

# **A START-UP GUIDE FOR EARLY CAREER ARTISTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, TIPS AND USEFUL INFO**

Artsadmin and Live Art Development Agency (LADA) have compiled this information and advice resource. It is intended as a brief starting point for artists who work in Live Art and Contemporary Performance and are at the start of their career.

Just as the practice of every artist is different, so are their professional development needs. We therefore encourage each artist to treat the information provided here as a springboard for their own self-directed research.

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Live Art  
Development  
Agency

**ARTS  
ADMIN.**

## WHAT IS LIVE ART?

Live Art is an umbrella term encompassing a range of performance, performative and time-based practices; some view it as a strategy for making work that is not defined by art form.

There are many useful summary texts about Live Art available online, including: Joshua Sofaer's [What is Live Art?](#) and the [What is Live Art?](#) text on LADA's [website](#).

Perhaps the best way to find out more about the Live Art scene is to go and see as much work as possible. Get connected and find out what's on by subscribing to the newsletters and social media feeds suggested below.

## WHO ARE ARTSADMIN AND LADA?

[Artsadmin](#) makes art happen. Our vision is to be an arts lab for the 21st Century for the creation of performance, site-specific and interdisciplinary work, where the innovative, experimental and unusual are nurtured. As artists continue to question the world, to push boundaries and challenge preconceptions, our role is to help them to do it.

We do this by:

- Discovering and developing artistic talent and supporting artists at all stages of their career
- Responding to the creativity of artists and using our expertise to help them realise ambitious ideas
- Creating safe and supportive spaces for artistic experiment, risk-taking and development
- Being truly collaborative; sharing knowledge and resources and creating meaningful partnerships and networks
- Responding to the changing environment we live in; being a leader in the arts for work that addresses the issue of climate change and finding ways to reduce the environmental impact of the arts

[LADA](#) is a Centre for Live Art: a knowledge centre, a production centre for programmes and publications, a research centre setting artists and ideas in motion, and an online centre for digital experimentation, representation and dissemination.

Areas in which we work:

- LADA works on curatorial projects, programming partnerships, and dialogues and debates to develop new contexts, discourses, and audiences for Live Art.
- LADA offers a range of artistic development schemes in collaboration with practitioners and organisations that aim to respond to, and support, the needs and expectations of artists
- LADA works to support Live Art in Higher Education by contributing to research, study, and teaching at individual and institutional levels.
- LADA works to support the development of Live Art in the UK through facilitating national and international networks.
- LADA provides access to a wealth of specialised research facilities; information and advice; online films, documents and programming packages; and the distribution of films, publications and materials.
- LADA publishes and co-publishes books, DVDs and Artist's Editions.

Many other organisations across the UK support artists working in Live Art from [Live Art UK](#), a national network of key promoters and facilitators who support the Live Art infrastructure, to multiple artist-led initiatives such as [Live Art Bistro](#) in Leeds and [BUZZCUT](#) in Glasgow, plus many more. If your work crosses over into the dance field, also check out the [National Dance Agencies](#) and artist development spaces such as [Chisenhale Dance Space](#).

## **WHAT OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES ARE OFFERED BY ARTSADMIN AND LADA?**

### **Artsadmin**

[Artsadmin's weekly e-digest](#) is an artists' resource featuring information on funding / commissions / platforms / calls for artists / seminars / workshops / courses / resources / jobs & opportunities and much more. It's available as a mobile app for iOS and Android devices or as a weekly email. You can sign up [here](#).

[Artists' Advisory Service](#) – A free service offering one-to-one advice and information throughout the year. This is open to all UK-based artists working in contemporary performance practices at any stage of their career. Meetings can be in person, by phone or Skype. If there is a specific area of work, issue or project you would like to discuss, you are welcome to get in touch at [advisoryservice@artsadmin.co.uk](mailto:advisoryservice@artsadmin.co.uk)

[Artsadmin's Artists' Bursary Scheme](#) – Supports artistic experiment, risk, speculation and play, rather than the production or touring of finished work. It

offers time, space and money to explore processes and try out new ideas within a framework of constructive and critical dialogue. The Bursary Scheme is open to application every 18 months.

