

Artist

Introduction

As an Artist, you will produce fine art. You might specialise in one area such as painting or sculpting. All artists spend some time producing sketches and developing concepts or ideas. You may do a study of a particular subject, such as the human body.

Also known as

- Painter (Artist)
- Sculptor
- Fine Artist



Work Activities

As an Artist, you will produce fine art. You'll produce work that people appreciate for its beauty or for its ability to make them feel different emotions.

Artists use a variety of methods in their work such as painting, drawing, graphic arts, printmaking or photography, etc.

You could also work using a variety of different materials. Painters may use watercolours or oil paints to paint a portrait or landscape, or sculptors may work in metal, wood or clay to produce a statue or object. Some Artists use a combination of materials.

Whatever the finished product is to be, you will spend some time producing sketches and developing concepts or ideas. You may do a study of a particular subject, such as the human body, and use the resulting sketches and photos as the basis for a series of works.

You will need to promote your work and have to persuade gallery and exhibition managers to display your pieces. You may spend quite some time meeting people and identifying potential clients. Many Artists display their work on the internet, for example, through online galleries or art websites.

Only very few Artists manage to live on money made from the sale of their work. The majority take commissions, for example, to paint portraits, or take residencies in industry, education or community centres.

Other Artists may teach or work in art therapy or art restoration. A lot of artists may need to find other part-time work to supplement their income.

Personal Qualities and Skills

As an Artist, you need:

- Creative and artistic skills.
- A good understanding of colour, shape and form.
- To enjoy working on your own.
- Self-motivation, determination and self-confidence.
- Business skills, if you're self-employed.
- To be able to cope with fluctuating work and income.
- Marketing skills.
- To work to deadlines and budgets.
- To be the kind of person who can cope with rejection.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £24,000
- With experience: £25,500 - £29,500
- Senior Artists earn £31,000

You may face long periods without work. To help, you may be able to claim benefits. Take a look at our information article on Universal Credit to see if you might qualify.

Hours of work

Artists can choose their own hours of work, which may be irregular, and include weekends. Some artists work long hours, especially as a deadline for a particular piece of work approaches.

Many aspiring artists find it necessary to take initial employment outside the art world or in a related field such as teaching.

Where could I work?

Some artists are offered a residency in, for example, a school, hospital or cathedral.

Opportunities for artists occur in towns, cities and rural areas throughout the UK. However, the ability for individuals to promote their work online via the internet means location is less important.

Some artists choose to base themselves in Europe, for example, France and Italy are popular, where some offer teaching holidays to increase their income/sales.

Self-employment

Artists often work on a freelance basis or become self-employed, which helps provide artistic freedom but reduces long-term job security.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

A common route into this career is via a Foundation course in Art and Design followed by a degree, HND or foundation degree in a subject such as fine art or visual arts.

For relevant Higher Education courses, you'll need a wide-ranging portfolio.

All degree courses in fine art include art history as part of the course. You should check the proportion of practical work to theory on each course, as this varies considerably. Most courses offer experience in a wide range of fields, with specialisation in later stages.

Departments of art put on exhibitions of students' work, which may help establish a reputation and provide a basis for a career as a full-time artist.

Training

There are postgraduate courses available in art, which are useful for specialised areas such as arts therapy or teaching.

Progression

Many artists become self-employed.

Qualifications

To enter any course in art and design, you'll need a portfolio of your work.

The usual entry requirements for a relevant Foundation course are:

- 1/2 A levels. You'll need an A level in Art or in an art-based subject.
- GCSEs at grade C/4 or above in 4/5 subjects. Some courses ask that you have a pass in English

Alternatives to A levels include:

- A BTEC Level 3 qualification in Fine Art or related subject
- A Design Advanced Level Apprenticeship
- The International Baccalaureate Diploma

Many other qualifications are also accepted so check college/university websites for more details.

The entry requirements for relevant HNDs and foundation degrees are similar to those needed for the Foundation course mentioned above.

If you go on to a degree directly, you'll usually need:

- 2 or more A levels. Many courses ask that you have at least a B grade in an art-based subject.
- 4/5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above. A pass in English is often required.

