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## **Organizing Dark Matter: W.A.G.E. as Alternative Worker Organization**

Greig de Peuter

### **This is not an artwork**

On 20 September 2018, W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy), an artist-initiated activist organization based in New York City, launched WAGENCY. Countering unpaid work in the arts, the WAGENCY platform gives artists digital tools to request payment for their contributions to US nonprofit galleries and museums - from a solo exhibition to an artist’s talk. “W.A.G.E. is not an artwork,” W.A.G.E. insisted when it announced WAGENCY.<sup>1</sup> This refusal to be misclassified as an art project highlights W.A.G.E.’s activist intentions: to transform prevailing institutional practices through collective action. W.A.G.E.’s clarification also tacitly names a contradiction for which it has low tolerance: the art world currently has an appetite for socially engaged and politically radical artwork while many art institutions seem content to restrict their engagement with labour justice to an exhibition theme or panel topic.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, when the art press has covered W.A.G.E., the stories often focus on discrete programs that W.A.G.E. has developed. This chapter does not approach W.A.G.E. as an art project, or limit its distinction to have devised a fee calculator for example. Instead, W.A.G.E. is positioned as an alternative worker organization - albeit one whose strategies are shaped by the specific conditions of the art field, the economic habits of which W.A.G.E. has worked for more than a decade to reform.

W.A.G.E. was founded in 2008. Emerging in advance of Occupy Wall Street, W.A.G.E. was among the currents of discontent anticipating the surge of collective outrage in the face of deepening class inequality and deregulated industry in the US. Like many activist groups, W.A.G.E. grew out of conversations between friends and acquaintances. Its founders, some of whom rented studio space in the same building,<sup>3</sup> talked about how, even if their profiles as artists were rising, they struggled to get by - while many nonprofit galleries seemed to expect them to show work for nothing, or next to nothing. Initiated

by a group of more than ten visual and performing artists and independent curators that included A.K. Burns, K8 Hardy, Lise Soskolne, and A.L. Steiner, W.A.G.E. began to build solidarity through open forums, where they sounded out artists' concerns about money matters. W.A.G.E. continued its "consciousness-raising" work, singling out the problem of nonpayment in presentations, workshops, and interviews. In 2012 W.A.G.E. released the results of its artist survey: 58% of 577 respondents reported a situation of receiving no compensation from a New York nonprofit art institution.<sup>4</sup>

W.A.G.E. incorporated as a nonprofit in 2011 and, in 2014, one of W.A.G.E.'s co-founders, Soskolne, became W.A.G.E.'s full-time, paid organizer. The same year, it launched its signature policy initiative, W.A.G.E. Certification, a voluntary program recognizing nonprofit galleries and museums that pay artist fees as set by W.A.G.E. By 2019, 72 institutions had been certified. Alongside coordinating WAGENCY, W.A.G.E. has spearheaded new projects, including a blockchain-based platform that would help to return to artists a share of the expanded value when one of their artworks is resold at a profit in the commercial market. Inside a decade, W.A.G.E. went from a small, feisty grassroots collective to an internationally recognized, yet lean, organization, which not only advocates for labour standards in the nonprofit art sector, but also provides practical tools to begin the work of doing better by equality.

W.A.G.E.'s lineage could be mapped from multiple branches internal to contemporary art - the tradition of institutional critique;<sup>5</sup> the embrace of the collective as a way of working;<sup>6</sup> the practice of artists creating and managing their own institutions such as artist-run centres;<sup>7</sup> the recent spike of interest in labour issues, artistic labour especially, among artists, theorists, and curators; etc.<sup>8</sup> But W.A.G.E. is only partly locatable within practices more or less unique to the art world. W.A.G.E.'s aspirations - to redistribute wealth and raise compensation to benefit the people who produce value in the art economy - are squarely within the traditions of unionism. Already notable for its longevity, W.A.G.E. is an early-21<sup>st</sup> century addition to the episodic history of collective labour organizations formed by American visual artists at the margins of the commercial cultural industries.<sup>9</sup> Formally, W.A.G.E. is not a union. Nor does its dispersed artist constituency easily lend itself to organizing or have work relationships that neatly fit traditional models of collective representation. Typically, an artist engages an art institution on a short-term project basis, whether it is a six-week exhibition or a two-hour presentation. W.A.G.E.'s constituency lacks a single, stable employer to whom to address economic demands - but they also, by virtue of their employment status, do not have access to collective bargaining rights.<sup>10</sup>

