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A Fracture in a Broken Crystal: Artists' Precarity Under Crisis

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Social sciences have identified that artistic work typically characterizes as highly precarious, both professionally, and creatively or ontologically (for a review see, for example, Duarte, 2020). As crises tend to increase social inequalities, artists, who are already exposed to high degrees of precarity and so more unprotected, along unskilled workers (Waite, 2009), tend to experience an increase of such precarity under those conditions. Therefore, crises might also reveal the most critical components of that precarity. Besides, since the social representation of artists' precarity, including the one of policy, is not so well clear than the one of research (Comunian & England, 2020), moments of crisis seem to have the power of increasing the social visibility of such precarity (Comunian & Conor, 2017), and of stressing the need for structural changes. All these aspects are in analogy with Sigmund Freud's metaphor for psychopathology: "If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal's structure." (Freud, 1933, p. 58). With more concrete relevance for the thematic of this article, Albert Camus also wrote, in his 1947 novel *The Plague*, "It was as if the earth on which our houses stood were being purged of its secreted humors; thrusting up to the surface the abscesses and pus-clots that had been forming in its entrails." (Camus, 1948, p.16).

Analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis that started in 2020 on artists' precarity has therefore not only intrinsic value but is also an opportunity to draw attention to an already existing problem. The goal of this paper is to explore knowledge, gained so far in different national contexts, mostly by social sciences research, about impact of that pandemic crisis on artists' precarity. Besides, there was also focus on how some artists testify through their art a negative impact of the pandemic on their work, or somehow integrate this thematic in it, mostly in answering to art calls on the subject.

The text is structured in three parts. In part one a summary is given on how the pandemic crisis is impacting both on artists' precarity (and more generally in cultural workers' precarity), both at the professional and the ontological level. In part two, an analysis is done mainly on the work and psychological consequences of such impact. Finally, in the conclusion, besides a summary, some practical implications are drawn regarding ways of helping artists and for the future of the art world.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis on Artists' Precarity

As expected, there is evidence from several national contexts that the pandemic crisis increased artists' precarity in general, threatening the sustainability of many. Moreover, this increase is adding to a previous one resulting from the economic crisis of 2008 (Banks, 2020). Besides, the crisis affected more artists of the performing arts, where direct and non-protected interaction with audiences is essential (Bataille et al., 2020), female artists (Dümcke, 2021; Pacella et al., 2020), and probably even more the ones that are beginning their careers, that belong to ethnic minorities and that live in poorer areas (Comunian & England, 2020).

Impact of COVID -19 Pandemic Crisis in Professional Precarity

Mainly by obliging to the closing of cultural institutions and canceling cultural events, the pandemic provoked a significant reduction of work activity in the cultural sector, especially in independent workers, in micro-firms and non-profit organizations, in the venue-based sub-sectors (e.g., festivals, live music, performing arts, cinema, museums, etc.), and in higher levels than in the general population (e.g., Kern, 2020; OECD, 2020). For example, 90 percent of world museums have closed during the pandemic crisis (UNESCO, 2020) and, emblematically, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra had never gone through such a long closure since its foundation in the 19th century, even during the world wars or the Spanish flu (Dümcke, 2021). More radically, in some contexts, like China, the pandemic crisis might have even eradicated, at least in the near future, some cultural events, like many independent music venues (Gu et al., 2020), and more than 10 percent of world museums may never reopen (UNESCO, 2020).

The impact of the pandemic in cultural work reduction is interpretable in a work for the call "Art in Quarantine", by *Umbigo* art magazine, where artist Fábio Colaço, presents a

pair of shoes with a stone on top. In a joint legend it is written: "*Untitled (heavy)*, 2020, is a sculpture built from a ready-made logic. This work can be read as a metaphor for the current situation, trapped by a social, political and economic stone, Sisyphus of the time in which we live." (https://fabiocolaco.com/untitled-heavy).

