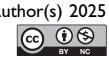
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Cultural labour, income support, and the welfare state: Non-arts funding and funding the arts

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Abstract

Cultural labour intersects with other forms of labour, such as immaterial and affective labour. However, it is distinct from these in its specific goal of producing 'culture.' Furthermore, the conditions necessary for cultural labour to thrive resemble that which Pierre Bourdieu referred to as *skholè*, unimpeded time to pursue one's work. Yet the problem of resourcing this labour and equitably funding it remains a unique issue.

This paper will examine cultural labour and issues of equity in the contemporary Australian context, providing an overview of how artists have used arts and non-arts funding to resource their labour. Through a discussion of Australian cultural policy, this paper identifies key insufficiencies of project-based grant funding. By acknowledging the policy/practice gap in Australian cultural policy, the paper concludes that an understanding of the need to resource *skholè* effectively is necessary if we are to expect equitable access to and output of cultural labour practices.

Keywords

cultural labour, arts funding, creative and cultural industries

Introduction

This paper will consider the ways in which practising artists resource their labour using various income sources, including a combination of grants, public subsidies, welfare, income support and more, and the effect this has on labour conditions and issues of

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equity within the arts, creative and cultural industries.[1] Exploring an Australian context, the article demonstrates how artists have historically pieced their incomes together from a variety of sources, and how such inequitable and inconsistent income arrangements have become further entrenched with the emergence of the creative industries as a dominant policy object, narrative, rhetorical device and conglomeration of diverse cultural and creative sectors (Banks & O'Connor, 2017; Caust, 2003; McRobbie, 2002; Throsby, 2001). Through a comparison of contemporary Australian cultural policy with other international and historical initiatives, this paper identifies key insufficiencies and inadequacies of project-based and competitive grant funding in effectively supporting cultural labour. The authors draw on their lived experience as a practising theatre-maker and a former musician, as well as the literature on cultural labour and income support, to consider the nature of making a livelihood in the arts and creative sectors in modern Australia. Alongside this, the paper also considers alternative models for arts funding and the role of the state and cultural policy in guiding these funding models.

The paper's central question relates to cultural labour and how it is resourced in a contemporary Australian context. The core argument of the paper is that artists require both resources – equipment, capital and means of production – as well as unmitigated time, which we define here as *skholè*, to perform cultural labour. Specific to the broader Australian cultural policy context and the historical role of the Australian Council for the Arts (now Creative Australia) in providing arts funding, the paper takes a comparative case study approach. Our methodology is one of textual and policy analysis, informed by reflective ethnography and lived experience. Albeit not empirical, our methodological approach is sociological in nature as it is grounded in the material realities of Australian artists as reported in much of the recent literature on contemporary arts work in Australia. Following an initial summary of the academic literature that seeks to characterize cultural labour, this paper asks whether definitions and understandings of cultural labour are sufficient for contemporary artists, especially in so far as current policy initiatives can equitably resource cultural labour. To answer this question, the paper critically analyses historical and contemporary cultural policy approaches in Australia to paint a picture of the current policy landscape.

The paper begins with a discussion of cultural labour and/or creative labour and its definitions throughout the literature. It continues by defining and exploring the concept of *skholè* as fundamental to the process of cultural labour. After centring the importance of *skholè* to the labour of artists, the paper goes on to explore the practicalities of both historical and contemporary policy initiatives from both national and global perspectives, interrogating their effectiveness in resourcing cultural labour. Mark Banks (2023) concept of 'contributive justice' is used as a theoretical lens through which to analyse cultural policy approaches through a public good perspective, and is utilized to justify alternative funding support models.

Due to limitations of scope, only federal Australian cultural policy funding initiatives are explored to present a generalized view of the Australian policy landscape. Although many local funding bodies are influenced by national campaigns and the authors acknowledge the significance of local and state policy funding initiatives (as each Australian state and local government area has a diversity of funding measures available to artists), a

national perspective is presented here for the sake of clarity and to avoid jurisdictional confusion.

The insecurity and instability of work in the arts and cultural sector has been explored across a broad range of disciplines, such as sociology (Alacovska, 2019; Threadgold, 2018), media and cultural studies (Banks & O'Connor, 2017; Caust, 2003; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013) and cultural economics (Banks, 2017; Throsby, 2001). This insecurity persists despite many governments and industry stakeholders framing these sectors as areas of economic growth (Sigurdardottir & Candi, 2019), particularly under the guise of the 'creative and cultural industries' narrative beginning in the United Kingdom (and Australia) in the 1990s (Banks & O'Connor, 2017). Apart from the United States, which retains considerable market power across many of the so-called creative industries, the 'creative and cultural industries' narrative has influenced a great degree of arts and cultural policy, with Australian policymakers performing a key role in popularizing it.[2] Such a propensity for this type of framing at a time when work in the arts and cultural sector has become increasingly fraught reveals a substantial tension between arts and cultural policy responses and the lived experience of artists' regarding their capacity to resource their labour (Pennington & Eltham, 2021; Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017). This paper explores these tensions, with a focus on the way in which artists piece together their incomes and 'buy' time for creative/cultural production in the absence of increasingly scarce institutional and government support; what we term the 'policy/practice gap.'