The employment status of the artist - most of whom earn their primary keep beyond their art practice - parallels that of freelancers, independent contractors, gig workers, and other workers who are not in a “standard employment relationship,” the fraying normative arrangement around which many social protections and rights have been designed.<sup>11</sup> Artists also operate in a professional milieu of intense competition, individualizing coping tactics, and deep attachment to work. Setting out to improve artists’ livelihoods despite these challenging conditions, W.A.G.E. is an example of what Immanuel Ness terms “new forms of worker organization,” permutations of which range from worker centres to rank-and-file-led unions.<sup>12</sup> While there frequently is greater interaction with unions than the label implies, “alt-labour” signals similar experiments that support nonunion workers, such as the Fight for \$15 campaign and the intern labour rights movement, which have mobilized, outside a collective bargaining framework, to improve workers’ conditions.<sup>13</sup> In the last decade or so, nonunion cultural workers and their allies have initiated several organizations fitting into this alt-labour constellation, such as the Urban Worker Project, Game Workers Unite, Gulf Labor Coalition, Model Alliance, Precarious Workers Brigade - and W.A.G.E.

This chapter is a case study of W.A.G.E., which has received only passing attention in cultural labour studies. Informed by W.A.G.E.-authored texts, media coverage of W.A.G.E., and interviews with the group’s core organizer and programmer, this chapter surveys W.A.G.E.’s strategies for organizing “dark matter,” a concept that Gregory Sholette repurposed from physics as a metaphor for the majority of artists and activities that populate the art world and uphold and subsidize its most visible and commercially successful figures.<sup>14</sup> Inevitably partial, the account that follows describes W.A.G.E. in five registers: its practice of *parrhesia*, algorithm of fairness, strategy of certification, post-horizontalist form of organization, and platformization of labour politics. While W.A.G.E. has been tackling dilemmas specific to the nonprofit arts, its strategies hold wider relevance to confronting the challenge of organizing workers who are outside of an employment relationship, who lack access to unions, and for whom the opportunity to be self-expressive or the promise of exposure may be regarded as compensation enough.

### ***Parrhesia***

W.A.G.E.’s focus on nonpayment was a strategic decision informed by reflection on the Art Workers Coalition.<sup>15</sup> Between 1969 and 1971, the AWC agitated in New York City around a raft of contentious issues - ties between art institutions and the military complex, artists’ lack of control over the context in which their work was shown, and the marginalization of women artists and artists of colour, and much more.<sup>16</sup> While respectful of the AWC’s historic

significance, W.A.G.E. stingingly identified the most lasting concrete policy achievement from the AWC's lengthy list of demands: free admission to the MOMA one evening a week, which has become a corporate sponsorship opportunity.<sup>17</sup>

From crushing M.F.A. debt to big-oil money sloshing around the museum world, harassment in art-world workplaces, and the icon of culture-led gentrification, the starchitect-designed gallery - W.A.G.E. is not unaware that the art sector is overdue for "total structural reform."<sup>18</sup> Still, W.A.G.E. homed in on a single issue. By isolating nonpayment, W.A.G.E. puts to the test a premise of collective action theory: a source of dissatisfaction is more likely to scale to a grievance with the capacity to mobilize when there is a perception of unfairness or injustice in the mix.<sup>19</sup> W.A.G.E.'s early talking points included that the art market is awash in capital while artists endure precarity; gallery staff is on payroll while artists are compensated ad hoc, if paid at all; and art institutions' ability to fulfill their missions depends on the contributions of artists whose sustainability is not necessarily a budgetary priority of those same institutions.

Without a shared workplace to build a sense of common cause, W.A.G.E. turned to communication through art world channels, from symposia speeches to open letters, to reach its constituency and lodge its complaint. From the outset, W.A.G.E. linked the instance of nonpayment to artists' material conditions generally. At one of W.A.G.E.'s first public talks, at Creative Time's *Democracy in America* (2008), W.A.G.E. addressed an audience of artists, curators, and art administrators and aficionados. "W.A.G.E. RAGE" spray-painted on their shirt, one member shared: "Let me tell you about the glamour of being an artist in this city: the glamour of not being able to eat well; ... the glamour of not being able to go to the doctor; ... the glamour of every year moving further and further away from the city; ... and the glamour of spending your every last dollar every month."<sup>20</sup> Most artists' income from their practice is insufficient to live on, and multiple job holding is industry standard. Beyond highlighting artists' strained livelihoods, W.A.G.E. troubled how artists are routinely invited by gatekeepers to accept the promise of exposure in lieu of monetary payment. As W.A.G.E. lamented in its "wo/manifesto," the currency of exposure compels cultural workers to adopt the market rationality of the "speculator."<sup>21</sup>

