

## **W.A.G.E. WO/MANIFESTO (2008)**

**W.A.G.E. (WORKING ARTISTS AND THE GREATER ECONOMY) WORKS TO DRAW ATTENTION TO ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES THAT EXIST IN THE ARTS, AND TO RESOLVE THEM.**

**W.A.G.E. HAS BEEN FORMED BECAUSE WE, AS VISUAL + PERFORMANCE ARTISTS AND INDEPENDENT CURATORS, PROVIDE A WORK FORCE.**

**W.A.G.E. RECOGNIZES THE ORGANIZED IRRESPONSIBILITY OF THE ART MARKET AND ITS SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS, AND DEMANDS AN END OF THE REFUSAL TO PAY FEES FOR THE WORK WE'RE ASKED TO PROVIDE: PREPARATION, INSTALLATION, PRESENTATION, CONSULTATION, EXHIBITION AND REPRODUCTION.**

**W.A.G.E. REFUTES THE POSITIONING OF THE ARTIST AS A SPECULATOR AND CALLS FOR THE REMUNERATION OF CULTURAL VALUE IN CAPITAL VALUE.**

**W.A.G.E. BELIEVES THAT THE PROMISE OF EXPOSURE IS A LIABILITY IN A SYSTEM THAT DENIES THE VALUE OF OUR LABOR. AS AN UNPAID LABOR FORCE WITHIN A ROBUST ART MARKET FROM WHICH OTHERS PROFIT GREATLY, W.A.G.E. RECOGNIZES AN INHERENT EXPLOITATION AND DEMANDS COMPENSATION.**

**W.A.G.E. CALLS FOR AN ADDRESS OF THE ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES THAT ARE PREVALENT AND PROACTIVELY PREVENTING THE ART WORKER'S ABILITY TO SURVIVE WITHIN THE GREATER ECONOMY.**

**W.A.G.E. ADVOCATES FOR DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT OF MUTUAL RESPECT BETWEEN ARTIST AND INSTITUTION.**

**WE DEMAND PAYMENT FOR MAKING THE WORLD MORE INTERESTING.**

## W.A.G.E. and Labor for Black Lives (2016)

Founded in 2008, Working Artists and the Greater Economy is a New York-based activist organization focused on establishing a sustainable labor relation between artists and the institutions that contract our work. In the absence of state regulation and oversight W.A.G.E. introduces mechanisms for self-regulation into the field of contemporary art for both institutions and artists.

Artists have been providing free content and services for decades and the struggle for compensation has been going on for just as long—but W.A.G.E. believes that *how* we make the case for compensation must change. The demand to be paid can no longer be made on the basis of being an impoverished, marginalized, and exploited constituency.

Today the art field is an elite one and barriers to entry into it are higher than ever. And while it is true that the work of artists is still exploited by a multibillion-dollar industry (as all labor is under capitalism), it is also true that many artists operate in close proximity to a billionaire class and benefit greatly from it.

It is also undeniable that the art field's institutions are predicated on deeply entrenched forms of white supremacy and that internal efforts to deal with this have usually been weak gestures toward increasing "diversity". This has never been good enough, having historically changed almost nothing.

Even though W.A.G.E. has advocated for reforming the nonprofit sector and not overturning it, we believe that fundamental structural change is critical to that process. We agitate for the wholesale redistribution of resources within the field and propose forms of union building based on individual self-organization supported by a broad-based collective struggle that must take place laterally across class.

Aligning W.A.G.E. with Black Lives Matter and finding ways to support it through Labor for Black Lives is critical for us. The struggle for equity in the art field can no longer be limited to empty gestures at a seemingly radical political agenda; it must go much further in acknowledging the systemic racism and inequity upon which the field's institutions are built—and most importantly it must align with those whose labor has not been exploited by our field's institutions simply because they have been, and still are, prevented from fully participating in them.