Central to these gaps, tensions and our argument is a mis/understanding of cultural labour throughout contemporary Australian cultural and arts funding policy, which often seeks to fund project costs rather than the cost of creative labour/cultural labour itself. This paper will draw on the literature on cultural labour and creative labour, discussing the means of cultural production, its relationship with time as a resource specific to cultural production and how Pierre Bourdieu's definition of *skholè* can help to explain this relationship further. Finally, we consider how these factors interact with both arts and non-arts funding, and artist's capacity to sustain a livelihood.

'Cultural' or 'creative' labour

Work in the arts, cultural sector or so-called 'creative' industries is commonly viewed, from a positive perspective, as desirable because it supposedly offers less alienating forms of work (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009, p. 417), is characterized by aesthetic and professional autonomy (Beirne et al., 2017), a less formal and hierarchical work environment than traditional employment (Lampel & Germain, 2016) and greater levels of 'social prestige' (Banks, 2017). Alternatively, many argue that the reality of creative work is one marked by insecurity, high levels of (self)exploitation and the corrosion of work–life demarcations (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Blair, 2009; Luckman, 2017). Indeed, most research on cultural labour has emphasized participants' strong commitment to and self-identification with work, the means of cultural production and the products of their cultural labour, while also demonstrating how such commitment and identification often underpins exploitation (Banks, 2023; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013; McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 1999).

Work in the creative sector – otherwise defined as 'cultural' or 'creative' labour – has often been framed in terms of various descriptions of labour, specifically 'hope' or 'aspirational' labour (Duffy, 2016; Mackenzie & McKinlay, 2021). Such terminology stems from research which demonstrates that much arts practice is done in the hope of future, rather than immediate, financial recompense. Sociologist of music Simon Frith (2017, p. 115) makes the point that this serves the interests of capital directly, as it disempowers cultural workers and their capacity to advocate for better pay and conditions. This is echoed by Mark Banks (2007, p. 43) in his work on the pervasion of self-exploitation throughout the cultural sector.

Cultural labour also intersects with other forms of labour, such as 'immaterial' and 'affective' labour (Gill & Pratt, 2008). However, it is distinct from these broader definitions, which also include care work and other types of historically exploited labour, whereas cultural labour or creative labour has a specific goal of producing 'culture.' We refer here to Raymond Williams iconic three definitions of culture, specifically his third definition of culture as an 'independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (Williams, 1976, p. 90). As Williams states, 'this seems often now the term's most widespread use: culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre, and film. A Ministry of Culture refers to these specific activities, sometimes with the addition of philosophy, scholarship, history' (Williams, 1976, p. 90).

Within the context of this paper, 'cultural labour' (Patel, 2020), 'creative labour' (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013) or 'cultural work' (Banks, 2007) as it is otherwise defined in the literature, refers to the material production of works of intellectual and artistic activity as defined by Williams (1976). Hesmondhalgh and Baker's definition of 'creative labour' is also illustrative in this context:

> [W]e use the term 'creative labour'… to refer to those jobs, centred on the activity of symbol-making, which are to be found in large numbers in the cultural industries. Such work exists in other sectors, but only in the cultural industries is the primary aim of businesses to make profit from such activity, and this raises important issues about tensions and contradictions between economics and culture, creativity and commerce' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2013, p. 9).

However, such definitions of this type of work, although providing context, do not necessarily give us a fix on what cultural labour or creative labour *is*. That is, what the material and productive processes of cultural labour/creative labour require, how they are constituted, and what they produce.[3]

It is important to note that cultural labour is never homogeneous, and that the 'tensions and contradictions between economics and culture, creativity and commerce' are organizationally and industrially specific and need to be identified when speaking of cultural or creative labour (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013, p. 9). Indeed, the effective funding and resourcing of this type of labour is a particularly unique problem (Caust, 2018) and is inherently political. Cultural labour is heterogeneous and describes many styles of 'work.' It is both: (a) creative conception, that is, the individual or collective work of generating an original piece of art (e.g., writing a piece of music); and (b) creative

reproduction, that is, the reproduction of that art by skilled cultural/creative workers (e.g., performing that piece of music). This limits the potential for a 'one-size-fits-all' policy model to suit all creative practices and types of cultural production.

The free market, although effective in its commodification and commercial valuation of some types of creative and cultural products, is also not wholly sufficient to compensate for the role that culture plays as a 'public good' (O'Connor, 2024), which is why cultural production has historically been an object of state subsidy and public support (Caust, 2003). Such public support and subsidies have persisted despite the disruption of the 'creative industries' relatively neoliberal policy ideal (Banks & O'Connor, 2017; McRobbie, 2002), and the commercial viability of many creative sectors. Therefore, a nuanced understanding of how the labour of cultural and creative workers is resourced is still warranted.

