

Making a living as an artist: More complex than an hourly wage

This document is intended to outline the complex nature of income for visual, media, and craft artists. While we are directly addressing these disciplines, we recognize that this outline can be applied to artists across all disciplines.

Primarily self-employed, visual, media, and craft artists derive income through diverse revenue streams. It is extremely rare for an artist to have only one source of revenue, as rarely does a single source provide enough income. It is a common practice for artists to perform a number of roles, including but not limited to: creation, sales, instruction, mentorship, consultancy, artist talks, curation, writing, and working for art institutions. This leads to a mixture of royalties and fees paid, sales, and wages from additional part-time jobs, such as teaching in universities or working for galleries.

The following chart breaks down a variety of the income streams that feed into a single career in craft, or visual and media arts.

Income Types		Description	Timeline of Payment
Retail Sales*	Consignment	Artists are paid a percentage of the retail value for their work that sells in shops and galleries. Typically this ranges from a 40 - 60 to 50 - 50 ratio with the hosting institution. Work is only paid for if sold.	30 - 60 days after sale
	Wholesale	Artists are paid in full for their work, which is then sold at a premium with a shop or gallery.	Percentage upon order and balance on delivery, or payment in full within 30 days upon delivery
	Festivals/Markets	Artists sell their work directly to the public during special event-based activities such as summer festivals, holiday sales, or pop-up venues.	Immediate during sale
	Online Sales	Artists may sell their work directly to the public through their own online shop, social media platforms, and/or third party e-commerce websites, like Etsy and Shopify. Online sales can also be handled through wholesale and consignment relationships with galleries and shops.	Immediate for direct to customer sales, otherwise see wholesale terms.
	Commissions	Artists are commissioned to create custom pieces, from small pieces of jewellery, to a one-of-a-kind portrait, or large-scale architectural installations. There are multiple stages to the development of custom work, from design throughout production.	Depending on the scale and complexity, the project may include a deposit to offset costs of materials and labour. Final payment issued upon completion.

	<i>*It is important to know that revenue from sales is not equivalent to income. Income is derived once associated cost of sales, such as commission payments, materials, labour and overhead, is deducted from gross revenue.</i>		
Artist Royalties and Fees	Exhibition Royalties	Often in alignment with CARFAC-RAAV's Fee Schedule, artists are paid a flat rate for the presentation of their work in galleries and public spaces. This is a royalty for the presentation, unrelated to sales. Presentations may be presented on-site or online.	Ranges from full royalty paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
	Reproduction Royalties	Often in alignment with CARFAC-RAAV's Fee Schedule, artists are paid for the reproduction of their work, whether in print or online, in catalogues or in advertising, etc.	Ranges from full royalty paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
	Professional Service Fees	Often in alignment with CARFAC-RAAV's Fee Schedule, artists are paid to give lectures, participate in panel discussions, provide their expertise as a juror or consultant, for the publication of written work, or preparation and installation of artworks on-site, etc. (These fees are not royalties. Artists may also receive fees for work as an independent curator, which are not royalties.)	Ranges from full fee paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
Teaching	Self-run Courses	Artists often design, host, teach, and administer courses for amateurs and professionals alike, for short- and long-term courses, such as a weekend-long course or weekly night class. These courses range in content and material depending on their design. Artists often provide the location, studio equipment and tools, materials, and instruction.	Course and material fees collected upon registration
	Guest Instruction / Demonstration	Artists are regularly contracted to design, host and teach courses on behalf of arts organizations such as galleries, guilds, co-ops, and councils. Sometimes this includes no-cost, drop-in, hands-on instruction with the public, pre-registered classes with paying participants, or demonstration-based performances of the artist's skills where they interact with the audience but do not teach hands-on.	Ranges from full fee paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
	Educational Institution Instructor	Artists teach an extremely wide variety of courses at universities, colleges, CEGEPs, and private schools across Canada. This may include part- or full-time instructors in arts programs at the instructor or professor level, guest lecturing, workshop/demonstration style courses, or academic programs.	Ranges from a typical salary or per/hour rate on an institutions payroll to one-off fees paid at or 30-60 days after courses are complete
Side-gigs	Arts Related	Artists often take on part-time or temporary arts positions or contracts with galleries, schools, or any number of institutions. This may include part-time payrolled positions (such as docents at an art gallery, or childrens' art program instructors).	Typically paid on salary or per/hour rate from an institutions payroll
	Non-Arts	These positions could cover any part-time, full-time positions, contract, or one-off income sources, in any sector.	Typically paid on salary or per/hour rate from an institution's payroll or on a contract basis.

Examples:

1) David is a luthier - an artist who makes or repairs stringed instruments such as cellos, violins, guitars, mandolins, dulcimers and banjos. His income is derived from:

- Running a guitar-making school which is a licensed Private Vocational School (including residential facilities for students) offered four times a year for seven weeks;
- Selling luthier supplies, materials and finished instruments from his online store and brick and mortar shop;
- Building and repairing guitars and other stringed instruments;
- Accepting commissions;
- Sales at markets, festivals and conferences; and
- Artist fees for leading workshops and lectures throughout the world.
- David is also a jeweller and musician, deriving income from these related artistic practices.

2) Samira is a performance artist and painter. She works part-time as an interpreter at an art museum, and she supplements that income from her artistic practice in several ways:

- She may participate in one or two exhibitions (solo or group) every year at an artist-run centre in her city or region. Those exhibitions are usually 2 or 3 months long, and she is paid exhibition royalties.
- She sometimes participates in festivals with performance programming, most of which are organized every other year. If it's in Canada, she is paid a royalty, but in most other countries, she is not compensated and she applies for grants to pay her travel costs.
- She is not represented by a commercial gallery, but she occasionally sells her paintings or reproductions of them at pop-up markets.
- She is sometimes paid to give workshops or artist talks.

3) Robin is an independent filmmaker who also works part-time at a film production centre. They are sometimes also compensated in the following ways:

- Grants to produce films, which may or may not include a budget for living expenses;
- A film distributor submits their work to festivals, and if accepted, royalties are paid;
- Teaching one course per semester at a university as a sessional instructor;
- Occasionally accepting contracts as a film editor.

This document was originally prepared in partnership between the Canadian Crafts Federation/Fédération canadienne des métiers d'art Executive Director, Maegen Black, and the Saskatchewan Craft Council Executive Director, Carmen Milenkovic, on behalf of the CCF/FCMA's national membership. The document was amended and expanded to incorporate visual arts and media arts disciplines in partnership with the CARFAC's Executive Director, April Britski, and Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA) National Director, Emmanuel Madan.

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