How W.A.G.E. has gone about broaching nonpayment measures up well to the ethos of *parrhesia*. This Ancient Greek term, on Foucault's definition, refers to a practice of speech that operates as a mode of criticism, is voiced "from below," and relies on "frankness" more than "persuasion."<sup>22</sup> The *parrhesiastes*, or speaker, occupies a subordinate position in relation to their addressee, and speaks at some "risk" to themselves, with Foucault describing *parrhesia* as an act of "courage" rooted in a sense of "duty."<sup>23</sup> *Parrhesia* is, he writes, "a 'game'

between the one who speaks the truth and the interlocutor. The *parrhesia* involved ... may be the advice that the interlocutor should behave in a certain way, or that he is wrong in what he thinks, or in the way he acts.”<sup>24</sup> Writing about the interaction of social movements resisting precarious labour and art institutions claiming a progressive identity, the philosopher Gerald Raunig proposes a twofold *parrhesia* strategy: “an attempt of involvement and engagement in a process of hazardous refutation, and as self-questioning.”<sup>25</sup> In naming nonpayment, W.A.G.E. did not so much lay bare a previously undisclosed truth as publicly amplify an open institutional secret - while also asking artists to question how they might hold to sensibilities that prop up the sector’s payment norms.

W.A.G.E.’s strategies follow from analysis of the position of its interlocutor, the nonprofit art institution, in the political economy of contemporary art. In a text presented at the 2015 *Artist as Debtor* conference, W.A.G.E. elaborated on the nonprofit as a nodal point in the circulation of financial resources in the US art system.<sup>26</sup> Whether from government programs or private foundations, arts funding flows to nonprofits, who subsequently distribute the funds to individual artist projects. W.A.G.E. emphasizes nonprofits’ status as charitable organizations premised upon their service to the social good. As W.A.G.E.’s presentation highlighted, however, the nonprofit art institution is entangled with powerful class interests: the nonprofit is a tax shelter for philanthropists as well as a recipient of grants from foundations whose coffers are often a living legacy of industrial-era class exploitation; private collectors who sit on a nonprofit’s board may have vested interest in showing certain artists to increase the value of work in their own collections; and exhibiting an artwork at a nonprofit confers moral worth, which can enhance an artwork’s monetary value. While W.A.G.E. stresses how enmeshed nonprofit art institutions are with capitalist forces, W.A.G.E. posited that the charitable nonprofit has a tough time recognizing artists as workers who generate value on behalf of these institutions in no small part because nonprofits project their charity status onto artists.<sup>27</sup>

W.A.G.E. has not exempted artists from critique, however. W.A.G.E. acknowledges artists’ “complicity” in nonpayment when exposure is accepted as legitimate compensation on the basis of a privately held, hopeful notion of “exceptionality”: “The fugitive promise of commercial success,” writes W.A.G.E. in an internal policy document, “has reinforced artists’ belief that it is they who might be the next exception.”<sup>28</sup> Such a belief, for W.A.G.E., miscalculates the centrality of “dark matter” to art’s stratified economy of rewards, wherein, as Jodi Dean writes in a different context, “the many” is mobilized to produce “the one.”<sup>29</sup> Exceptionality’s “cruel optimism”<sup>30</sup> overlaps the so-called “cultural discount,” the budgetary assumption that the

gratifications of art-making offset the sting of low pay.<sup>31</sup> Isabell Lorey goes further: “Perhaps those who work creatively, these precarious cultural producers by design, are subjects that can be exploited so easily because they seem to bear their living and working conditions eternally due to the belief in their own freedom and autonomy, due to self-realization fantasies.”<sup>32</sup> It is within artists’ own “accounts of value”<sup>33</sup> that W.A.G.E. makes an intervention - not to blame artists for nonpayment but to raise their expectations, and indeed encourage a sense of entitlement to payment.

Savvy about cultural-capital sensitivities within the art world, W.A.G.E. has pressured institutions reputationally. Institutions were not anonymized in W.A.G.E.’s compensation survey results. When the curator of a preeminent international exhibition was recorded as seeming to suggest that participating artists were not paid, because the invitation to exhibit was its own reward, W.A.G.E. posted a satirical video inviting this curator to accept the same logic for a prospective curatorial project.<sup>34</sup> And when the New Museum announced expansion plans, W.A.G.E. shared an open letter: “Congratulations - that’s big news. It could also be big news for the hundreds of artists who supply the content for your programs each year. After all, if you plan to double in size, surely there will be a significant increase in the number of programs being produced, which would surely provide income to more of the artists upon whose work your existence is predicated.”<sup>35</sup> Soskolne admits “there are dangers with naming and shaming.”<sup>36</sup> An art institution named in W.A.G.E.’s compensation survey, for example, threatened to sue. But just as art institutions are vulnerable reputationally - especially when their missions are couched in support for the arts - W.A.G.E., too, has established its legitimacy as a moral voice, which it has accrued over the years through expressions of support from high-profile institutions, coverage in key publications, and association with respected artists in the contemporary art field. Ultimately, however, W.A.G.E.’s *parrhesia* is underpinned by the belief that nonpayment is not inevitable.