Despite its considerable heterogeneity and disputes surrounding its precise definition, it is perhaps most useful to think of 'creative labour/cultural labour/work' in terms of how the various practices that constitute it are resourced. A painter needs paints, a studio space to experiment within and canvas to explore. Musicians need instruments and some sort of training. Whether self-taught or trained via more formal means, both require the investment of time and often capital. Video game designers need both software and hardware; dancers require specialist footwear and studio space; and writers desire an amenable space, writing materials, and often access to resources for research purposes. Whether you are a graphic designer or a classical musician, all creative labour needs to be resourced, which involves an initial and often ongoing outlay of either time, capital, or both. Therefore, any policy or funding model that seeks to resource arts and cultural labour broadly needs to take both its heterogeneity and its required resources into account.

What we can identify from this as being specific to cultural labour is unmitigated and unimpeded time to pursue one's work, as well as the tools and space to do it; the means of cultural production. In an academic context, cultural labour or creative labour has certain elements in common with writing and research, or the 'scholastic point of view' as Pierre Bourdieu (1990) might term it. Specifically, academic labour and cultural labour both rely on elements of the concept of *skholè* (Bourdieu, 1990).

Skholè, time and the means of cultural production

As it is defined by Bourdieu (1990), *skholè* refers to the leisured time that scholars and researchers have in which to explore new ideas and points of inquiry. Derived from the Greek for school, it implies spare time, leisure, rest, ease, idleness and learned discussion. In his 1989 lecture on 'the scholastic point of view,' Bourdieu quotes Plato in reference to *skholè as* 'to play seriously' (Plato, 1973; as cited in Bourdieu, 1990, p. 381). Much like 'the scholastic point of view,' the 'artistic perspective' requires time for reflection and engagement with questions of meaning. However, also like the academic experience, cultural labour is work; hard work, skilled work, difficult work, and any leisured time for reflection and thought is followed by the making, the doing, the work.

We use the term *skholè* here to refer to the intangible, non-material elements of cultural production to draw attention to the specific role of time within cultural labour

and the production of cultural objects. A similar term might be Declan Long's (2022) 'legitimate idleness,' although *skholè* evokes both a more playful and more productive state of being. While cultural production is dependent on certain tangible means – equipment, specific materials, physical space, capital, additional skilled labour, etc. – the intangible, non-material means of cultural production (i.e., the talent, training and time needed to carry out cultural production) is dependent on a confluence of factors. These factors are increasingly difficult to arrange and access for young and/or emerging artists, especially in the current era of late-modern capitalism (Hesmondhalgh, 2016; Luckman, 2020; Standing, 2011) where work and labour in the creative and cultural sectors is increasingly precarious and insecure. As a result, many practitioners must piece together their incomes from multiple, disparate sources while also finding time to engage in their creative practice, that is, to participate in and practise *skholè*.

Indeed, when much of the research and development component of cultural labour – what might otherwise be referred to as 'pre-production' – is unpaid, finding time for it between paid work, caring responsibilities, maintaining a social life and meeting day-to-day essentials becomes exceedingly difficult for young and/or emerging artists in particular, as this cohort suffers from exacerbated financial and cost-of-living pressures (Pennington & Eltham, 2021). Such difficulties are compounded if artists are from lower socio-economic backgrounds, are new migrants, or are faced with other structural/systemic barriers (Banks, 2017, 2023). As Bourdieu implicitly frames it, *skholè*, and likewise much of the 'legitimate idleness' associated with the conceptual stage of cultural labour, is therefore an object and product of privilege.

To make engagement in such a practice more equitable and to create further opportunities for a diversity of cultural producers, policy-makers and other state actors must play a proactive role in creating a level playing field (Banks, 2017; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1980).[4] This is because without organized labour (i.e., strong trade unions, professional associations, etc.) or broader systems aimed at reclaiming income and power for those producing cultural work, assisted by the political and legal means by which to effectively do so, many artists are left atomized and unable to bargain for better wages and conditions on their own (Lei, 2023; McRobbie, 2002; Pennington & Eltham, 2021). It was this dilemma of competing interests – between the social and cultural role of arts and culture as a public good (Meyrick & Barnett, 2021; O'Connor, 2024) and its commercial viability as a commodity (Caust, 2010; McRobbie, 2002) – that provoked the founding of arts councils and ministries to militate against the worst excesses and neglect of the market in many of the Global North's fledgling social democracies following World War Two (Upchurch, 2016).

Cultural policy, the welfare state and public arts funding were key outcomes of the post-war consensus, and the ripples of that period still exert a significant influence over cultural policy today. However, the way in which cultural policy identifies, defines, and thus seeks to resource artists has always been shaped by the politics of the day (Caust, 2010, 2003; Hands, 2020; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013). In contemporary and particularly Australian cultural policy settings, this has led to a significant gap between the labour practices of creative and cultural workers, and how this work and

its constituent professions are defined within the policy settings designed to support such labour (Pennington & Eltham, 2021; Stevenson, 2020).