Correlatively to the reduction in cultural work, the pandemic provoked a fall in the income/revenues of the cultural sector, parallelly to many others (Milne, 2020), along with an intended dislocation of many artists out or towards the periphery of cultural urban centers (Eikhof, 2020). Moreover, the prediction for the medium term is that this negative effect of the pandemic crisis will last and could amplify, due to drop of demand and investment and funding in culture (OECD, 2020).

Convergently, in a work titled *(Un)natural Virus,* 2020, for the referred call "Art in Quarantine", artist Colin Ginks, presents a short video of an ATM machine that returns a long blank bank coupon (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo1Tcmp69lA&ab_channel=UmbigoMagazine).

Also for this call, the duo Sara and André, presented an untitled work consisting of an official independent art worker's provider form filled with apparently meaningless doodles (https://umbigomagazine.com/pt/blog/2020/06/27/arte-em-quarentena-sara-andre).

As it happened with the virus responsible for the pandemic, the scenario of an increased artists' precarity globalized, but also assumed local variants, analyzed through national studies.

Preliminary results of a survey study in Portugal (Neves et al., 2020-2022, as cited in Nadais, 2021) reported a triplication of absence of work, from five to 16 percent, among independent cultural workers between 2019 and 2020, during the first pandemic wave. Furthermore, this is in heavy contrast with general unemployment during the same period, that reached a maximum of eight percent. Parallelly, in Portugal some artistic sectors were particularly more affected by the pandemic crisis, like the one of performance (Borges, 2020) and urban artists (Ferro, 2020).

A survey study in Malta (Visanich & Attard, 2020) indicated that 90.8 percent of artists' working activities, like exhibitions, concerts, and performances, were cancelled (52.8 %) or postponed (38.0 %) due to the pandemic. Moreover, for these artists much of their work was not transferable online, since many are freelancers that work from temporary projects, provoking a significant negative impact on their income (Visanich & Attard, 2020).

Studies on the situation in Germany (Dümke, 2021) also indicated a significant reduction in artist's working activity and correspondent revenues. Consequently, it was preview that the cultural and creative sectors will lose between 12.7 and 23 percent of their annual return due to the pandemic crisis (Dümke, 2021).

A meta-analysis of survey studies conducted in UK (Comunian & England, 2020) indicated a significant reduction of organizational activities and individual workloads in the creative and cultural sector, in many cases of 100 percent (Comunian & England, 2020). Artists were particularly affected by this, with 82 percent of respondents having their work canceled (like events, performances, and public activities), due to official advice to social distance and self-isolation. Additionally, the crisis might provoke a long-term breakdown of freelance work provision, from which many artists depend as a secondary income source. Furthermore, the long-term impact of the crisis on artistic work activity might be bigger in sectors where audiences could take longer to gain security for attending performances or events. Naturally, the UK reduction in work activity also corresponded to a significant loss of income/revenue for organizations and individuals working in the creative and cultural sector (Comunian & England, 2020).

According to a US report (Randy, 2021) American artists/creatives belong to the working group that is was most affected in terms of reduction of work activity due to the pandemic. Specifically, in the beginning of March 2021 they were experiencing a reduction of 79 percent in creative work that generates income, with 62 percent with "drastic decrease". Consequently, those artists/creatives reported a loss of income of 95 percent. Moreover, from those, "black, indigenous, artists of color" were suffering more than white artists.

A study on the situation in Argentina (Serafini & Novosel, 2021) reported that 44 percent of the workers in the cultural sector had their activities and income suspended due to the pandemic crisis. Besides, 32 percent of those were unable to pay basic personal expenses.

A study that analysis the impact of the pandemic crisis in the cultural industries of the African continent (Joffe, 2021) points to their drastic decline due to the imposed restrictions, despite their relative underdevelopment.

A study on the impact of the pandemic crisis in Australian music industry (Brunt & Nelligan, 2020) indicated radical reduction in Australian musicians' work activity due to the national closure of live music venues in March 2020. Consequently, the music industry lost millions in that country.

