

# INTERVIEW for the article: "What is the position of the (independent) artist in our country in the times of the current pandemics?"

The following set of questions is intended for artists and cultural workers. They have been sent to you in an attempt to gather the information for an article article that I'm writing.

I am striving to provide a realistic representation of the creative/art scene during the Covid-19 pandemic and your answers are of great importance to the article. I would not like to take a lot of your time, but I would appreciate your insights. I might decide to quote some of the answers in the article, therefore please fill-in your contact details. You can answer in English or in Macedonian. If you need translation of the questions in Macedonian, please contact me.

If you feel that some of the questions are not applicable to you, or you don't have an opinion on the issue, please leave the box empty. Finally, If you have any comments or disagreements, or would like to talk more about the issue I am exploring, please write to [brankoprlja@gmail.com](mailto:brankoprlja@gmail.com). If it's easier for you to just talk about the issues, we can arrange a video-chat.

Thank you in advance,  
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1. What is your opinion on ONLINE ART EVENTS? Do you think they give an opportunity to the artists and art audience or it diminishes their experience?

I believe that we can't talk about online events simply in terms of positive/negative - it is a \*different\* kind of experience, and it offers some new opportunities to artists and audience (it allows for more clear/pondered/researched discussion), but it also decreases the "intensity" of the overall experience.

2. Do you think that the HUMANISTIC aspect of ART is important in these strange times?

It depends on what we mean by "humanistic". I would argue that we need be more radical, and go beyond "humanistic". We need to propagate a shift of paradigm that will be bio/eco/etc...centric, and not antropocentric. So, rather than a "humanistic" aspect of art, I would argue for a "deantropocentrifying" aspect of art, that raises awareness of the fatal consequences we are living in a world where art plays by the rules of a late neoliberal paradigm, which is not just dehumanizing, but omni-destructive.

3. Do you think that CULTURAL POLICY MAKERS in our country have done enough concerning the cultural workers in the wake and the development of the pandemics?

No, they haven't. As far as I am informed, they have done little for some artists in the field of music (concerts in public), and they have pledged to give two basic monthly salaries to 141 artist - that already have their own company, but that covers an insignificant number of artists. Cultural policy makers and state institutions could have much more for artists. It is very easy to set some basic criteria: (low) income for past year / (un)employment status / relevance and recognition. On the basis of these criteria support could be given to artists and to us writers. But it doesn't happen. I am also member of MATA, the Translator's association, and regardless of the support that has been requested for the translators, also nothing has been done for us as translators, even though we translators are very much affected by the crisis.

4. In your opinion, are ARTS AND CULTURE VALUED in our society and if not, what could be done?

It is an overwhelmingly complex question. Arts and culture are valued, as they have always been. However, to a great extent, due to different types of personal and collective corruption, creativity is marginalized and good, non-provincial ideas don't receive visibility and accomplishment, which compromises the interest for the general public for critical, constructive culture. A lot could be done, on many levels.

5. Is the INDEPENDENT CULTURAL SCENE active in the current time of the crisis? If possible, give examples of current interesting initiatives?

Independence is hard, and therefore almost nonexistent. In a setting where sustainability is nonexistent, independence is also nonexistent. Most artists and cultural workers prefer to proclaim themselves as "independent" "activists", even though they are dependent on centers of power (very often external, such as the EU, or other NGO's and Foundations) for financial support. One initiative I can think of is a Facebook group called "Covid diaries" where enthusiasts post their quarantine short stories.

6. What role, if any, have the MUSEUMS had in the times of the crisis? Are you aware of any online exhibitions, discussions etc?

There are on-line exhibitions by some galleries, and the Museum of Contemporary art in Skopje has an initiative where they publish a work of art per day, with accompanying description. The MOCA also does screenings of films. Also, the national Cinematheque has exhibited some films for free screening and download, and has shared some film-studies (texts, papers) with the audience. In Strumica, there is an exhibition called "Self-portrait in self-isolation".

7. Are any artists, cultural workers or any other entities representing or advocating for extended SUPPORT from the government during Covid-19 crisis?

As far as I know, in the literature sector, there has been no artists or cultural workers that have been advocating for Support.

8. Can this situation teach us anything about the ROLE OF ART in society?

No, not really. This situation per se can't teach us much about the role of art. But, some good critical art could teach us about our role in situations like this.

9. The members of the Croatian platform "Za KRUH" made an appeal (<https://zakruh.wordpress.com/appeal/>) to their Ministry of Culture. Among (many) other things they ask for "universal basic income". Do you think Macedonian artists should propose similar appeals?

Yes, I do believe that Macedonian artists should do the same. Such "universal basic income" could apply to individuals on the basis of the three mentioned criteria: (low) income for past year / (un)employment status / relevance and recognition).

10. Do you think that artists and cultural workers should exercise their SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY during the current pandemic?

Yes, I do.

If you desire to add anything, please comment here:

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