



Scottish **Arts** Council



# Making their mark

An audit of visual artists in Scotland – Summary Report

# Making their mark

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Summary Report written by Andrew Patrizio, Amanda Catto and Wendy Law, based on research commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council from Bonnar Keenlyside

The full research report is available on the Scottish Arts Council website, [www.scottisharts.org.uk](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk)

## Acknowledgments:

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Cover image: Jim Lambie's 'Paradise Garage'/'Futura Deluxe', 2003 (duct tape/wooden door, mirrors, gloss paint). Installation view: Zenomap, the Scottish exhibition, Venice Biennale, 2003. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and the Modern Institute, Glasgow.

# Foreword

The Scottish Arts Council, through its Visual Arts Strategy, aims to ensure that Scotland continues to be recognised as a centre of excellence in and for the visual arts, nationally and internationally. This vision acknowledges the current strength and diversity of visual arts in Scotland and emphasises the need for the Scottish Arts Council to continue to play an active role to maintain its momentum.

This Audit of visual artists was commissioned to provide the Scottish Arts Council and others with accurate information about individual artists working across the country. It is a first attempt at defining the characteristics of the sector, not just in terms of geography but in relation to practice, professional development needs and aspirations. The findings are important in providing a snapshot of current practice based on evidence rather than anecdote.

There is still a tendency to assume that artists operate on the fringes of society, working in isolation and in poor conditions, waiting to be discovered – often too late to reap the rewards. The Audit is an important tool in dispelling this myth and reinforcing the professional nature of artists' practice today. It presents a picture of artists in Scotland who are highly skilled, active, resourceful and committed to promoting their work to the public at large. Despite the very real financial challenges many face, artists continue to make a positive social and economic contribution to the country.

Artists live within a mixed economy and opportunities to generate income from sales of work, teaching, community engagement, and exhibitions are just as important to them as grants and awards. The Scottish Arts Council through information and advocacy can help to increase the range of opportunities but there is a need to develop new partnerships. Importantly we need to engage artists, arts organisations and the public in debate about how to effect change in both the short and longer term.

The Audit is just one of several initiatives being undertaken which aim to improve the environment in which artists make and promote their work. Other initiatives include the National Collecting Scheme for Scotland and research being carried out by Arts Council England on developing the market for contemporary art. This Scottish Arts Council Audit provides a valuable insight into visual arts practice today and will act as a catalyst for development in the future.



**Graham Berry**  
**Director**  
**Scottish Arts Council**

# Introduction

‘Our cultural achievements depend on individuals – organisations exist to support them. Those working in the cultural sector should have opportunities to continue to develop their professional skills, both as creators and business people. The purposes of arts and culture go beyond providing a living for those working in the sector. Without vibrant cultural industries, not only are the needs of the audience likely to be neglected, but cultural expression itself can suffer. Those working in these sectors require:

- an appropriate range of opportunities to make a reasonable living and to benefit from good working conditions;
- continuing professional development in artistic, business, professional, and other skills, including opportunities to engage in high quality training, customised to their professional needs;
- access to advice about career development and pathways;
- good links between initial training or tertiary education and business, commercial and/or professional competencies.’

From *Creating our Future... Minding our Past – Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy*

This Audit of visual artists was commissioned to provide evidence of the characteristics of the visual arts sector in Scotland and the contribution made by visual artists to the economy. It gives new information concerning the aspirations of artists in Scotland and identifies the very practical challenges they face.

The Audit is one of several initiatives identified in the Scottish Arts Council’s Visual Arts Strategy which aims to enable artists to develop creatively and professionally. It has highlighted the needs of artists and will inform future initiatives that support those who wish to develop their creative, business and technical skills. Together with work being undertaken by other funders and agencies (such as Arts Council England, Scottish Artists Union, a-n The Artists Information Company) it provides an important platform for debate and future action.