Consistently with and corroborating the reduction in their work activity and income, artists publicly manifested and informed on the intensification of their precarity, and at the same time required support.

For instance, in UK there was an active requirement of government support by organizations and individuals working in the creative and cultural sector, frequently by lobby, in face of the increased precarity the pandemic brought (Comunian & England, 2020). Specific required actions include tax suspension, rent holidays, interest-free loans, faster access to funding, grants and simplifying applications for Universal Credit. Similarly, in US artists/creatives reported a need of food/housing assistance, forgivable business loans, and unemployment insurance (Randy, 2021).

In a performance, by Nuno Gama and Olga Roriz, 2020, that took place in a public space in Lisbon, instead of presenting clothes, fashion models only dressed black thongs (https://visao.sapo.pt/atualidade/sociedade/2020-10-10-nuno-gama-mostrou-performance-em-vez-de-colecao-na-modalisboa).

Impact of COVID -19 Pandemic Crisis on Ontological Precarity

The work limitations brought by the pandemic to the artists resulted also in non-previewed changes to their creative work, in ways that can eventually constrain it and even alienate it.

Imposed social distancing due to the pandemic is a condition in antinomy with the experience of direct exhibition and contact with art works (Horváth, 2020). The consequence is an impossibility of such exhibition and art appreciation or a reduction in its quality, that becomes dependent of an indirect showing and contact through art reproductions or streaming. Social distance measures, along with occasional closing of locals and events of art exhibition and performance, resulted then in a kind of "pandemic censorship" for the artists and their works. Moreover, in some cases these restrictions imposed changes in the works of art. For instance, the referred study in Malta, by Visanich and Attard (2020), indicated that although most cultural events were canceled or postponed due to the pandemic, some (5.2 %) shifted online, and others (3.9 %) changed due to it (specially rehearsals, work-in-progress, and creative research).

The "pandemic censorship" on art is represented by the work *Memorial #2,* of Nuno Vieira, 2020, presented to the previously referred call "Art in Quarantine": an empty room of art gallery with an office chair from the artist's studio, on which a room sheet is placed.

The sheet had information about the works developed for the room but that remained stored in the artist's studio during the exhibition (https://umbigomagazine.com/pt/blog/2020/04/10/arte-em-quarentena-nuno-sousa-vieira/). Another work in the same direction, produced to the same call, is *Still-life Agitable #2*, 2020, by Diogo Costa, that shows a work of art inside a box (https://umbigomagazine.com/pt/blog/2020/05/15/arte-em-quarentena-diogo-costa/).

Paradoxically, this production of art works that refer to the pandemic crisis, along with others that contribute to recommend health safety and adaptative personal/social practices during this crisis (e.g., Adenle & Akande, 2020; Buchmiller et al., 2020; Pandanwangi et al., 2020), show again not only the resilience of art under negative conditions, but also that art finds new forms and motives under those conditions, which serves as a way of articulating and coping with them (e.g., Govinden, 2020). Convergently, forced confinement due to the pandemic increased the amount and reduced the costs of the offer to culture and art, through television and internet, and turned more people into it, both in terms of appreciation and creation, testifying and increasing the visibility of its importance in public well-being (Banks, 2020; OECD, 2020). Nevertheless, there is also a risk in this boom: the reinforcement of a social representation of art as a mere source of joy or relaxation, in oblivion to its needed function in social critique (Banks, 2020; Martinho, 2020).

