved to continue in every art field.

Labour Market Status of Finnish Artists

The frequencies concerning the labour market status of Finnish artists working in the different forms of art are summarised in Table 2. One of the most common features among artists is that they work in several positions within the labour market during one year and the majority of them are self-employed.

Table 2. The labour market status of artists in 2000 (proportion of choices, overlapping)

Art form	Employed %	Freelance %	Free artist %	Entrepreneurs %	Other* %
Architecture	41	7	7	40	29
Cinema	15	49	13	24	15
Crafts & design	26	16	12	39	18
Critique	7	74	5	5	2
Dance	39	50	12	3	21
Literature	3	27	58	6	16
Multidisciplinary	14	35	47	19	18
Music	45	41	20	9	15
Photography	16	9	18	57	8
Theatre	41	36	10	3	21
Visual arts	11	17	78	6	22
All artists	29	29	28	18	19

* Unemployed, pension, etc.
Frequencies are weighted.

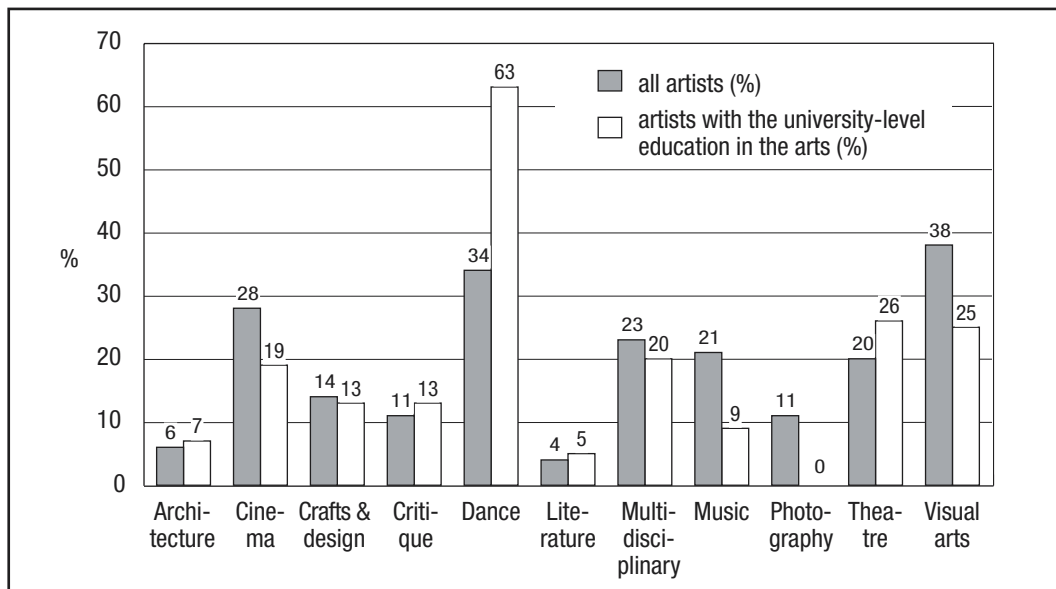
Working as an employee (permanent or fixed-term) is typical for performing artists (e.g. musicians, actors). In the field of the theatre, even

if changes have taken place, the proportion of those with an employment contract is still over 40 per cent. The proportion of so-called free artists (those who work without an employment contract or commission, but are not entrepreneurs either) is highest among visual artists. In the fields of critique (74 %), dance (50 %) and cinema (49 %) the share of freelancers is relatively high.

The proportion of entrepreneurs among artists is not particularly high (18 %), but slightly higher than among the whole workforce in Finland (12 % in 2000).⁵³ Photographers (57 %), architects (40 %) and artists in the field of crafts and design (39 %) work more often as entrepreneurs. In photography, the high proportion of entrepreneurs in Finland is explained by the fact that the research population includes members of The Finnish Photographers' Association (often entrepreneurs in their own photo shops) and members of The Finnish Advertising Photographers in addition to The Union of Artist Photographers.