In considering the findings of the Audit an important factor is the individuality of artists’ practice. While this report examines a sample of artists working across

the country and identifies common concerns, the circumstances of any one individual are unique. Artists, like other professionals, need to remain critically engaged with their practice and the fields in which they operate. They need to maintain networks and build professional relationships, keep abreast of current developments and exchange information. Importantly they need to communicate effectively, with their peers, other practitioners and professionals and the public at large.

The Scottish Arts Council will continue to work with others to shape an infrastructure that is more responsive to artists’ needs and which holds greater potential for those who choose to live and work here. As importantly, artists themselves must continue to take responsibility and to carve out new opportunities. Such partnerships will enable Scotland to retain and attract creative and talented artists and to sustain excellence in the visual arts into the future.

## The brief

The Audit sought information on the demographic spread of artists working in Scotland; their training; definitions of practice; earnings and employment status; support from the Scottish Arts Council and other public bodies; access to facilities; promotion and marketing; continued professional development; and artists’ contribution to the economy.

## Methodology

Details on the methodologies and process used can be found in the full report (available on [www.scottisharts.org.uk](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk)). In brief, the research team used questionnaires and three focus group development sessions were held, guided by a Scottish-wide advisory group. A total of 527 artists responded to the questionnaire.

Respondents represent all age groups, genders, and different geographic, cultural, disability and ethnic backgrounds. The largest age group is 25-34 (31%); 60% of respondents are female; 93% of the sample are white; Greater Glasgow, Edinburgh and Lothians account for 53% of those responding; 23% are primary carers for children or relatives.

# Main findings

## Practice

In this section, we see the ways in which Scottish visual artists currently work and exhibit, and their levels of education and professional representation.

### Media

In terms of media used by artists, the mainstream disciplines of drawing and painting make up the majority of activity (60%), but there is a large cross-over between media, with many artists working across photography, new media, installation and video/film. Relatively new disciplines, such as installation and film, are being practised by younger artists, indicating that more diversity is coming into the sector. There are no major gender divisions between or within disciplines.

It is interesting to note that new technology is making an impact with visual artists embracing a diverse range of media.

### Respondents by medium practised

	Base	No reply	Medium/media in which you currently work								
			Installation	Live art	New Media	Painting/drawing	Photography	Print making	Public art	Sculpture	Video/film
<b>Base</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>No reply</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<b>Medium/media in which you currently work</b>											
Installation	131	–	131	18	36	58	63	31	48	60	46
Live art	27	–	18	27	12	8	14	3	14	6	15
New media	71	–	36	12	71	28	50	19	25	25	38
Painting/drawing	323	–	58	8	28	323	62	69	40	54	30
Photography	145	–	63	14	50	62	145	33	41	53	50
Printmaking	96	–	31	3	19	69	33	96	20	27	16
Public art	87	–	48	14	25	40	41	20	87	41	27
Sculpture	141	–	60	6	25	54	53	27	41	141	27
Video/film	79	–	46	15	38	30	50	16	27	27	79

# Main findings

## Exhibiting

A huge 94% of respondents have had work exhibited in the past two years, demonstrating that most creative work reaches the public. Residencies are well used, with 28% of artists undertaking them, the majority within Scotland and 13% of these being within community settings.

Scotland enjoys a very active and internationally-minded artistic community. Noticeably, one third of respondents have exhibited internationally and a similar percentage has undertaken an overseas residency. The success of our artists is a major achievement that should be acknowledged more widely.

## Professionalism

Agent or gallery representation is held by 27% of artists, which demonstrates a high degree of professionalism. Even more strikingly, 19% of artists are represented by an overseas gallery or agent. Similarly, the artistic population of Scotland is very highly trained, with 45% trained to graduate level and 37% holding postgraduate art degrees.

This would indicate that artists are well qualified and able to work closely with many other professionals, adding value to their practice and to the other sectors they work in.

### For those represented by a gallery or agent, where is the gallery or agent based?

Base	135	100%
Scotland	92	68%
Other UK	53	39%
Abroad	26	19%

## Working conditions and artists' resources

In this section we find out more about how artists use facilities and resources and about their information needs.