It should also be considered that the pandemic crisis brought perceived advantages to the creative work of some (maybe established) artists: for instance, some (like Portuguese sculptor Rui Chafes) reported that the forced confinement during the pandemic worked as an opportunity of reclusion and social isolation that allowed them to concentrate exclusively and satisfactorily in their work (de Oliveira, 2021). A fact that is not surprising considering isolation is a common working routine among artists (Currey, 2013). Moreover, this converges with some of the results of a study that compared 235 social sciences students' diaries pre and during the pandemic and lockdown: "little-c level" or "everyday" creative activity (including artistic creativity of the same level) significantly increased during lockdown (Karwowski et al., 2021). The authors hypothesise that creative activity during lockdown might serve as an emotion regulation strategy to relieve boredom, keep oneself busy and improve the mood. Actually, some research founded evidence that social isolation and sensory deprivation can benefit creativity (e.g., Forgays & Forgays. 1992), maybe because those conditions can promote daydreaming, which frequently characterizes as creative (Ariety, 1976). Additionally,

economic and social crises can be periods with positive impact in art production, even provoking new art movements, like expressionism and modernism (Radermercker, 2021). Oppositely, for some artists reclusion and social isolation are counterproductive. For instance, due to the forced confinement, performer artists and students dependent of a workspace in-person coaching to maintain and develop technical and artistic abilities, like circus artists, risk falling behind their labor force in the expected pos-confinement phase (Stuckey et al., 2021). According to these authors this could result that those in such condition might seek different employment pathways.

Furthermore, due to the impact of the pandemic crisis on closing borders and limiting international travel cultural exchange and cross-cultural learning opportunities, such as artistic residences and tours abroad, was restricted (Global Impact, 2020, as cited in Anheier et al. 2021).

A relevant art testimony is a work, by urban artist MaisMenos, 2020, composed of the graffiti sentence *New World Border* (which gives the title to the work), sprayed on a window blind (https://www.artsy.net/artwork/plus-maismenos-plus-new-world-order). While the work can intentionally allude to the special tragedy of the forced home confinement of urban artists, it is also interpretable as a reference to the within borders enclosing of artists and people in general.

Consequences of Artists' Precarity Increment

Increment of artists' precarity due to the pandemic crisis had several consequences regarding sustainability and pursuit of art careers, the adaption of new required form of artistic work, mental health and well-being, and support availability.

Due to the pandemic crisis some artists and cultural workers were obliged to leave their profession, which can derive in the loss of talent for society (Anheimer et al., 2021). The crisis might also have a long-term impact of reducing the motivation and financial support students need to enter higher education in the arts, by increasing the difficulties art graduates will have in joining the sector (Comunian et al., 2020).

Besides, by imposing artists and artistic institutions with their audiences the pandemic crisis pusheed an online shift of art exhibition in the form of online museum displays, virtual exhibitions, distant visits, virtual events, and streaming (Gu et al., 2021; Horváth, 2020). The crisis therefore reduced a collective, physical, on site, indoor, public pattern of art consumption and increased a digital/virtual, private, home, free and open-access

pattern (Radermecker, 2021). In this way the crisis might also had stimulated the development of virtual ways of displaying art or of complementing the real exhibition of art in the post-pandemic future. For instance, virtual exhibitions facilitate the availability of art by overcoming physical restrictions and complement and increase the impact of physical exhibitions, by extending audiences' motivation, deepening and participation (Foo, 2008). Some projects focused in expanding established ways of exhibiting art, by creating paired digital contexts (Marmeleira, 2021). Besides, such development will also prospectively benefit persons generally or occasionally limited to an exclusive virtual contact with art or with some art works (e.g., individuals with special needs, isolated or in a long-distance).