In total, 37 per cent of all artists work exclusively in their artistic occupations. The majority of artists (62 %) have arts-related work and almost one third (31 %) non-arts work.

Figure 1. Unemployment among artists by art form 2000* (%)



* The question concerned unemployment at some point during year 2000 regardless of the length of unemployment. Frequencies are weighted.

Compared with the general unemployment rate in Finland (10 – 13 %) ⁵⁴, the proportion of unemployed is relatively high in almost every field of art (Figure 1). According to these findings, the proportion of unemployed is highest among visual artists (38 %) and dance artists (34 %). In those fields artists work as freelancers (dance) and as free artists (visual art), which causes the instability in these labour markets. Multiple job-holding is also common in these fields and the level of education does not have necessarily a positive effect on employment.

Income Level and Sources

The income level of artists varies strongly between and also within art forms. Significant factors affecting the level of income proved to be the art form, gender, and the labour market status. In addition to these, age also has an influence on the level of earnings. On the other hand, the effect of training on income level is not very significant, contrary to the other occupational sectors. Only higher level arts education and other university level training have a slightly positive effect on income.

In Finland and the other Nordic countries, grants are an essential part of artists' working conditions. Grant income is principally tax-free in Finland. The impact of grants on artists' income formation was examined in this study by constructing a category of 'total income'. Constructed total income (CTI) includes both taxable income and tax-free grants. In this report, artists' standard of income is described by using the categories of *constructed total income*, *total taxable income*, *income from artistic work* and *grant income* (Figure 3).

The proportion of grant recipients ⁵⁵ among artists was 27 per cent in 2000. The highest shares of grant recipients are in the fields of literature (79 %) and visual arts (44 %). According to this data, grants are an essential part of income, especially in literature, visual arts, cinema and photography. In these fields, grants seem to balance the income level more than in the other forms of art and reduce the need to raise taxable income.

As can be seen from figure 3, tax-free grants have an effect on the total income level of certain art forms. This is illustrated by the fact that the income sequence of art forms changes when grants are included in CTI. The change concerning income level has been more notable in the field of literature (approximate values of median taxable income 16 820 € and median CTI 24 560 €) than in the other art fields.

The main income sources of artists are artistic and arts-related work. On the average, the proportion of artistic income of total taxable

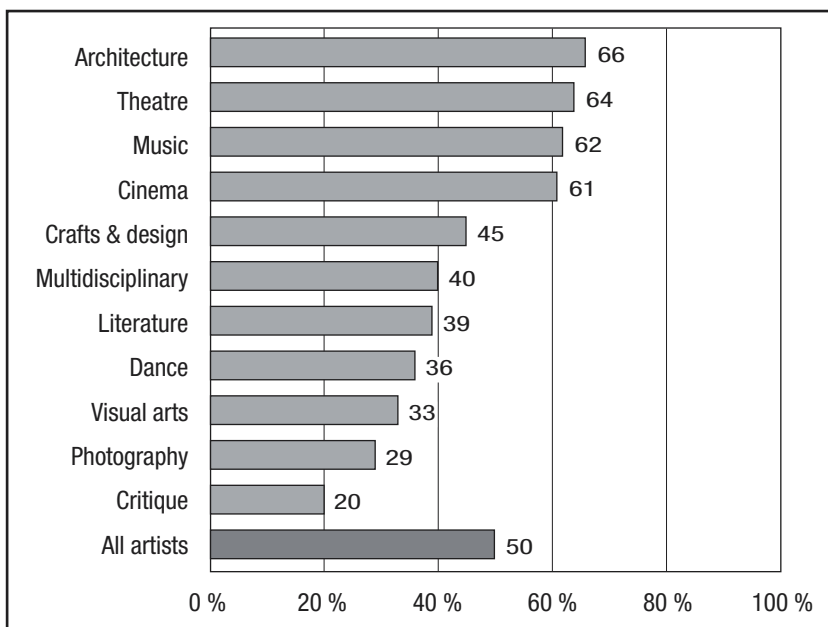
54 The general unemployment rate in 2000 varies depending on source, Statistics Finland, Labour Force Survey: 10 %, Ministry of Labour: 13 %.
www.tilastokeskus.fi/tk/tp/tasku/taskus_tyuelama.html 22.5.2002.
www.mol.fi/katsaukset/tils200012.htm 22.5.2002.