### **Each according to their TAOE**

To solve the nonpayment problem, W.A.G.E. proposed nonprofit art institutions collectively abide by a standard artist fee system. This approach illustrates two more premises of collective action theory. First, that mobilization depends on an institutional actor believed to be in a position to remedy the grievance.<sup>37</sup> So, while W.A.G.E. calls out nonprofits, it engages them not only as antagonists but also as potential allies. The prospect of solidarity rests partly on the fact that many arts administrators moonlight as practicing artists or are trained as artists and are hardly unaware of the challenges in artistic careers. Second, that a group must believe that their demand - artist fees in W.A.G.E.’s case - is deserved and achievable.<sup>38</sup> W.A.G.E., however, did not simply assert the need for artists fees

- it also determined the rates. “We chose,” writes W.A.G.E., “to set our own prices because there were none.”<sup>39</sup> W.A.G.E. produced “policy from below,” where the people most directly affected propose - in the context of collective organizing - regulatory solutions to mitigate their challenges.<sup>40</sup> By setting fees, W.A.G.E. reaffirmed that “standards can be set by workers.”<sup>41</sup>

Having identified the nonprofit as a strategic lever of redistributive justice, W.A.G.E. came to conceptualize “equity” in its context as “begin[ning] with recognizing that the contribution made by cultural producers is integral to the functioning of the arts institution. Financial compensation for this contribution,” states W.A.G.E., “acknowledges its value.”<sup>42</sup> Despite its name, W.A.G.E. has not sought wages but fees. Bypassing thorny questions about how to measure labour time in the making of art, W.A.G.E. adopts the language of fees because artists are not in an employment relationship with nonprofits. For W.A.G.E., fees neither cover production costs nor imply the purchase of work. Instead, W.A.G.E. defines artist fees precisely as payment “for the work of working with an institution”:<sup>43</sup> “We define it as the expected remuneration for an artist’s temporary transactional relationship with an institution.”<sup>44</sup> Positioning artists as “contracted workers,” W.A.G.E. describes a fee as payment for “services rendered and content provided.”<sup>45</sup> A fee, insists W.A.G.E., “is not a reward.”<sup>46</sup>

Against the prevailing practice of offering fees based on each individual artist’s perceived merit, W.A.G.E. advocated for a standard fee structure that is applied equally to all artists. In pressing for artist fees, W.A.G.E. has revived earlier fleeting efforts of American artists, such as the Artists’ Union-supported “Rental Policy” campaign of the 1930s.<sup>47</sup> One of more recent references for W.A.G.E., however, was the Canadian artists’ organization CARFAC, which formed in 1968 and compelled nonprofit galleries to adhere to its regularly updated fee schedule as a condition of government funding.<sup>48</sup> Because no such guidelines existed in the US, W.A.G.E. designed its own fee structure, which covers 16 categories, from solo and group exhibitions to published texts. Beyond raising expectations - the crux of organizing, argues labour activist Jane McAlevey<sup>49</sup> - W.A.G.E. codifies expectations, arguing, “for conditions to change, institutions must adopt and commit to using shared standards.”<sup>50</sup> For W.A.G.E., the problem is not only that institutions fail to pay - many do pay - but that the amounts are so erratic and the reasoning so opaque. Standard fees remove inconsistency and provide a benchmark for artists and institutions to consult, and also strengthen artists’ bargaining power: “If you don’t have a minimum,” says Soskolne, “you have no place to start from - and, therefore, no place to go.”<sup>51</sup>

W.A.G.E.’s fee structure acknowledges the uneven economy of nonprofit institutions, which range from small artist-run centres to globally recognized



museum brands. In the name of fairness, W.A.G.E. opted for scaled rates, indexing minimum fees to a gallery's budget, specifically its total annual operating expenses (TAOE), a figure that US nonprofits must legally disclose. "Our model ties artist fees to these costs," W.A.G.E. explains, "because they are the financial articulation of an institution's priorities," and its means.<sup>52</sup> W.A.G.E.'s fee system has three tiers. The first, Floor W.A.G.E., applies to institutions with expenses below \$500,000. The second tier includes organizations with budgets between \$500,000 and \$5 million, and the third tier covers institutions with yearly expenses higher than \$5 million. Key to W.A.G.E.'s fee structure is that the minimum rates for institutions within the second and third tiers scale according to a fractional percentage of an institution's TAOE. For example, a gallery in the first tier would pay \$1,000 for a solo exhibition and \$150 for a commissioned talk, while for a gallery in the third tier the rates would be \$10,000 and \$1,500. W.A.G.E. has created an online fee calculator, which allows institutions and artists to calculate minimum rates.