But despite allowing a virtual display and a form of accessibility to some art this online shift of art is also problematic. Such online shift does not properly compensate the lack of direct delivery. Primarily, only 54 percent of the word population has access to internet (*The State of Broadband*, 2020, as cited in Anheier et al. 2021), and with unequal media literacy competencies (Quintela & Rodrigues, 2020). Also, the online shift can compromise a fair gain and control by artists for their digital displays (CuttingEdge, 2020, as cited in Anheier et al. 2021). Such shift is not possible or easy to all artistic activities and systems, functioning as an "unequalizer" (Anheier et al. 2021). Effectively, the need to digitalize and transfer artistic content online requires costly training and time of work that can discriminate many artists which will be left behind (Comunian & England, 2020). For example, the augmented consumption of streamed cultural content during lockdown benefited the main specialized companies (OECD, 2020). The prolonged use of digital tools that the online shift is also demanding from artists can provoke exhaustion and a longing for manual crafty work (Marmeleira, 2021). The mass availability during forced confinements of much art works in an open access mode also developed audiences' expectations that such works should be accessible for "minimal or low cost" (CuttingEdge, 2020, as cited in Anheier et al. 2021). Furthermore, the exclusive virtual and distant contact with art can change and probably limits the process of art appreciation. Most importantly, that kind of contact simply does not replace the real contact with art, and some forms of art are not prone to digitalization (Polivsteva, 2020). Plus, it has been argued that such online contact might lead audiences to surf across reproductions of works of art and to spend only a short time on specific ones (Anheier et al. 2021). Virtual and distant contact with works of art also limits the behavioral dimension of art appreciation. As an art spectator testifies: "(…) I just cannot connect, it's not natural. For example, let

us say that tomorrow the Cinematheque shows a movie at 22:00. My body must dislocate there. There is a deliberation, an agency that does not occur in the digital." (Marmeleira, 2021, p. 20). Finally, the rapid online shift of art might somehow also be conceptualized as a symptom of an economical expansionism that even exploits the pandemic, still if involuntarily, and might threaten the quality of art appreciation (Quintela & Rodrigues, 2020).

In a performance named *Cuarentena de Impresión* (*Printing Quarentine*), within the larger project *Impresiones sobre Actualidad* (*Impressions on Actuality*), 2020, Colombian artist José Diaz confined in an art gallery, lively broadcasting 24 h. per day, to continue printing sentences on the actuality, some of which expose the constrains the pandemic brought on artistic work (e.g.," Today, at a distance"; "Today, virtual") (González-Martin, 2021) (www.espacioeldorado.com/impresiones-sobre-actualidad).

A more specific form of artists' ontological precarity the pandemic crisis and the online shift indirectly promoted derives from the fact that such seems to stimulate the "criptoart" market (Pequenino, 2021), which involves transactions (with criptocoins) of digital art or digital registries of works of art (and not the works themselves), possibly made by the artists, known as "non-fungible tokens - NFTs". Criptoart seems to present some advantages for the artists, like the increase of visibility (particularly relevant during pandemic), the register of works' chains of provenience, the possible gain for in subsequent sales, and some independence from intermediaries (Pequenino, 2021). Nevertheless, as this author states, criptoart also facilitates certain forms of artists' alienation, like non-authorised NFTs upon works of art, or use of worthless criptocoins in their transaction. Moreover, NFTs seem to promote art speculation and instrumentalization: for instance, a work of art (*Morons*, by Banksy, 2016, which ironically represents an art auction) was already bought, digitalized, and destroyed in order to increase the value of its correspondent NFT (Criddle, 2021).

Besides, as one of the potential consequences of work precarity is the deterioration of mental health and well-being (Blustein et al., 2016), it can be expected that an increased precarity due to the crisis will also increasing such deterioration, also possibly amplified by confinement and social distancing. In his participation on the Wreading-digits' "Art in Quarentine" call, 2020, artist Jan Theuninck presented a photo of himself as a prostrated, apparently depressed, street beggar near a written sign *Exiled in my own Country*, which also gives the title to the work.

Most of the inquired artists in the study of Visanich and Attard (2020), in Malta, indicated that the effects of the pandemic on work termination and postponement had a significant impact on their life satisfaction and wellbeing. In the same direction, an analysis of media narratives about the Australian music industry's mental health crisis that have emerged during the pandemic (Brunt & Nelligan, 2020), suggested that many musicians were traumatically experiencing loss, grief, anxiety, and despair, provoked by absence of work, with significant impact on their mental health. Parallelly, the same analysis disclosed a correlatively increase of promotion about wellbeing resources for musicians (e.g., self-care tips, counselling, psychotherapy).