55 All grant schemes and grant awarding bodies (state, municipal, and foundations) included.

income (income subject to taxation) is about 50 %. Variation across the art forms is significant. The proportion of artistic income is highest among artists in the fields of architecture (66 %), theatre (64 %), music (62 %) and cinema (61 %). This data also verified a strong dependence between the labour market status and the share of artistic income; the more stable the labour market status (i.e. employment contracts, employer institutions), the higher the proportion of artistic income (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

Compared to the findings of earlier studies from the 1980s and 1990s, this data shows a decline in the income level of certain art fields. These are, for example, literature, music and theatre. In contrast, the level of earnings in cinema, photography and visual arts has increased to some extent. However, visual artists still have a lower income level than those in the other fields of art (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Share of taxable artistic income of total taxable income by art form in 2000



Frequencies are weighted.

When the income level of all Finnish artists (median CTI 23 550 €) is compared to other income recipients (mean 18 560 €), the situation seems to be relatively good, i.e. the income level of artists is almost the same as or higher than that of other income recipients. However, when assessing the income level of artists, the differences between art forms should be kept in mind. Furthermore, the comparison of the incomes of artists with the income level of all salaried employees (median 24 400 €) with full-time work showed the earnings of artists to be

lower. The difference in income level between artists and other groups increases even more when academic graduates (median 36 420 €) are taken as a comparison group. The estimate and comparison of the income levels become more complicated if occupational expenses are taken into consideration. Artists usually have more expenses connected to their professional activities than average wage earners. The expenses of the artistic profession include materials, equipment, union fees, rent for work space, taxes, insurances and pension plans.

According to this study, one of the changes in the status of artists has been the widening income gap between genders. In 1992, artists' earnings were 76 per cent of men's, but in 2000 they proved to be even lower (72 %). Currently, the income gap between women and men is actually wider among artists than among all salaried employees in Finland.

* * *

Instability of employment, relatively low income level, multiple job-holding and several income sources characterise the working life of most Finnish artists. This research indicates that both individual and (artistic) occupational variations are significant. The average parameters (medians and means) show that a very small minority of artists have high incomes. Artists working in the fields of visual art, dance and photography occupy the lowest position in the income hierarchy. Artists, on the average, earn less in total than other comparable professionals, yet they work about the same amount of time or more.

The share of artists working exclusively in their artistic occupations has increased. Whether this change is a consequence of better economic potential in the arts or an expansion of the definition of artistic work cannot be answered on the basis of this data. The majority of artists still have arts-related work and one third of them have non-arts work. On the average, artists receive half of their taxable income from artistic work and another half from arts-related and /or non-arts work and other sources (pensions, etc.).

The unstable labour market has become permanent, also in those fields of arts with a relatively stable situation earlier (theatre, music, etc.). For example, unemployment among actors and other artists in theatres has grown considerably during the last decade. This development has not been so intense for self-employed artists.

The study confirms the heterogeneity of the Finnish corps of artists in regard to incomes, employment and dependence on public support. This heterogeneity also needs to be taken into account in policies regarding the arts. In sum, arts policy measures (i.e. grants) have not lost their importance. On the contrary, because of the more insecure labour markets, the number of artists calling for public support and policy actions may grow in the future.

Figure 3. Total taxable income (median €), constructed total income (median €), grants (median €) and income from artistic work (median €) by art form

