

Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), in partnership with Artists Space, presents a series of public forums that will take place from January through September 2012. These events will include contributions from invited speakers presenting perspectives on the arts economy, alongside open discussion. Please join us on Monday January 9th at 7pm for the first of these forums:

FEELING THE SHAPE OF THE ARTS ECONOMY:

Think Tank Coalition/Agenda Formation/Alliance Building Marathon (nourishment provided!)

After a brief introduction to W.A.G.E. Certification, the program will begin with a presentation by artist, economist, and sociologist Hans Abbing, author of *Why are Artists Poor: The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*. Abbing's presentation and Q & A will be followed by a sustenance break with homemade soup, bread and drinks. The evening will culminate in a town hall meeting, engaging the public in an open-ended discussion that will contribute to framing the agenda for upcoming programs and the formation of W.A.G.E. Certification.

Event agenda:

- 1) Introduction to W.A.G.E. Certification
- 2) Teach-in: presentation by Hans Abbing
- 3) Audience Q&A
- 4) Break: Soup social
- 5) Open Forum: agenda/alliance formation

Hans Abbing (born Utrecht, 1946) is a visual artist and economist, and Professor Emeritus in Art Sociology. He studied economics and worked as an economist until he was thirty, after which he attended the Amsterdam Rietveld Academy of Visual Art. For the next ten years Abbing worked as an artist, after which he partly returned to science, writing articles and books on the economics of art and increasingly on Art Sociology. Between 2005-08 he was Honorary Professor in Art Sociology at the University of Amsterdam and currently writes and supervises master theses at the universities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. His most well known book is *Why are Artists Poor* (University of Amsterdam Press, 2002). He is now working on another book entitled *Value of Art*.

Background

In March 2011, Artists Space initiated a dialogue with W.A.G.E., a New York-based activist group that advocates for the regulated payment of artist fees by art institutions. Discussions about the implications of two recent W.A.G.E. initiatives—the 2010 Artist Survey and W.A.G.E. Certification—resulted in the formation of a temporary partnership between the two organizations. This partnership will provide W.A.G.E. and Artists Space with a cooperative platform on which to organize a series of symposia/public discussions and strategic think tanks involving artists, activists, curators, grant makers, administrators, economists, sociologists, and the public in an extended conversation about payment practices in the arts.

These events, beginning in January 2012 are designed to engage a diverse arts community on multiple levels, and to provide vital dialogue and feedback through which W.A.G.E.'s Certification Program will be developed. W.A.G.E. Certification recognizes and 'certifies' organizations that voluntarily adhere to a best practices model and pay artist fees in relation to the conditions under which artists are involved in their programs.

Using Artists Space's organizational support and budgetary transparency – together with the active participation of the public – the criteria for W.A.G.E. Certification will be collectively developed. At the conclusion of the partnership in September 2012, W.A.G.E. Certification will be fully established and if compliant, Artists Space will become the first organization to receive Institutional W.A.G.E. Certification. Printed and downloadable resources for artists, produced through this partnership, will include among others: a comprehensive fee schedule, best practices model, and sample contracts.

After the first forum, *Feeling the Shape of the Arts Economy*, future symposia subjects will include: *Statistics / Survey*, a statistical, information-based presentation about the arts economy, *Unionizing & Other Models*, bringing together artist-activist groups internationally to look at a range of approaches to organizing art workers around alternate economic models; *Funders Talk*, a discussion between key government and foundation funders about creating a system of accountability between non-profits and their funders to insure the payment of artist fees; *Institutional Directors*, a discussion between museum and non-profit directors about institutional budget priorities and transparency, *Profit Sharing*, a discussion about the problems of support and exploitation between commercial galleries and non-profit organizations in the commissioning, production and sale of art works; and *Legal-ease*, focusing on the legal rights of artists in New York State, including re-sale, copyright, contracts, and reproduction rights.