W.A.G.E.'s fee system is underpinned by a class analysis that stressed commonality over exceptionality. Defining fees as compensation for "the work of working with an institution" points to a kind of universal artistic labour. The demand for fees is, moreover, an ethical proposition. Institutions are asked to take responsibility for artists' collective reproduction: "we don't have art," says one W.A.G.E. ally, "unless we have working artists."<sup>53</sup> W.A.G.E. also viewed a fee system as a means to counter class-based exclusion in the arts. "The barriers to entry are so high at this point," says Soskolne, "that only those who can afford to work for free can afford to participate."<sup>54</sup> The culture of nonpayment "precludes the participation of most working people, which means that the kind of art that is being produced and supported is representative of an elite and predominately white constituency."<sup>55</sup> While fees cannot independently upset these intersecting inequalities, they remain a necessary component of any policy effort to expand access to artistic careers.

W.A.G.E.'s fee structure sets minimums. But it is a bargaining device and, as such, artists may negotiate upward - but only to a point. W.A.G.E. set a "maximum wage." As Soskolne reflects, "we used to make the case for compensation on the basis of [artists] being this marginalized underclass, but now it's actually our proximity to wealth."<sup>56</sup> W.A.G.E. recognizes the stratification of not only institutions but also artists: dark matter and superstars that have come to expect lavish fees are mutually constitutive. Rooted in the principle that "nobody unduly profits from the redistribution of wealth - including artists,"<sup>57</sup> W.A.G.E. stipulated that an exhibiting artist must not receive a fee greater than the average salary of the exhibiting institution's full-time staff.

W.A.G.E.'s fee structure makes a redistributive claim and invites art institutions to reflect on the coherence of their missions and budgetary practices. But because artists lack the legal right to collectively bargain and thereby hold institutions to fees, W.A.G.E. confronts a common challenge of policy from below: adoption.

### **Certification as Strategy**

W.A.G.E.'s fee framework is the policy pillar of W.A.G.E. Certification, W.A.G.E.'s primary strategy for bringing compensation standards to nonprofit art institutions. The certification method reflects the structural constraints W.A.G.E. operates within. As Mark Graham et al. write in the context of digital labour platforms: "If formal channels for worker voice are not available, then workers may need to develop their own means for bringing their demands to bear upon any exploitative platforms or clients."<sup>58</sup> Certifying galleries and museums that adhere to W.A.G.E. standards is an alt-labour approach that makes institutions responsible for upholding minimum rates.

W.A.G.E.'s certification program is rooted in self-regulation, a form of governance that follows from the nonprofit sector's composition. W.A.G.E. initiated certification in a context that lacks a national framework such as that in Canada where government-funded art institutions are expected to comply with CARFAC rates. Assuming such state involvement would be unlikely in the US, W.A.G.E. opted against lobbying politicians for top-down policy change. Soskolne adds that self-regulation was necessary "because foundations"- a major arts funding source in the US - "are also self-regulating."<sup>59</sup> Certification was also designed as a self-regulatory system in an attempt to navigate lingering aversions to bureaucracy in the arts. W.A.G.E. wagered that nonprofit institutions were capable of reforming their budgetary practices without being forced to do so by government or binding contract.

W.A.G.E. first experimented with certification in 2010 when the group was invited by curator Lauren Cornell to be part of an exhibition, *Free*, at the New Museum. W.A.G.E. contributed by negotiating fees for the exhibiting artists. W.A.G.E.'s institutional certification program was formally launched in October 2014. The first certified gallery was W.A.G.E.'s longtime interlocutor and ally, Artists Space. By 2019, W.A.G.E. had certified 63 nonprofits in the US, the biggest cluster in New York City. To put this figure in perspective, there were some 95,000 art nonprofits in the US in 2013.<sup>60</sup> While most W.A.G.E.-certified institutions are small-scale, "there's enough anecdotal evidence," according to W.A.G.E., "to indicate that artists are most likely to not get paid by the large institutions... As institutions get larger, they have a tendency to become further removed from ... providing support to artists, because they incur many other additional expenses."<sup>61</sup> Buy-in from large institutions is, however,

vital to W.A.G.E.'s profile and impact. So, it was seen as “precedent-setting”<sup>62</sup> when in 2018 W.A.G.E. certified its first museum - the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Philadelphia, which is a part of the University of Pennsylvania and has a nearly \$5 million budget and 25 full-time staff. Since 2014, W.A.G.E. has focused on certifying institutions, though it rehabilitated its pilot tactic in 2018 when it certified the Carnegie International exhibition.