Funding the arts

Public support and funding for the arts has become further marginalized throughout the creative industries-era, which has primarily sought to commodify and/or privatize cultural labour for commercial purposes (Banks & O'Connor, 2017; McRobbie, 2002). Framing culture as an 'industry' also implies that all creative work is driven by economic models and that those who work in the so-called creative industries are therefore likely to, or aspire to, succeed financially, and that ideals of success in the creative industries are always economic. Funding bodies are complicit in these falsehoods by adopting the language and framing of this ideology (Caust, 2010). Hence, cultural workers are ill-served by governments and agencies who are meant to be helping them, given their constant framing of the cultural sector in primarily economic terms.

Despite this, funding the arts remains a vital function of arts councils, cultural ministries, philanthropic agencies and other institutions that seek to resource and support arts and culture as a public good (Meyrick & Barnett, 2021; O'Connor, 2024; Upchurch, 2016). Inherent within a public good argument for the arts is the notion that products of cultural labour are good for society and democracy, contributing to social cohesion and providing a common cultural vernacular that can emphasize ideas of both nationhood and multiculturalism, often simultaneously. Such a public good argument can also be used to support nationalist or other ideological sentiments, and Caust identifies four primary models for public arts funding that prioritize different political agendas, ranging from the 'hands-off' philanthropic tax subsidy approach popularized in the United States, to the state-sponsored propaganda model utilized by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Caust, 2018, p. 11). Regardless of the model and jurisdiction, the problem of public funding for the arts remains a political football for most governments, and each has multiple modes of delivery for such support, all of which vary in their effectiveness and significance (Caust, 2003; Hands, 2020; Stevenson, 2020).

Australian cultural policy and the policy/practice gap

The Australian arts and cultural sector have a complex relationship with government funding, with many firms, companies and artists in the sector relying on government grants and investment for financial survival (Caust, 2010; Hands, 2020; Milne, 2004). Most contemporary independent Australian artists, small-to-medium and even large organizations rely on the acquisition of grants, fellowships and other public revenue sources for at least part of their funding (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017; Milne, 2004). However, while most artists working both independently and in larger companies are reliant on some form of subsidy to survive, this support has not maintained itself over time.[5]

This is further emphasized by the lack of successful arts funding applications making their way into the sector. For example, of the 4065 applications received by the Australia

Council for the Arts in 2018–2019, only 587 were successful, a success rate of just 14% (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 42). Furthermore, Pennington and Eltham describe an overwhelming bias towards larger arts organizations where the 'funding does not easily trickle down to workers in the sector' (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 42). However, even for larger established companies, funding is subject to the whim of cultural policy decision-making (Watts, 2019; ArtsHub, 2019). In 2020, the Australian arts community expressed shock when the Australia Council for the Arts announced that only 95 companies would be supported by the 'Four Year Investment for Organisations' grant programme, down from 128 in 2016 (Watts, 2023). Of those who were successful, many received a further blow with the announcement that their funding may be reduced by up to 70% (Watts, 2023). Companies such as Restless Dance Theatre have since had their funding reinstated, though not without jobs already being cut (Smith, 2021), alongside the stress of needing to 'plan for projects that we may not know will go ahead' (Smith, 2021).

This increasing defunding of the arts was somewhat reversed in 2023 when the reinstatement of a Labor government saw the release of the first national policy document in a decade, *Revive*, which was received with optimism from the sector. *Revive* has since acknowledged the effects of a 'constrained' (Smith, 2021) arts sector following the funding cuts of the previous Liberal–National coalition government, and the need to reinstate an 'arm's length' (Australian Government, 2023, p. 67) government funding approach that is not 'designed with a preference for decisions on funding to be made by the minister of the day' (Australian Government, 2023, p. 67). However, while the reinstatement of much of the 2020 funding cuts has seen companies such as Restless Dance Theatre recover, other companies are still left without the support 'crucial to keeping [their] doors open' (Keen, 2023).

While it is early days for *Revive*, it remains to be seen whether this policy can fully support the necessary conditions for cultural labour, primarily the pursuit of *skholè*. Furthermore, while *Revive* centres the importance of the artist in its policy recommendations 'supporting the artist as worker' (Australian Government, 2023, p. 18) and classifying 'artistic and cultural work [as a] professional activity' (Australian Government, 2023, p. 53), it also contradicts itself by characterizing employment in the arts as 'seasonal', 'ad hoc', 'short-term', 'intermittent' and having 'insecure working arrangements' (Australian Government, 2023, p. 53). While the *Revive* policy acknowledges the importance of classifying artists' work *as* 'real work,' there remains a distinct lack of clarification around how arts labour models *should* be characterized. Artists mentioned in the policy (Australian Government, 2023) are alternatively classified as 'creative workers' (Australian Government, 2023, pp. 5, 7, 52, 54, 82, 101), 'workers' (Australian Government, 2023, pp. 6, 7, 13, 14, 17, 18, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 85, 101), 'cultural workers' (Australian Government, 2023, pp. 25, 53) and 'professionals' (Australian Government, 2023 pp. 26, 48, 52, 53, 54, 62, 69, 77, 85, 92, 94, 101, 104) with the main throughline being an understanding that the arts are distinctly *difficult* to characterize. Therefore, while there may be a consensus around the idea that the creative arts are a form of 'work,' the *status* of this work is rather more difficult to define and has led to the current reality where 'the result is often if not confusion [then]