For the International Baccalaureate Diploma, many courses will ask that you have Art at Higher level.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A-level.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Entry

You need a good portfolio to enter art and design courses.

Courses

If you don't have the qualifications needed to enter your chosen degree or HND course, a college or university Access course (eg, Access to Art and Design) could be the way in. No formal qualifications are usually required, but you should check individual course details.

They can lead to relevant degree/HND courses.

Distance learning

Relevant courses in art and design subjects, at various levels, are offered by a large number of centres, by distance learning.

Funding

The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust offers grants of up to £18,000 to people wishing to set up craft/design businesses.

The Elephant Trust offers grants for artists working on particular projects.

Statistics

- 78% of people in occupations such as artist are self-employed.
- 13% work part-time.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
Tel: 0800 015 0400
Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
Website: www.apprenticeships.org.uk
- **ScreenSkills**
Skills for the creative industries
Email: info@creativeskillset.org
Website: www.creativeskillset.org
- **Creative Choices**
Publisher: Creative & Cultural Skills
Email: info@creative-choices.co.uk
Website: www.creative-choices.co.uk
- **Creative & Cultural Skills**
Skills for craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts
Email: london@ccskills.org.uk
Website: ccskills.org.uk
- **Getting into Art & Design Courses**
Author: James Burnett Publisher: Trotman
Website: trotman.co.uk/our-books/getting-into-art-and-design-courses/
- **Get into Theatre**
Email: info@getintothatre.org
Website: www.getintothatre.org
- **London Art College**
Address: PO Box 719, Lancaster LA1 2WT
Tel: 0800 3280465
Email: admin@londonartcollege.co.uk
Website: www.londonartcollege.co.uk
- **Design and Art Direction (D&AD)**
Address: Britannia House, 68-80 Hanbury Street, London E1 5JL
Tel: 020 7840 1111
Email: contact@dandad.org
Website: www.dandad.org
- **artsHub**
Publisher: Arts Hub UK
Website: www.artshub.co.uk/uk/
- **craft&design**
Address: PO Box 5, Driffield, East Yorkshire, YO25 8JD
Tel: 01377 255213
Website: www.craftanddesign.net
- **a-n The Artists Information Company**
Email: info@a-n.co.uk
Website: www.a-n.co.uk

- **Creative Scotland**
Scottish enquiries
Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com
Website: www.creativescotland.com
- **Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust**
Address: No 1 Buckingham Place, London SW1E 6HR
Tel: 020 7828 2268
Email: qest@rwba.co.uk
Website: www.qest.org.uk
- **Elephant Trust**
Address: 512 Bankside Lofts, 65 Hopton Street, London SE1 9GZ
Tel: 020 7922 1160
Email: ruth@elephanttrust.org.uk
Website: elephanttrust.org.uk
- **Art Business Today**
Publisher: Fine Art Trade Guild
Email: info@fineart.co.uk
Website: www.fineart.co.uk/Art_Business_Today.aspx
- **Writers & Artists**
Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
Email: waybfeedback@bloomsbury.com
Website: www.writersandartists.co.uk
- **Arts Professional**
Website: www.artsprofessional.co.uk
- **Wales Arts International (Welsh Enquiries)**
Address: Bute Place, Cardiff, UK, CF10 5AL
Tel: 029 2044 1320
Email: info@wai.org.uk
Website: www.wai.org.uk

Related Careers

- Medical Illustrator
- Design Assistant
- Fashion Designer
- Graphic Designer
- Artworker
- Metal Engraver
- Visual Merchandiser
- Commercial Illustrator
- Signmaker
- Ceramics Designer
- Footwear Designer
- Furniture Designer
- Product Designer
- Vehicle Designer
- Interior Designer
- Jewellery Designer
- Packaging Designer
- Textile Designer
- Costume Designer
- Theatre Designer
- Musical Instrument Technician
- Picture Researcher
- Technical/Scientific Illustrator
- Model Maker

- Picture Framer
- Designer
- Illustrator
- CGI Artist
- VFX Artist
- Nostalgist