**Sweatshops** – Informal, free afternoon workshops on key areas of professional and artistic development, including Marketing, Fundraising, Finance, Documentation, Applying to Grants for the Arts, Participation, UK Touring and International Touring.

**Weekenders** – Intensive weekend labs led by international artists which are open to all practitioners.

**For under 25s** – Artsadmin curates an extensive education programme with and by artists including projects, events and services supporting under 25s, such as SCRITS and Make Space Summer Projects.

Links and resources – Extensive lists of networks / funding bodies / festivals / venues / studios / blogs / campaigns available [here](#).

To hear news of all opportunities for artists offered by Artsadmin, [sign up here](#).

## **LADA**

**LADA Study Room** – A free, open access research facility in London, housing one of the largest publicly accessible libraries of Live Art related videos, DVDs and publications in the world. [Search the entire Study Room Catalogue](#) online.

**DIY** – Annual UK wide professional development opportunities run by LADA to support projects conceived and run BY artists FOR artists.

**Unbound** – The world's only dedicated online shop for Live Art books, DVDs and limited editions.

**Restock, Rethink, Reflect** – Ongoing series of public programmes, professional development activities, and archival and publishing initiatives mapping and marking underrepresented and culturally marginalised artists, practices and histories whilst also investing in future generations.

**Live Online** – A series of channels where you can watch short videos and films selected from LADA's Study Room or generated through programmes and initiatives.

[Online Resources](#) – A series of web pages focused on: Live Art venues in London; Writing about Live Art; E-mail lists and forums and useful downloads for artists.

Further Artist Opportunities – LADA regularly presents artist development opportunities including: platforms, awards, workshops, talks, screenings, and much more. All opportunities will be promoted on the LADA newsletter – [sign up here](#).

Additional recommended e-lists and websites:

- [Artquest](#)
- [a-n news](#)
- [On the Move](#)
- [Critical Network](#)

## HOW DO I GET MY WORK SEEN?

Often the best opportunity for artists to present their work early on in their career is at ‘platform’ or scratch events. These can be good opportunities to try out work in front of an audience, to hear views on it and to network with other artists at a similar stage. Feedback can be constructive; it can be useful to think in advance about what you would like feedback on and how to generate a discussion which will support you and your work.

The best place to find out about platform opportunities is through individual websites, newsletters and discussions groups. Artists should also independently research venues, festivals and institutes that may be interested in their work, and follow their social media channels and/or subscribe to their newsletters to find any opportunities to perform.

There are many open-call platforms specifically for artists who are starting out, from artist-run projects like [Tempting Failure](#) (Bristol) and [Homes for Waifs and Strays](#) (Birmingham) to larger festivals such as Experimentica ([Chapter](#), Cardiff) and [In Between Time Festival](#) (Bristol). Established venues and producers also present open-call platform events such as the annual Now series at [The Yard Theatre](#) (London), Open Labs at the [Barbican](#) (London), plus [hÅb](#) (Manchester) and [Compass Live Art](#) (Leeds) to name a few.

Also see the [SPLL Festival](#) (London/Ipswich): a high profile National Platform for up to 50 emergent artists at their Ipswich Festival, with 10 subsequently being selected to go forward to the SPILL London Showcase.

Platforms for artists with more experience include [Caravan Showcase](#), [British Council Showcase](#) (Edinburgh Festival) and [Flying Solo](#) at Contact Theatre (Manchester).

Many artists also create their own contexts for showing work by joining forces with others to hire a space to make and/or show work, or by presenting work in homes and public spaces.

How to find the relevant info:

The majority of current UK open-calls are advertised on the weekly Artsadmin E-digest. LADA provides a list of [Live Art key venues in London](#) under the Resources section of their website. Artsadmin provides a list of [Festivals, Venues, Platforms and Artist Led Initiatives](#) under the Artist Support section of their website.

## **HOW DO I BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT FUNDRAISING?**

We recommend that when it comes to fundraising you should make sure you fully research your options, be realistic in your planning, read the available application guidance information and talk to any available funding advisors. Newsletters and social media carry huge amounts of information about opportunities for funding, residencies and commissions.

When starting out, the most relevant sources of funding tend to be the more publicly known ones such as Arts Council England's [Grants for the Arts Scheme](#). See here for a video and extensive info on [how to apply](#).