certainly conflation' (Stevenson, 2020, p. 122). The *Revive* policy itself concedes that it is only a 'beginning framework for how to achieve safe and sustainable employment practices in the creative industries' (Australian Government, 2023, p. 14). However, the importance of clarifying more effectively what kind of work we are talking about in cultural policy is imperative to ensuring that artists receive the right kind of support.

The impact of misinterpretations of artists' working environments was brought into stark illumination during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency response. Explored in *Creativity in Crisis* (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 2), a mid-pandemic economic report conducted by 'independent public policy think tank' The Australia Institute, the report found that:

> Little of the government's emergency funding has reached small and medium arts enterprises (which generate the majority of arts sector activity), with support for individual artists and cultural workers left to JobKeeper (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 33).[6]

That the emergency funds were used to continue to support larger institutions rather than individual artists or medium level organizations represents a key misunderstanding by policy-makers regarding the working lives of Australian artists. *Creativity in Crisis* cites a 2020 National Association for the Visual Arts study that found that 'most of Australia's 50,000 professional artists were *not* covered by JobKeeper, due to either their casual working arrangements or their employers being unable to qualify under the eligibility criteria' (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 35, emphasis our own). In miscategorizing the working lives of artists, 'many arts and entertainment sector workers were left out of national support measures because policy-makers did not acknowledge the reality of work relationships in the sector' (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 36).

The gap between the rhetoric of cultural policy and the labour practices of arts and cultural workers reveals an inherent complicity by the state (Caust, 2010), but also the cultural sector and its workers, in terms of their (self)exploitation. Such exploitation (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013) is influenced by a misunderstanding and/or obfuscation of cultural labour in both the cultural policy literature and the broader discourse regarding this work. These inconsistencies and misunderstandings must be acknowledged as part of the process of defining (or redefining) the working status of artists, as does understanding this gap and its ramifications for the material and working conditions of artists. Such an acknowledgement and understanding are directly relevant to our discussion of cultural labour and income support.

Creative justice

Moving towards improved definitions of cultural labour, Banks (2017, p. 2) concept of 'creative justice' is founded on three conditions of 'economic', 'cultural' and 'political' grounds to justify a 'more even distribution of positions and rewards in the cultural industries' (Banks, 2017, p. 2). 'Creative justice' goes beyond forms of meritocracy, scarcity, discrimination and competition that are a 'symptom of a flawed distributive justice' (Banks, 2023, p. 48). With creative justice, Banks (2023) proposes a move beyond 'distributive justice'–'the kind of justice concerned with fair dues and just desserts in relation

to allocation of a given resource' (Banks, 2023, p. 48) – towards a 'contributive justice' concerned instead with 'what people give or contribute to society, rather than what they get' (Banks, 2023, p. 47). Contributive justice is concerned with the concept of 'good and meaningful work' and is premised on the idea that 'access to such work should not be unduly protected or restricted in supply' (Banks, 2023, p. 52).

Contributive justice reframes creative work as a 'recognition of contribution' and 'as an innate right and value' (Banks, 2023, p. 58). This does not completely abandon the concept of distributive justice, but instead works in tandem to allow the 'widest array of persons who have the aspirations and abilities to undertake and contribute to the shared stock of cultural work' (Banks, 2023, p. 58), while also ensuring that once they are employed in this work they are 'appropriately rewarded and able to obtain the respect, recognition and voice that is both their right and due' (Banks, 2023, p. 58). Perhaps, then, funding and income support, both in terms of the arts and welfare generally, play a valuable role in facilitating such 'good work,' although the administration and implementation of such funding schemes often produce dramatically different results despite similar intentions.

Artist grants and project-based funding

According to *Making Art Work* (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017), a total of 18% of artist's annual income was derived from grants, prizes, fellowships and sponsorships (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017, p. 90). As well as contributing to almost a fifth of artists' income, the attainment of funding has been shown to be fundamental to the capacity of artists to achieve something close to *skholè*. *Making Art Work* found that among many of the positive impacts funding can have on participating artist's practice, the most common outcome identified was the 'freedom and opportunity provided to devote time to research, development and creation of work' (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017, p. 109). However, artists also confirmed that any time afforded to them by grant funding is directed primarily towards increasing productivity (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017, p. 109) – that is, research, development and the creation of new work – rather than 'leisured' time necessary to explore new ideas. This is apparent in artists' statements that funding provided 'freedom from financial worries', and the capacity to 'devote more time to [work]' (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017, p. 110). Perhaps most striking is that most artist respondents to the *Making Art Work* report stated that the most important impact financial support had on their practice was in 'buying time… to concentrate on creative work or research' (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017, p. 111). The idea of artists' needing to 'buy' their time reveals the strange relationship that artists have with the value of their labour, implying a tendency for artists to justify their work through productivity (McRobbie, 2016).