Moreover, particularly for artists that could not transfer their workspace to their home context, like performers, the pandemic crisis created new stressors that can amplify even more mental health problems (Stuckey et al., 2021). As these authors state, since performer artists ground their work on the body and on the interaction with the context, including apparatus and audience (making their art bodily extended and embodied), they are more psychologically vulnerable to a forced separation of material/social spaces.

Nevertheless, it should be considered that deterioration of mental health and well-being in artists that are able to keep creating might be partly compensated by the know positive effects art activities have on mental health, in terms of lowering anxiety and depression, and of increasing life satisfaction (Randy, 2021).

The pronunciation of artists' precarity due to the pandemic crisis prompted some cities and states to support artists and culture workers and organizations with measures like subsidies or tax delays or rebates (Anheier et al. 2021; Betzler et al., 2020; Brian & O'Connor, 2021b; Dümcke, 2021; Joffe, 2021; Pacella et al, 2020; Serafini & Novosel, 2020). Such support was justified not only by the need of helping a collapsing sector, but also considering the psychological, social, and economic functions of art and culture (Brian & O'Connor, 2021b). Nevertheless, besides the fact that the scale and scope of this support varies much across and within contexts (Anheier et al. 2021; Brian & O'Connor, 2021b), in many even this support faces problems and obstacles. In general, much of this support is not adequate to the freelance, intermittent and hybrid work of the artists (OECE, 2020). Further, most support was given to institutions and their employees, rather to individual artists, that often are ineligible freelancers (Anheier et al. 2021). For instance, in UK newly employed cultural workers are not receiving government support since this requires a record of tax returns (Comunian & England, 2020). In Portugal the pandemic crisis leaved many cultural workers without social support (e.g., layoff;

unemployment budget), since their condition as precarious (e.g., working without a contract) was not making them eligible to such support (Carvalho & Sousa, 2021), a fact that triggered structural reforms in this issue. The equivalent happened in Australia, since many arts and culture workers fail the prerequisite of a 12-month continuous employment with one employer (Pacella et al, 2020). Considering the obstacles to an effective general support to artists in need independently of their status, it has been argued that the crisis likely increased the winner-take-all structures in cultural markets (Betzler, et al., 2020). More importantly, it seems that state support of the cultural sector in face of the pandemic crisis consisted mainly of emergency reactions, in the absence of a needed strategic action that would contribute for a longer-term improvement of its conditions (Serafini, & Novosel, 2021).

Conclusion

Like crises in general, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis seemed to increase the already existing precarity that tends to affect artists, as many other disadvantaged workers, promoting the social inequality they tend to be exposed to. Consequently, this crisis seemed to make more visible an higher precarity that artists already tended to be exposed to, and that does not result from it. In this perspective, the specific impact of this crisis on artists' precarity can be placed in a more general context of a crisis of neoliberalism (Banks, 2020; Banks & Connor, 2021b; Meyrick & Barnett, 2020) or of "rentier capitalism", if we better consider that economy has evolved to such a scenario (Standing, 2020).

Having in mind that the exploratory analysis here conducted is mostly based on ongoing research that just delivered early findings, it is possible to conclude that the pandemic crisis increased artists' typical, although heterogeneous, shortage of work activity, and low income. This is naturally accompanied by artists' public denouncement of their situation and claim for official support. Moreover, by distancing art/artists and audiences (beneficial for some artists and unsuitable for others) the crisis brought a kind of "pandemic censorship" of art, that nevertheless resisted trough a (potentially advantageous, but problematic) online shift, a development of new themes and a contribution to the global response against the pandemic. Besides, confinement of artists threatened the creative sustainability and development of some. Consequently, the crisis might have sabotaged vocational orientation to the arts and maintenance of art careers,