Projects can also be supported through crowd-funding initiatives and certain Trusts and Foundations. A [list of funding bodies](#) and discussions around approaches to crowd-funding is available through Artsadmin's online resources.

Many artists also support their practice through a range of jobs. Thinking about how you can find support 'in kind' is also key – for example, can you offer skills and time in exchange for space? Again, getting involved and developing your community can really help.

## HOW CAN I REPRESENT MY WORK?

There will be many times in their career when artists need to represent their practice to others – for example, a studio visit, a submission for a commission, a funding application or an informal meeting. When the time comes, think about how you can best present / represent your work, and at the same time, think about what the person / people you are presenting to will want to know about you and what you do. There is unlikely to be ‘one’ package that you should have but rather a selection of ‘components’ that can be packaged together.

We suggest that there are three key areas that artists should address:

**Content** – what it’s about (and why)

**Form** – what it looks like / how it works

**Context** – how it relates to the sector and its history; how it relates to what the venue / funder / commissioner is doing / interested in; and how it relates to what other artists are doing

If you are preparing a package of information to give to someone or to submit with an application you could ask yourself some of the following questions.

- Should I provide documentation of my work (maybe a DVD of a full performance or an edited version, if you have one) or a promotional package (perhaps a show reel with edited highlights)?
- How much material should I provide?
- What form should my documentation / package take – DVD, images, text, URL to online material?
- Should I include a CV (a list of what I have done) or a biography (a more discursive approach)?
- Should I include press clippings, reviews or testimonials? If I do not have any available can I arrange for someone who has seen my work – e.g. university tutor – to write something for me?

If you are writing a proposal, ask yourself:

- Have I covered all the bases – i.e. have I made sure all the ‘required’ information (such as addressing guidelines of an application procedure) is included?
- What should the tone of my writing be – e.g. hard-sell or background information?
- Do I want a reaction / response? If yes, have I built in a mechanism for this response (such as ‘please let me know if you will be able to attend my performance’)?

Our four tips, in relation to preparing written statements about your work are:

- Make sure you write a short (paragraph) and long (one page) version early on in the development of your project, and continually update and revise these statements as your project progresses. Preparing statements at this early stage will ensure that you have material 'ready to go' when asked.
- Get a friend to read a draft with fresh eyes. Ask how it strikes them and if your intention is coming across.
- Be sure to provide the information that is required. This almost always includes content, form and context.
- Target your proposal. Make sure your material is written for the person who is going to read it. If you are writing a letter never use 'Dear Sir/Madam'; instead, research and identify the name of the person you want to communicate with.

## **HOW DO I FIND PEOPLE TO WRITE ABOUT MY WORK?**

A good way to contextualise, promote and develop your work is to create/encourage written responses, if this is an avenue that interests you. With the proliferation of independent blogs there are a number of mechanisms for how to engage with writers about your work. The LADA website has a [list of critical writing platforms](#) under the Resources section

Again, if the right context for writing about your work does not exist you could consider setting up a blog, asking for email responses from friends and colleagues, or writing about your work yourself.

Recommended blogs:

- [Exeunt](#) – Online theatre & performance magazine, with weekly newsletter.
- [Run-Riot](#) – Listing of cultural happenings in London, updated on a regular is by a team of writers, agitators and culture enthusiasts.
- [This is tomorrow](#) – A contemporary art magazine.
- [Total Theatre Magazine](#) – An online magazine and resource for practitioners of contemporary theatre and performance.

## WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE ADVICE?

As mentioned above, Artsadmin has a free advisory service, but generally other artists are likely to be your best long term support network, knowing what it takes to make work, to keep going and to find ways forward. Perhaps it is stating the obvious, but supporting others will help develop a sense of community. So many opportunities are created by artists themselves, rather than by institutions – evidence that it is possible to create your own context.

Some links to artists offering advice:

- LADA's Vimeo channel for '[Artists on: Being an artist](#)'
- Alan Lane's [practical advice](#) for the newly emerging professional
- Action Hero's advice on [how to make a living as an artist](#)
- GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN's [interview](#) with Action hero about scratch opportunities
- Scottee's [discussion](#) on crowdfunding