The impact of project-based funding, while providing short-term viability to creative practice, is only a piece of the puzzle, with artists describing grants, fellowships and residencies as only one of 12 sources of income pieced together to sustain their practice (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017). Pennington and Eltham in *Creativity in Crisis* describe the 'endless short-term grant cycle' as 'inadequate and unsustainable' in a society that values the arts (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 55). Alternatively, fellowships and

residencies have traditionally allowed for more sustained and comprehensive support for cultural labour and the material conditions of artists' lives. However, such long-term and sustained support mechanisms are becoming increasingly scarce in an arts world typified by short-term contract work and project funding that often does not account for living costs (McRobbie, 2016).

Fellowships and residencies

To remedy the issues identified above, Pennington and Eltham make several recommendations that may better provide security and basic labour rights to artists, firstly to 'greatly expand the number of creative fellowships' (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 43) offered by Creative Australia, as well as 'improv[ing] the wages and conditions of these fellowships to pay artists a living wage' (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 43). This would provide artists with security, as well as affording them the 'the same rights and conditions as full-time employees in other industries' (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 44). Writer Jennifer Mills writes about her experience as a funded artist-in-residence at Vitalstatistix in Adelaide, stating 'it's not just the money that provides relief', but also the 'structure' and 'support into the midterm future' in which she is 'able to plan' (Mills, 2023, p. 174). Mills (2023) also notes the entitlements to leave and superannuation where ordinarily she would 'have to argue a case for super with each "employer" I write for' (Mills, 2023, p. 174). As well as her increased sense of labour rights and security, Mills also spoke to the way in which 'set hours, instead of being paid per piece' was able to alter her 'relationship to time' (Mills, 2023, p. 174).

The altered relationship to time afforded by a long-term artist-in-residence programme, as opposed to the 'endless short-term grants cycle', opens a greater capacity for *skholè*. Indeed, Pennington and Eltham compare the expansion of artist fellowships to the ideal model for university research fellowships, further recalling the idea of *skholè.* They assert that 'the Australian Research Council offers around 320 new research fellowships to academic researchers annually' (Pennington & Eltham 2021, p. 44), but that there is no comparable model for artists. The creative and cultural industries require government investment, and that independent artists and the small-to-medium sector need access to more reliable long-term grants and fellowships. The reality outlined in the report's conclusion is that without support for a more equitable labour landscape for artists and arts workers, 'many artists and cultural workers will be forced to leave the industry in search of secure incomes' (Pennington & Eltham, 2021, p. 55). Such dire circumstances require radical solutions, for which we may look abroad to international policy initiatives.

International case studies

Basic income for artists

A contemporary policy initiative that seeks to address some of the issues associated with conventional arts funding models is a Basic Income for Artists (BIA) (Banks, 2023;

Caust, 2022; Cole, 2022; Johnston, 2022). The Republic of Ireland has recently instituted a trial BIA scheme, providing three years of support to up to 2,000 individual artists (Cole, 2022). While this does not meet the criteria of 'universal basic income' given its limited application within a specific sector, it does provide an opportunity to consider what artists are capable of when they are financially resourced simply for being artists.

Qualification for the scheme relies on meeting two out of the three following conditions:

- Have previously earned an income from the arts,
- Have an existing body of work, and/or
- Be a member of a recognized arts body, such as a trade union. (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2022)

Such conditions allow for both emergent, established and late-career artists to apply for the scheme, as the two out of three conditions allowed for wriggle room in the assessment criteria. Further, out of the 8,000+ pool of eligible applicants, 2,000 were randomly selected by sortition, adhering to broader principles of equity (Johnston, 2022, pp. 251–2). Successful recipients were allocated weekly revenue of €325 and retain the ability to earn additional income without this basic income being affected (Johnston, 2022, pp. 251–2). Although this is slightly less than the current minimum wage in Ireland (Johnston, 2022, pp. 251–2), it does provide a substantial financial floor for artists and cultural workers, providing them with the freedom to focus more time on their creative practice than they would otherwise (Feldkircher & O'Donnell, 2024).