In pursuing institutional certifications, W.A.G.E. behaves like a union in that it represents artists' grievances - but the daily work of certification revolves less around organizing artists than mobilizing institution staff that resolve to use their positions to materially express support for artists whose work is their institution's condition of possibility. W.A.G.E. urges galleries to align their payment conventions with their missions to support the arts. But certification is more than a rhetorical appeal to consistency; it is an invitation to solidarity, calling on institution insiders to “serve as our advocates.”<sup>63</sup> And Soskolne reports that the impulse to certify is institution-driven: “people have been reaching out to us to get certified.”<sup>64</sup> Interest in certifying comes from varied sources, from a gallery's curatorial team to its advisory board. The ICA director, Amy Sadao, suggests gathering support toward certification by building “a coalition among ... board leadership and patrons who really support living artists and emerging artists.”<sup>65</sup> W.A.G.E. does not necessarily wait on institutions to initiate a discussion about certification. W.A.G.E. board members have undertaken behind-the-scenes advocacy, and Soskolne often follows up directly after an institutional representative has signed up on W.A.G.E.'s website to explore certification.

The certification program creates a context for W.A.G.E. to enter a formal conversation with an institution about labour standards. The process can involve extensive one-on-one communication between W.A.G.E. and institutional representatives. It can entail working through challenges such as exhibition formats that are not captured in W.A.G.E.'s fee schedule. W.A.G.E. and the ICA discussed traveling exhibitions, for instance, deciding that the ICA was responsible for writing artist fees into agreements when an ICA exhibition is presented elsewhere. As an ethical proposition, however, the certification program seeks to prompt conversations within institutions to “seriously engage with the idea of what equitable exchange means, then internalize the answer into their respective missions so they can carry it forward.”<sup>66</sup> At the ICA, they prepared for certification for about one year, though the groundwork had been laid earlier through internal discussions.<sup>67</sup> Staff reflected on issues such as how certifying might impact programming, concluding that the ICA would need to “do less to enable the right kind of budgets.”<sup>68</sup>

Certified institutions are required to comply with W.A.G.E.'s fee structure - the point on which Soskolne says she has encountered resistance from

some large museums that “don’t want to be told what to do ... by a scrappy little organization.”<sup>69</sup> But “standards,” W.A.G.E. maintains, “don’t mean much without standardization,” or wide take-up.<sup>70</sup> Echoing sectoral unionism, W.A.G.E. Certification aims to create conditions where artists would be able to count on minimum fees from any nonprofit with which they work in the US. To be certified, a nonprofit must document that it paid appropriate W.A.G.E. fees for the previous year, that it included artist fees as a dedicated budget item, and that it has not allowed fees to displace production-cost coverage. After a gallery has been certified, W.A.G.E. is not directly involved in fee administration. In keeping with self-regulation, W.A.G.E. grants institutions access to its “online auditing infrastructure,”<sup>71</sup> including a fee calculator. Journalist Tim Schneider explains: “After registering on the organization’s website with details about its TAOE, administrators are asked to enter the details for every relevant event in the institution’s programming calendar, such as the program title and payment date, the names of artist, the fee category, and the amount paid to participants. The interface saves each record to the museum’s profile as a way to track their overall progress.”<sup>72</sup>

Certification doubles as a counter-publicity device. Whether or not an institution posts a W.A.G.E.-certified logo on its website, certified status tells artists that the institution took the decision to recognize its labour foundation, to compensate artists equitably, and to alter power relations by removing the fear that may otherwise prevent artists from requesting payment. “A W.A.G.E. certified organization,” says Soskolne, “signals that it stands in solidarity with artists as part of an equitable community no matter what their material practice or reputation might be.”<sup>73</sup> The reputation of the W.A.G.E. Certification program is bound up with that of the institutions bearing W.A.G.E.’s seal of approval. A new certification is also a promotional moment. Some institutions have released announcements that are picked up by the art press. Some allies use the media release to nudge their colleagues. “We’re proud to be the first museum to join this diverse group of arts and culture institutions across the U.S. who are certified, and hope that it will encourage other museums to do the same,” said Sadao in the ICA’s release.<sup>74</sup> In its announcement, Buffalo art centre Squeaky Wheel expressed its view of certification’s political stakes: “If we are reimagining our organizational structure to be with W.A.G.E., it is because we believe that artists provide ways to reimagine ourselves and our future. ... We cannot do this as long as we depend on labor that is not properly compensated. The word ‘community’ must mean something if the futures we imagine are to exist.”<sup>75</sup>