### Studios

Nearly 40% of respondents have access to a dedicated studio in their own home, indicating both a preference, in some cases, for this arrangement as well as personal, literally 'in-house' subsidy of their professional practice. The next biggest source of studio accommodation, at 18%, is within publicly-subsidised studios, as tenants. Younger artists are more likely to rent a studio, with older artists more likely to have a studio at home.

### Location of studio

Base	527	100%
No reply	112	21%
In your home	206	39%
Rented in publicly subsidised studio (eg WASPS)	93	18%
Outside your home but owned by you	49	9%
Rented from a private landlord	45	9%
Not applicable	37	7%

Patterns of studio use between rural and urban areas reflect local provision, with 28% of urban-based artists renting publicly-subsidised studios compared to 3% in the country. More research would be needed here to establish either the degree of personal choice or the necessity reflected in these figures. A clear majority (63%) of those without a studio are barred through cost. Of those with studios, a significant minority are concerned with heat and lighting costs, security of tenure and working conditions, highlighting the vulnerability of the infrastructure for artists producing work.

The use of home-based studios could have a negative impact on how effectively artists share information and on their access to wider networks – both factors which can affect their professional practice.

## Facilities

Increasingly, artists who may not necessarily be trained in certain media are working within facilities and with experts in order to make work. Consequently, specialist arts facilities remain important, with 66% of respondents making direct use of them, and 40% visiting facilities on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. These facilities provide artists with valuable specialist equipment and professional and technical support. Many artists rely on publicly-supported facilities across the country, although a high percentage across a number of disciplines also use specialist facilities in their own home (for example, 70% of photographers; 60% of sculptors).

Reasons for accessing specialist facilities are included in the table below. The figures are listed in order of importance to the artists.

### Use of specialist facilities

Base	527	100%
No reply	132	25%
Access to specialist equipment	226	43%
Access to professional and technical support	178	34%
Advice and information	142	27%
Peer group support	102	19%
Professional development (eg courses, workshops)	98	19%
Exhibition opportunities	97	18%
Not applicable	92	17%
Access to IT/new media facilities	86	16%

## Information

A clear majority of respondents use the Scottish Arts Council's *News and Opportunities* (69%) as well as a-n The Artists Information Company (66%). Importantly, 41% use the internet as a source of information. Not surprisingly, for 15%, the most important source of information is other artists.

Rural-based artists have challenges accessing information as well as meeting with other artists, a common means of information gathering.

There exists a clear need for funding schemes and creative opportunities to be signposted effectively throughout the visual arts sector.

## Economic conditions

This section looks at sources of income, expenditure, and benefits and tax issues.

### Income

Over 80% of respondents regard visual arts as their profession and for 70% it consumes more time than anything else they do. However, only 40% of visual artists say that art is their primary pursuit in terms of income generation. Perhaps strikingly, 40% of the under-35s in Scotland continue to make work with no income generated from it, signalling a young artistic population that seems willing to invest time in the hope of future recognition and support. For this younger group too, grants and awards are vital, with 44% relying on this source, far higher than older groups.

Levels of gross income for artists are low compared to the national average, all the more marked considering the high level of postgraduate qualifications that Scotland's artists hold. The statistics represent a challenge to the viability of artists' practice. For example, 38% of respondents earn under £5,000 gross; 24% earn between £5,000 - £10,000; 22% earn between £10,000 - £20,000.

# Main findings

## Gross income from all sources

Base	527	100%
No reply	24	5%
under £1,000	47	9%
£1,001 - £3,000	57	11%
£3,001 - £5,000	64	12%
£5,001 - £10,000	108	20%
£10,001 - £15,000	62	12%
£15,001 - £20,000	35	7%
£20,001 - £25,000	23	4%
£25,001 - £30,000	19	4%
£30,001 - £35,000	9	2%
£35,001 - £45,000	9	2%
£45,001 - £55,000	2	0%
£55,000+	11	2%
Decline answer	57	11%

## Gross income from visual arts practice

Base	325	100%
Under £1,000	108	33%
£1,001 - £5,000	125	38%
£5,001 - £10,000	36	11%
£10,001 - £20,000	33	10%
£20,000+	23	7%

When art-related income is isolated, the figures are worse, with only 17% earning more than £10,000 per year. Compounding matters, the research indicates that nearly half of the respondents are the principal wage earner for their household.

