

Is working for the “exposure” a satisfactory situation for an up and coming creative artist?

As a student studying to become a creative artist the question of whether working for exposure is a satisfactory situation for someone in this field of work. Working for exposure is when someone will work for free and get credited for their work or will be able to put it down on their CV as experience. From doing research, there are a lot of artists that have been approached with the same offer of exposure instead of actually being paid. Most of them are not happy with this offer but also acknowledge that there are benefits from doing it. There are some grey areas in this like working for a charity or for a good cause that need to be judged individually, such as if it is a charity that the artist is passionate about and they are more than happy to work for free.

On one hand, working for exposure can be really beneficial for the artist. For example, it can get the artist's name out there and up for consideration with other potential employers. When reading John Liots' article “On Working for Exposure: A Truth of Creative Currencies” he mentions the fact that it has been beneficial to him to work for exposure. When studying photography at his university, he had an opportunity to take some photos that he proudly puts as the first thing on his website. This has sparked conversations between clients and him that have progressed that professional relationship and created more exposure for him whilst also getting paid. This shows that it can be satisfactory to work for exposure. In Matt Crawford's article “Working For Exposure Or Not? Everything You Need to Know About Working For Exposure” he lists some advantages for working for exposure. One of them is gaining on set experience. This can vastly help any person working in the creative arts since they can put this on their CV and will look like a better person to employ. It is valid to say that you would rather employ someone with experience than someone without and still have to pay them. Through working for free, it would be a lot easier to get the experience needed to then get higher paying roles. When gaining this on set experience it can also help the artist to make connections in their field. This was also one of the points that Crawford made. It can help to advance their career in the future since they can look out for each other and employ them, especially if they are good at their job and easy to get on with. Another point is that it can showcase the artist's work which can lead to more opportunities later.

On the other hand, working for exposure can damage the industry. It can question the legitimacy of the creative industry and whether it is actually an important industry if the artists are not being paid. This is mainly because most people do not fully understand the amount of time and effort that can go into creating a piece whether that be acting, scenic art or physically making a set. In the article “Working for ‘exposure’, is it worth it?” from Freelancer Talk, it brings up the very valid point that exposure does not pay the bills. Since working in a creative industry already does not guarantee a paycheck since it is mostly freelance work, this can put a lot of stress on the artist. The article also cautions that exposure can open the artist up to exploitation. This is because everyone will think that it is okay to compensate them with exposure and they will get less and less job offers that will actually pay them. In John Liots' article, he mentions that when he did work for free it was at an event he was asked to photograph that he was not paid for but other services that were hired such as

catering were being paid. Even though it turned out okay for Liots, it does not always turn out okay for every artist. At the start of his article he mentions the fact that the people who are saying that new artists should not work for exposure are the same ones who already have a stable job or have their name established in the scene. It is not fair for them to say this as it is not as much of a gamble for them as it is for a new artist. Being “paid” through exposure is very easy for the person hiring because it relies on the public and everyone else seeing that piece of art to consider actually supporting the artist. The same Freelancer Talk article mentioned earlier eloquently describes it as “‘exposure’ is a hollow promise presented as a desirable ‘what-if’ potential.”. It does not directly lead to paid work and the person hiring the artist is not in the wrong if or when it does not. There is no guarantee that enough people will see the art and bother to look at the artist for said artist to make enough money to compensate them properly for their time and hard work.

In conclusion, the jobs that are offering exposure should be judged on a case by case basis. If it seems like there is a good chance that the job can actually get the artist's name out there and considered then it is more than acceptable to be offered exposure, unless it would not cover the amount of time or effort put into it. If it is for a charity that the artist cares about then they should be able to do it for free without judgement just like anyone volunteering in a charity shop does. In the end it is up to the artist but it can reflect how much they think their work is worth.

Bibliography

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