demanded digital work adaptations for which not all artists are prepared, might have increased in them the deterioration of mental health and well-being that typically results from precarity, and prompted unequal state support for which many artists are ineligible. For the short-term, the pandemic crisis demanded ways of helping artists in need, especially the ones in this condition who just live from artistic work. In this line several actions have been proposed for artists (Joffe, 2021; OEDC, 2020; Visanich & Attard, 2020) like: emergency funds, in the logic of the universal basic income; solidarity grants; quick resolution of pending payments; advanced payment of new commissions; tax incentives; or investment in cultural production. Besides, counselling and psychotherapy services and resources can be facilitated, to help artists dealing with the pandemic impact on personal mental health (e.g., Stuckey et al, 2021). Moreover, artists can be assisted on how to connect with their audiences and produce revenue at a distance (e.g., online exhibiting; livestreaming; etc.). Digitalization of art and culture demands development of digital skills in artists, greater extensibility of digital access (OECD, 2020), and adequate ground and planning (Quintela & Rodrigues, 2020), by artists and cultural workers (Polivtseva, 2020), in order its quality is not threaten.

For the long-term the pandemic crisis stresses the need to: find ways of making free-lance artists eligible to special social security measures in case of need, like wage-supplements or layoff (Visanich and Attard, 2020); reinforce the importance that artists organize in cooperatives (Battaile et al, 2020) and lobby groups that represent them collectively; invest in digital infrastructure (OECD, 2020); and to promote intersection of culture with education and health services (OECD, 2020).

Moreover, this crisis stresses the need, potentially constituting an opportunity, for structural actions that help to reduce or eradicate artists' precarity in the future and not only in the short-term. Basic income can be one answer to artists' precarity, and for precarity in general, as the following quote of a testimony of an artist illustrates: "We are all emotional beings as well as rational ones. My basic income payment was the day I became free – a signal I could dream of something better" (Standing, 2020, p. 94). But aspiring for more, this crisis is an opportunity for developing conditions of stable and adequately remunerated work for artists (Comunian & England, 2020), along with due social care (Quintela & Rodrigues, 2020), under a possible "new deal for culture" (Banks & O'Connor, 2021a, p.1). Furthermore, this crisis appeals to the need of developing cultural infrastructures and seriously assuming the social role of culture and arts, parallelly to other social components like sports or health (Anheier eat al. 2021). This

would dignify art and artistic work and would develop its sustainability in general and in the face of future crises. As other previous crises, the pandemic crisis stresses therefore the social regard owned to the artists, and that seems expressed in the work *Self Portrait of the Artist during COVID-19*, by Chris Theiss, 2020, a bust of himself using a respirator mask, inside a glass bell, with the word "respect" at the base (https://www.schack.org/exhibits/sheltered-artists-respond-to-covid-19).

Besides, the crisis opens the opportunity to move beyond a massive tourism-based culture to models that favor cross-innovation between the cultural sector and traditional manufacturing and services; and to use culture to raise awareness on structural threats like climate change and population ageing (OECD, 2020).

Finalizing, the negative impact of this pandemic crisis in artists, as in the other sectors, can be treated with palliative care, just to return, after the pandemic, to the previous situation or, alternatively, with measures that help to restructure the relationship of artists and other workers with society. In a series entitled *The Ghostlight Theatre Project*, for the exhibition "Art in the Plague Year", by California Museum of Photography, 2021, artist Sara Boyer presents a sequence of photos of vacant theatres, illuminated by "ghost lights", that she visited during the pandemic across Southern California. As the exhibition text that accompanies this series states: "The project, however, is not about emptiness but potential. After all, an empty theater is pure possibility. Theater is a site of change. "When we are invited back in, theater will have evolved. It will invite more of us back in to all its phases—audience, creatives, actors, stagehands, stories. It will be stronger. That is what theater does. That is what we do." And we ourselves will be changed. Theater is "where we transform," states the artist." (California Museum of Photography, 2021).

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