Despite this economic reality, artists continue to invest in their practice and contribute to the economy and their communities.

Visual artists earn income from an unusually wide variety of sources, from both within and outside the arts themselves. 66% derive income from visual arts practice, with 37% partly from teaching art and 27% partly from arts-related occupations. However, 24% derive income outside the arts and 25% from benefits and other support.

A majority of artists (55%) teach the visual arts, with 28% teaching within community education. This is particularly the case in the areas of new media, installation, public art and video, with 70% undertaking teaching.

For those who generate an income from their practice, by far the largest proportion comes through private sales (59%) closely followed by sales at exhibitions (48%), teaching (45%) and private commissions (35%). Through sales of work, artists contribute financially to those who promote and exhibit them, with 91% charged a commission of 30% or more through the agent and gallery system. (Please refer to the table *Income derived from visual arts activity*.)

The Scottish Arts Council and local authorities are the two largest financial supporters of artists (both 16%). Significantly, 49% of respondents have received no support from public or private funds in the last two years. In terms of other kinds of support, artists show themselves to be largely independent of state schemes, with 53% receiving no support, 10% receiving support from family members, with a range of only 1-7% taking up the main state schemes (income support, disability allowance, etc).

In the Audit, artists were invited to suggest particular areas where they would like to see enhanced support. They identified: agreed rates and fees for artists; payment fees for artists in exhibitions; funding to provide financial security to develop work.

## Income derived from visual arts activity

	Base	No reply	Age			
			under 35	35-44	45-54	55+
Base	527 100%	7	196	148	90	86
No reply	15 3%	4	3	1	5	2
Private sales	311 59%	3 43%	97 49%	86 58%	60 67%	65 76%
Sales at exhibitions	252 48%	2 29%	77 39%	68 46%	51 57%	54 63%
Teaching	236 45%	– –	93 47%	80 54%	41 46%	22 26%
Commissions – private	182 35%	2 29%	58 30%	52 35%	41 46%	29 34%
Grants/awards	152 29%	– –	86 44%	39 26%	17 19%	10 12%
Commissions for public places	98 19%	2 29%	34 17%	33 22%	20 22%	9 10%
Workshops not linked to exhibitions	98 19%	– –	44 22%	30 20%	15 17%	9 10%
Exhibition payment right fees	83 16%	– –	43 22%	22 15%	9 10%	9 10%
Residencies	81 15%	– –	38 19%	30 20%	9 10%	4 5%
Bursaries/research stipends	68 13%	– –	31 16%	25 17%	6 7%	6 7%
Workshops linked to exhibitions	68 13%	– –	27 14%	27 18%	9 10%	5 6%
Assistant to other artists	42 8%	– –	28 14%	8 5%	5 6%	1 1%
Management of exhibitions/commissions/events	41 8%	– –	18 9%	11 7%	7 8%	5 6%
Consultancy fees	38 7%	– –	15 8%	12 8%	10 11%	1 1%
None	36 7%	– –	16 8%	9 6%	4 4%	7 8%
Commissions for public collections	30 6%	1 14%	8 4%	10 7%	4 4%	7 8%
Reproduction rights	29 6%	– –	6 3%	13 9%	6 7%	4 5%
Royalties	11 2%	– –	6 3%	2 1%	3 3%	– –
Gallery stipends/retainers	9 2%	– –	4 2%	3 2%	1 1%	1 1%

# Main findings

## Expenditure

Clearly artists contribute to related economies through arts-related expenditure. Each year, the 527 respondents collectively spent around £2.3 million on their professional practice, representing an average personal spend of £4,364. Taking only the 432 respondents who replied to the relevant question, the average rises to £5,324. Eighteen respondents spent over £40,000 annually on their practice. At the top end, around £650,000 a year is spent by respondents as a whole on materials in Scotland, with only around £47,000 spent annually on professional development and training. In terms of average individual spend by respondents, the highest figure is on assistance/assistants (£6,711) with perhaps more valuable longer term items falling to the bottom of the list, such as professional development and training (£773), research and documentation (£603 each). This presents longer term challenges for the future of Scotland's artistic community and likely signals that artists are moving into debt in order to fund their work.

