

# 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?

They deffinitely give an opportunity but on the other hand here we had only few. Not enough! I think the state is not conciered at all about "us".(not only speaking about financial surviving but also surviving as an asrtists at all/creativity,scene playing, performing...etc)

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

Of course. It has two sides and explanations: 1. Humanistic accordng to everybody involved in Covid crisis.

2.Humanistic in way of talkin about all of "us" artists surviving this longtime crisis..:)

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?

Just in a small percent. I have a feeling that "cultural pilicy makers" in this country are not making any "culture"thede days. Most of the projects are stopped,theres no strategy or a plan for stream/online events, the support from state agencies is very very low. The only exception was the project "Culture in time of Corona"organised by City od Skopje. But it lasted only 40 days in april/may. Not enough..

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

In my personal opinion..not at all! Theres a lot of work to be done. First of all our Ministry of Culture should start working on a real cultural issues and problems in all sectors of our cultural fields. We need strong and functional cultural institutions.

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

Many bands, art artists, musicians are producing these days. Writing songs, recording, painting, doing online "gigs" DIY... Couple of musicians including myself are working on a online/donating initiation called SAVE THE MUSIC. Posting videos and new songs we wrote..but still. Without live performances its simply not enough.

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

We had a few "virtual exhibitions" in here. But to be honest i expected much more. Discussions or online workshops? Maybe 2..3...

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

Talking as an independent selfemployed musician, what i got as an support from our government was a 3 month minimal wage payment (in total some 730 euros per march, april, may..) but it stopped in may. We are dealing hard times now. Some of my colleagues are struggling to survive.

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

The role of art in times like this is crucial for keeping the mental health on a higher level. But i dont think our politicians will ever understand 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?

Of course! As soon as possible. BUT!..I dont think Macedonian politicians will give answer to any of the petitions or actions like these. We had strong appeal addressed to couple of relevant institutions to get somehow back the events under strictly based protocols...but ..unfortunately still no precised answe. The appeal was made by a massive initation called MUSIC - NOW!!

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

Of course. I think that the artists (especially musicians :)) are the most disciplined and most social responsible citisens. Unfortunaelly this problem is bigger and its a matter of low level of counccissnes of people living here in general

If you desire to add anything, please comment here:

We need strong Cultural State Institutions that will REALLY work on the problems, all of the cultural workers have! We are ignored, forgotten, banned, the last point of disscusionon any government meeting. We need imediate actions and help for all of "us"!

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