Self-regulated labour standards regimes are contentious. The use of codes of conduct by transnational corporations forced to appear concerned about conditions within their supply chains, for example, has been dismissed as an

ineffective means to protect workers' rights, owing to compromised compliance monitoring and weak enforcement.<sup>76</sup> In W.A.G.E.'s case, it is impossible to predict whether a state-oriented campaign to pressure, say, New York City's Cultural Institutions Group to require gallery and museum members to meet W.A.G.E. standards as a condition of public funding, would have been more impactful. W.A.G.E. is not alone, however, in using certification as a strategy to improve working conditions for nonunion, project-based workers in creative industries where labour regulations are light and collective labour identities have weak precedent. For example, New York's Model Alliance launched a campaign in 2018 for a binding agreement that would better protect fashion models from sexual harassment,<sup>77</sup> and in 2017 UK academics announced the Fairwork Foundation, a proposal for a certification scheme for digital labour platforms.<sup>78</sup> But whereas those initiatives are dealing with for-profit businesses, W.A.G.E. engages nonprofits whose commitment to the arts and artists is central to their public missions. This normative dimension is integral to W.A.G.E.'s ability to make a case for reforming payment practices - and it allows artists to stake a claim on art institutions as also *their* institutions. Contra corporate social responsibility, W.A.G.E.'s certification program resonates with what activists have recently termed "worker-driven social responsibility," which "[incorporates] workers' organizations and community organizations into the setting of standards and the monitoring of compliance" and "[draws] on the knowledge and trust of workers and their organizations."<sup>79</sup>

### **Counter-Atelier**

W.A.G.E.'s strategies arise from a particular organizational form and set of processes. As it came to focus on certification, W.A.G.E. confronted the limits of its composition as a grassroots activist collective. When the group was mainly raising awareness about nonpayment, "[h]orizontal, non-hierarchical, consensus-based process worked well," W.A.G.E. reflected.<sup>80</sup> But "policy change" by contrast, they found, "involves sustained, internal work. It means developing models through writing, research, correspondence, making presentations, as well as meeting and organizing together with others who are making similar or compatible efforts through groundwork and investigating the possibilities of institutional change."<sup>81</sup> Marking its formalization, W.A.G.E. incorporated in 2011 as a nonprofit organization. It is overseen by a board of directors who currently include cofounder and artist A.L. Steiner, artist Andrea Fraser, curators Richard Birkett and Howie Chen, and academic Suhail Malik.

Steeped in the same institutional forms taken by its interlocutors, W.A.G.E. is a charitable nonprofit sustained by foundation grants as well as artists' donations and speaking fees, and a one-time crowdfunding campaign raised nearly \$53,000. Since 2014 W.A.G.E. has employed Soskolne on a full-

time basis, and contractors are periodically hired for policy and technical projects. While it advocates on behalf of artists as workers, W.A.G.E. is not a democratic worker organization in the way that a union elects representatives for example. W.A.G.E.'s nonprofit status, policy orientation, and community support system are traits it shares with many alt-labour groups. W.A.G.E.'s hybrid make-up - part-guild, part-policy institute, part-tech incubator, part-theorist - also reflects how its protagonists have turned to alternate ends the flexible competencies, network sociality, and forms of social practice characteristic of contemporary artist.

While currently led by Soskolne, W.A.G.E. is energized by collective cognition and community engagement. W.A.G.E.'s early public forums and nonpayment survey were organizationally formative inquiries into artists' conditions. Since then, W.A.G.E.'s research practice has been geared toward what was referred to earlier as policy from below. W.A.G.E.'s mission to transform nonprofit institutions' economic relations with artists was supported early on by one of its key allies, Artists Space. W.A.G.E. aimed to certify Artists Space (where Soskolne also worked as a grant writer), but this prospect "was going to take time, investigation, and discussion, so W.A.G.E. proposed a temporary partnership with Artists Space to help us in that process."<sup>82</sup> In 2011, the gallery served as a kind of policy lab for what became W.A.G.E. Certification. Artists Space opened its ledgers to W.A.G.E., and W.A.G.E. also programmed gallery events on art and labour.

As part of its budget research, W.A.G.E. compared Artists Space's payment history to CARFAC rates - one example of how W.A.G.E. drew upon the policy contributions of artists' organizations outside of the US which had proven that bringing standards to the sector was not unattainable. W.A.G.E. has also dialogued with groups such as the Scottish Artists Union and the UK-based Precarious Workers Brigade. Soskolne's conversations with art labour organizations, as well as with select artists, researchers, and curators, have been integral to W.A.G.E.'s policy formation process. These conversations sometimes piggybacked speaking invitations from institutions, indicating one way in which W.A.G.E. has leveraged art world conventions, namely its economy of events, to access transnational support and an audience to whom to float ideas. W.A.G.E. has also conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with artists and collectors, among others, to gather input on policy proposals. And W.A.G.E. has contributed to wider policy-from-below initiatives, including *The People's Cultural Plan*, which consolidated proposals from several New York activist groups for advancing intersectional responses to systemic inequalities within the city's cultural sector.<sup>83</sup>