## Tax

The Audit suggests that 38% of respondents are self-employed. Most of them earn their main income from visual arts practice and spend most of their time as artists. Only 7% of artists are registered for VAT.

Some artists expressed the view through the Audit that exemption from income tax and VAT would support their practice. The tax and benefits system is the subject of Arts Council England's Report, *A balancing act: artists' labour markets and the tax and benefits systems* (Warwick Institute for Employment Research and the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, University of Warwick, December 2002).

### Expenditure on visual arts practice by all respondents over two years (2000/01 – 2001/02)

	£	Total expenditure
Materials	1,364,457	30%
Premises	560,083	12%
Equipment	459,121	10%
Assistants/assistance	442,899	10%
Travel	427,613	9%
Framing	411,105	9%
Promotion	210,417	5%
Transport/packaging	191,284	4%
Installation	176,755	4%
Documentation	174,198	4%
Research	108,698	2%
Professional development/training	93,481	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,620,111</b>	

## Satisfaction

This section focuses on the degree of satisfaction visual artists have about their practice, opportunities for professional development and what it is like to be an artist working in Scotland today.

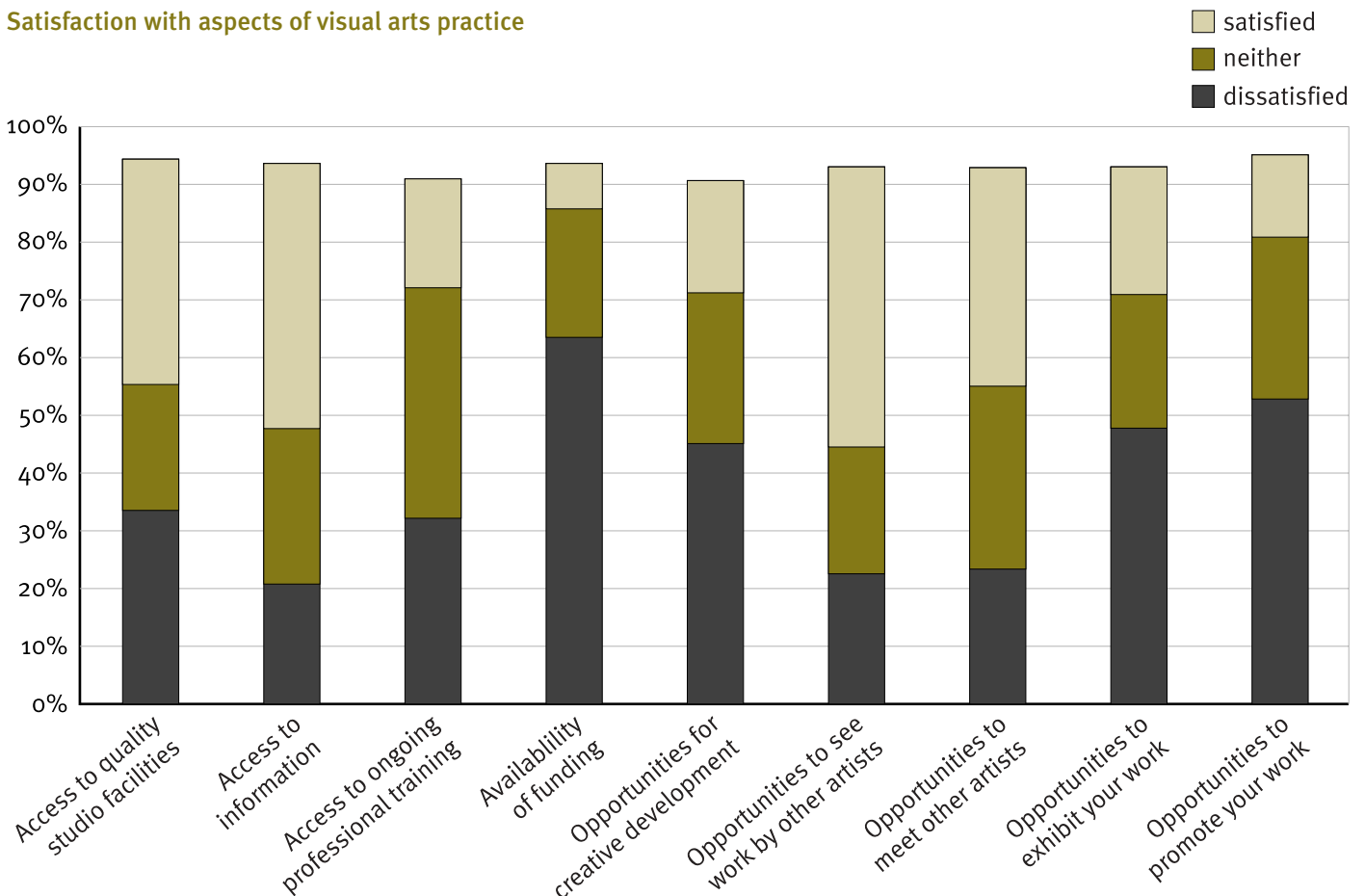
Access to information and ongoing professional training, as well as meeting other artists and seeing their work, are those areas where artists are most satisfied. However 38% say they do not have access to training to develop practice. This differential may signal slightly different understandings by artists of the terms ‘creative development’, ‘professional development’ and ‘training’.