While the Irish trial is the largest recorded trial of a basic income for artists, with similar limited trials being offered in San Francisco (Small, 2021) and New York City (Lalljee, 2022), direct support for artists dates to the days of medieval patronage (Mellor, , 2017), which has been adapted by digital platforms such as Patreon to fund individual content creators. However, the key difference between the patron model, which promotes the production of culture favoured by those with disposable capital, and a BIA is that the BIA prioritizes the artist and places no conditions on the types of culture to be produced (Social Justice Ireland, 2024). Indeed, the strength of a basic income model is not the income it provides, but the way in which it empowers individuals to make choices about how they wish to spend their extra time and capital, and how that act of trust and the level of self-esteem it instils means that recipients take the responsibility seriously (Bregman, 2014). Though this all seems rather out-of-reach within an Australian context, wherein the arts and artists have been denigrated by politicians and policy-makers for such a long time (Meyrick & Barnett, 2017), other transnational examples offer comparative pathways towards similar outcomes, albeit via different means. Resembling something more like unemployment insurance than a basic income for artists, the French 'Intermittents du Spectacl' has been a significant feature of the republic's cultural policy settings for cultural labourose to a century (Beardsley, 2021; Bisker, 2012).

Unemployment insurance

Created in the 1930's to subsidize the income of film industry workers alternating between short-term contracts and periods of unemployment, the 'Intermittents du Spectacl' has since been expanded to cover a variety of cultural workers and guarantees a government-subsidized stipend eligible to those who have worked a minimum number of hours in a cultural or artistic field, acting as an unemployment insurance scheme and a form of basic income, albeit one that is conditional. Although the scheme has been under attack by successive neoliberal governments in France (Parenteau, 2014), it still presents a gold standard in how to support working artists, lifting the standing of culture to one of national pride and providing artists and cultural workers with improved bargaining power overall. However, such a policy requires political consensus around the provision of culture as a government service and a public good, alongside health, education and other social services, a consensus increasingly rare within Anglophone jurisdictions dominated by the 'creative industries' narrative.

As a nation-state predisposed to social democracy and the provision of arts and culture as a public good as well as a nation-building project, France's cultural policy settings are both more progressive and more entrenched than that of Australia, featuring a Ministry of Culture and stronger institutional support for arts and culture on multiples levels. An equivalent repositioning of arts and culture as a public good within the Australia context would require a political economy approach to cultural policy, and therefore hinges on a refusal and rejection of neoliberal creative industries' rhetoric that seeks to further privatize cultural labour and its products. And unlike the previously discussed BIA, the French Intermittents du Spectacl is administratively burdensome and prone to abuse by both workers and employers (Parenteau, 2014). This is why unrestricted basic income without mutual obligations offers a viable alternative.

Non-arts funding and the arts

Unemployment benefits ('the dole')

Unemployment benefit schemes in Australia, Ireland and the United Kingdom, otherwise known as the 'dole,' provided a financial lifeline for many arts and cultural workers prior to the introduction of mutual obligations or other 'work for the dole' schemes (Carmody, 2021; Cathcart, 2000; Freyne, 2012). In Australia in particular, an entire generation of artists, comedians, musicians and actors emergent during the 1980s and early 1990s were able to draw a living wage from the dole while concentrating on their artistic practice (Castle, 2006). Arguably the majority of Generation X that are still actively employed or engaged in the Australian cultural industries today have the dole to thank for at least the earliest parts of their careers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023), as it offered an opportunity for them to focus on their craft while they were at the peak of their youth. Other material conditions such as cheaper housing, a well-funded arts infrastructure and a much better resourced public broadcaster in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, as well as a more vibrant community radio and media landscape, assisted this, but it is unsurprising that Generation X has

managed to dominate much of the media and entertainment space in Australia until recently. More research is needed to explore the link between what was at the time an expanded and reasonable unemployment benefit scheme and a golden age in grassroots cultural production led by a young Generation X.

The 'creative practice' Phd

Since the demise of 'the dole' and the rise of creative practice research in Australia, another stream of public funding has emerged to resource artistic labour and cultural labour; that of the PhD stipend. Alongside other university and research scholarships, PhD scholarships in the Australian arts and humanities are often used to fund the pursuit of a creative project (Goldson, 2020), with an accompanying exegesis attached to explain and critique the creative process, simultaneously justifying it as research. Indeed, the peers of each of this paper's authors in higher degree by research programmes have often been creatives seeking refuge in the sheltered workshop of academia to work on their screenplay, their book, or their documentary.

Unable to sustain a steady income through creative practice alone, and with other forms of part-time work becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, young artists are undertaking PhD programmes as a means of supporting their practice, as well as an opportunity to develop other skills and knowledge (Fairley, 2013). This is by no means an ideal approach to resourcing cultural labour, but one taken by many who see ongoing, funded study as something of a stopgap between one financially insecure year and the next (Fairley, 2013).

Of course, such a pathway is often only available to the privileged, the highly educated, or those that can nimbly jump through the hoops of university bureaucracy (Glade-Wright & Van Luyn, 2018; Kroll, 2004). This might produce interesting research and/or creative work, but also means that many artists not suited to the hierarchies and often brutal manner of the modern neoliberal university are frozen out of this potential funding stream. Again, PhD stipends offer an imperfect precedent outlining both what not to do when funding artists, but also what artists can achieve when resourced effectively and granted a degree of independence.