Whether or not artists have received funding does not seem to affect whether they are satisfied with its availability. Artists would clearly welcome more opportunities for funding, as well as more ways of exhibiting and promoting their work.

Similarly, 45% of all respondents felt they would welcome more opportunities for creative development, again signalling some challenges for the infrastructure to support artists over the length of their careers.

Across this area, there are clear individual differentials concerning how actively artists might take responsibility for their own levels of satisfaction and to what extent real barriers exist. Not knowing how readily individual artists network with colleagues, travel to cultural centres (especially if they live in remote areas), join membership organisations, etc makes generalisations difficult.

### Satisfaction with aspects of visual arts practice



# Main findings

## Opportunities

Around two thirds of artists identified a significant untapped opportunity to develop sales of contemporary art in, or from, Scotland. More effective use and promotion of art fairs in Scotland and abroad would be one option. Raising awareness of opportunities to buy contemporary work and generally developing buyers' confidence would provide others. Further dialogue with artists, arts organisations, enterprise organisations and potential buyers would identify new opportunities to exploit this potential.

Artists are very clear about their continuing professional development needs, with improved marketing and promotion skills emerging strongly (nearly 60%), closely followed by fundraising and IT skills (both nearly 40%).

More specifically, artists identified the Scottish Enterprise Network as a potentially useful resource in developing the visual arts, although the Network has yet to recognise fully this sector as an investment opportunity.

## Barriers

Artists believe that their contribution to culture, society and the economy is not fully recognised (57%). This view is unlikely to be unique to Scotland but does signal a need to identify more clearly the specific contributions that artists can make to the development of the country. It also offers an opportunity to highlight, through research and debate, the differing roles that artists can have in society and the benefits of their involvement in all walks of life. Artists working in rural communities, where there is possibly greater scope for personal interaction between artists and the people they live and work beside, feel significantly more valued and respected as professionals than those in urban communities.

In terms of where artists might invest more time, the two major areas identified are research and development of work and production of work (each around 60% of artists). Also high on the list is the need to generate income. One of the challenges for artists is to find a balance between the time required

to earn money to support themselves and the time required to develop their practice and maintain a successful career.

While artists in general are clear that their individual practice suffers from the need to generate income from other work (60%) it is the under-35s who feel particularly strongly that their practice suffers through having to spend time generating other income. This could suggest a need for training and development opportunities to be prioritised for this age group.

Findings indicate that artists suffer from poor or localised structures for promoting their work, with nearly half stating that informal, rather than formal, networks are the primary way they promote work, with private galleries (44%) and their own modest publications (42%) not far behind. By way of contrast, the major promotional tool of broadcast media has been enjoyed by only 9% of artists.

Nearly 40% of artists feel the need to invest more time in promoting their own activity.

Although nearly 50% of the respondents use informal networks and private galleries to promote work, only 20% believe private galleries are the most important for promotion. Only 10% of respondents consider informal networks and public galleries to be the most important for promotion despite the fact that 36% of artists use public galleries for this purpose. When asked about professional development respondents identified marketing and promotion as their main needs.

Artists were asked, if they had more time to invest in their practice, how would they spend it. A breakdown of how artists would use additional time is shown in the following table (*Investment of additional time in visual arts practice*).

### Investment of additional time in visual arts practice

Base	527	100.0%
No reply	13	2.5%
Production	332	63.0%
Research and development	315	59.8%
Ability to generate income	266	50.5%
Promotion	208	39.5%
Professional development/training	145	27.5%
Networking	96	18.2%
Community activity	58	11.0%
Management/administration	40	7.6%
None	10	1.9%

The Audit indicates that there may be particular barriers to women, who expressed considerably more dissatisfaction than men about the opportunity to promote their work. In line with this, three-quarters of women felt they were not able to develop their practice to its full potential, compared to 55% of men. Although not relating only to women, the research found that the inability to afford childcare is a barrier for 40% of artists who are the primary carers for children.

Membership of artists' organisations is very unevenly spread across a number of different organisations. For instance, 43% of respondents are not members of any organisation or did not reply to the question. 55% of the remainder are in one of five organisations: the Scottish Artists' Union, WASPS, the Society of Scottish Artists, Transmission, and the Collective Gallery, with no single membership above 12% of the total. Consequently, the collective voice of artists struggles to be heard more widely. The Audit, however, suggests that artists do recognise the importance of proactive and collective approaches, for example promoting and sharing of information.

Interestingly, only 13% of respondents in total felt that 'bias' or a 'closed shop' mentality in the visual arts scene was an issue or barrier for them.

# Recommendations

The recommendations are listed below (there is no order of priority). They indicate some important areas for development arising directly from the Audit. They do not attach specific tasks to named organisations. The Scottish Arts Council will be using this Artists' Audit to galvanise a number of organisations and individuals across the visual arts sector to work together to deliver on these recommendations to best effect. Please note that these are broad recommendations. The Scottish Arts Council is currently working on a more detailed action plan.

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- 1 Continue to identify and promote the contribution of visual artists to the social, economic, educational, and cultural life of Scotland.

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  - 2 Develop more opportunities for a wider public, and for decision makers, to engage directly with visual artists and the sector.

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  - 3 Establish a programmed media and policy campaign advocating on behalf of the visual arts.

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  - 4 Instigate programmes which encourage further investment in the visual arts, including developing the market for art purchasing.

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  - 5 Examine the case for changes to the state tax and benefits system to improve the financial circumstances of artists.

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  - 6 Establish a coherent strategy for professional development and ensure appropriate opportunities exist for artists to enhance their professional practice skills through mentoring and training.

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  - 7 Improve and more effectively promote opportunities for artists to develop their artistic skills and creative practice.

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  - 8 Work with relevant agencies and trades unions in the visual arts to encourage the adoption of codes of practice and protocols to enhance the professional status of artists.

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  - 9 Work to ensure flexibility within specialist facilities and maintain adequate studio provision and accommodation for artists.

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  - 10 Examine the needs of curators, support the development of curatorial skills, and promote stronger relations between curators, critics and artists.

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  - 11 Encourage and support new platforms for improving information-sharing and networking between artists, and across the visual arts sector.
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