Conclusion

Many artists are taught that they can only survive in the creative and cultural industries 'in spite of' the challenges of their chosen field, rather than being provided with the expectation of security that other professions often take for granted. The potent narrative of the tortured or impoverished artist is still pervasive (Sakr, 2015), and shapes the broader public and policy discourse. If cultural policies such as *Revive* are to take their pledge of minimizing the precarity of artists' work seriously, a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of the nature of cultural work is necessary.

Throughout this articlewe have determined that creative work is widely heterogeneous, requires a variety of tangible and intangible resources and is reliant on the privilege of *skholè* to produce creative output. Access to *skholè* is determined by funding and

revenue arrangements, whether subsidized or commercial, as well as to other forms of non-governmental funding and support, such as the PhD stipend. Within an Australian context, many of these funding models have proven to be unreliable and inequitable, and therefore create further barriers to access. This emphasizes that adequate resourcing and support for cultural or creative labour requires a proactive policy approach to see more than just a few lucky outliers 'make it.'

This articl has also outlined the current insufficiencies of project-based and competitive grant initiatives that fall short of providing the support or resources necessary for many small-to-medium arts organizations and independent artists, which are also subject to inconsistent and frequently unstable cultural policy at both a state and federal level. Its rationale has been to demonstrate that current policy models designed to support cultural labour in Australia are inadequate and usually inappropriate given the nature of cultural labour and what it means to resource such labour in a meaningful and effective way. Solutions and other contemporary initiatives aimed at addressing these insufficiencies have been presented and assessed, such as the BIA trial scheme in Ireland, the French 'Intermittents du Spectacl' unemployment insurance model, as well as non-targeted support structures available via unemployment benefit schemes.

Finally, in relation to the concepts of work, employment, and professional practice as they are understood throughout much of the public and policy discourse, an awareness of latent bias towards professions that fit a modern free-market system is necessary, as many forms of cultural labour do not fit this model and have proven to be incapable of succeeding in terms relevant to this understanding. In light of this inconsistency and the 'policy/practice gap,' Banks (2023) creative justice framework becomes a means to redefine the working status of artists who, rather than struggling to piece together a living, instead see their work rewarded, respected and recognized. This is important not only because it would teach us to value cultural labour and to engage with it more readily, but because it would also greatly expand our general wellbeing, our sense of civic engagement and our capacity to build shared values and stories.

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Notes

1. Although each of these terms are contested (see Hesmondhalgh, 2008), as this paper focuses on creative and cultural labour rather than a discussion of the industries in which this labour takes place, it will refer to each and sometimes all terms that denote the economic and industrial sectors relevant to creative and cultural labour, which are interchangeably referred to in a variety of ways throughout the literature.

2. The earliest instance of cultural policy that prioritized the economic and productive values of the cultural sector typified by the 'creative and cultural industries' was the Keating government's 1994 cultural policy, *Creative Nation*. Although *Creative Nation* was scrapped by the incoming Liberal–National government, its core tenets and policy objectives were propagated in the United Kingdom by Tony Blair's New Labour in the late 1990s. Once solidified as cultural policy in the United Kingdom, these ideas were then exported back to Australia in the 2000s, where Australian policy-makers and industry stakeholders took to them enthusiastically (Daniel, 2017, pp. 256–257).
3. Georgina Born's (2010) reframing of 'art' *as* 'cultural production' provides further clarity here, in that it shifts our understanding of culture to that of a product of labour that is culturally, industrially and aesthetically specific (Born, 2010), and which is not solely explained through processes or theories of reproduction (Born, 2010, p. 179). Building on a critique of Bourdieu's theory of cultural production, Born expands on this theory to explain how cultural products are a result of both social determinants, such as Bourdieu's *habitus* and its dialectical relationship with the 'field of cultural production,' and aesthetic histories and traditions, which inform the stylistic choices and decision-making processes of artists and cultural producers. However, although Born's (2010) conception of art as cultural production, with all its complexities and nuances, is able to provide a comprehensive ontology that accommodates for cultural labour or creative labour in near totality, it does not necessarily define or outline this labour, its inputs and its processes.
4. This assertion forms part of the central thesis articulated by the authors of the paper. It is also expressed by Banks (2017) and his articulation of the 'prevailing injustices within work and education in the cultural industries' (Banks, 2017, p. 159), alongside the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's assertion of cultural policy's capacity to help sustain 'the material conditions facilitating the release of… creative talent' (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1980) that can help level the playing field. This assertion is further expressed throughout the paper within our exploration of the history of cultural policy initiatives that seek to legitimize and support cultural labour where market driven policies cannot.
5. Alison Croggon recently published a damning article tracking the decline in arts funding that, due to it not being indexed by inflation, has seen 'total council funding [declining] by 11.4% since 2010' (Croggon, 2024, p. 3).
6. JobKeeper was the Australian federal government's national furlough scheme throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, used to subsidize the cost of keeping employees employed during periods of lockdown and low economic activity.

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