Vital to W.A.G.E.'s process is a "summit" model where policies are deliberated and decided upon. Typically following community consultation,

working groups, and iterative policy drafts, W.A.G.E. summits are one- to three-day closed meetings with a small group invited by W.A.G.E. and structured around sessions on specific policy points. The details of the W.A.G.E. certification program, for example, were solidified at a 2014 summit in New York City, whose participants included W.A.G.E. cofounder A.K. Burns, artist Andrea Fraser, Artists Space staff, curator Howie Chen, and researchers Alison Gerber, Stephanie Luce, Andrew Ross, and Marina Vishmidt, and Soskolne. In 2017, W.A.G.E. hosted a summit to develop policy for a blockchain-based iteration of The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement. Initially published in 1971, this agreement has been described as an "attempt at reconfiguring ownership relations around works of art," and was prepared by curator and art dealer Seth Siegelaub and lawyer Robert Projansky.<sup>84</sup> The agreement was designed to be used by artists who sell their work commercially, and includes among its terms a royalty right whereby the artist is entitled to 15% of the proceeds when a work is profitably resold. Aiming to rejuvenate this contract by bringing it online and using the blockchain to track artwork ownership and royalties, this project is an example of W.A.G.E.'s expansion into digital platform development. It is notable that W.A.G.E.'s artist resale summit took place at the ICA in London, to which two former Artists Space curators relocated - W.A.G.E.'s transnationalization thus mirrors the mobility of art world labour.

W.A.G.E. has closed a gap in artists' collective representation in the US art system. Yet W.A.G.E.'s organizational form is not without tensions. W.A.G.E.'s endurance testifies to the commitment of its core organizer, but its current reliance on one person raises questions about sustainability and institutional memory - and it is doubtful that such a lean organization would have the capacity to pressure, let alone administer, widespread institutional certifications. While it canvasses artists through a variety of means, W.A.G.E. remains directed by a single artist-organizer and is steered by a small core - a political structure that strikes parallels to early craft guilds. A worker organization's capacity to mobilize members in struggles is, however, vital to winning gains. Soskolne is alert to the tension between horizontal and vertical models: "I think to totally decentralize and have people ... representing themselves" - via chapters, for instance - "it starts to get really unruly, and I worry about that. But I also can see that W.A.G.E. can't be an autocratic movement. It can't be run by one person indefinitely."<sup>85</sup> W.A.G.E.'s economic independence is another issue: as a nonprofit, W.A.G.E. is eligible for grants, but this also makes it dependent on foundations, which are a key broker in the matrix of institutional relations that W.A.G.E. seeks to transform. These are some of the dilemmas that form the background to W.A.G.E.'s most recent strategic innovation, WAGENCY.

### **Dispersing Pressure, Platforming Negotiations**

Shortly after the institutional certification program was launched, W.A.G.E. board member Suhail Malik floated a parallel strategy: to certify individual artists that commit to work exclusively with W.A.G.E.-certified galleries and museums.<sup>86</sup> While this closed-shop model was abandoned, the artist-certification idea evolved, over three years of policy and technology development, into WAGENCY - a digital platform and sectoral coalition that upholds W.A.G.E.'s payment standards. After Soskolne and some board members brainstormed online, W.A.G.E. held a summit on artist certification in November 2015 in London, which produced a preliminary framework that Soskolne went on to revise through policy drafts, grant applications, presentations, and focus groups. With WAGENCY, W.A.G.E. expanded its strategy from mobilizing institutions (via a moral appeal to reputation) to organizing artists (via socio-technical practices of solidarity). WAGENCY's technological infrastructure was designed by artist and programmer Daniel Sauter, whom W.A.G.E. contracted to automate W.A.G.E. Certification and to begin to build the suite of tools underpinning WAGENCY so to enable artists to make fee requests through W.A.G.E.'s website. Hinging on artists' participation, WAGENCY is a mechanism to "self-organize around the demand to be paid."<sup>87</sup>

Launched in September 2018, the WAGENCY platform allows artists to calculate, request, and negotiate fees. Its users - WAGENTS in W.A.G.E.'s idiom - pay a five-dollar monthly subscription, providing W.A.G.E. with an independent income stream. When a WAGENT is invited to contribute to an exhibition or program at an institution, they log on to WAGENCY to generate a fee schedule. After entering the institution name and content type, the platform calculates a minimum fee according to W.A.G.E.'s TAOE algorithm and using budget information from GuideStar, a database of IRS-reported financial profiles of US nonprofits for which W.A.G.E. holds a licence. Using WAGENCY's email delivery system, the artist dispatches a fee request to their institutional contact in an auto-populated, customizable message, which appears as sent from W.A.G.E. and is cc'd to the artist. The email gives the recipient the option to either accept the request, or negotiate. If they click "accept," the WAGENT's status, which is reflected in a live SVG logo in their email signature, becomes "Certified WAGENT." If they click "negotiate," and the institution offered a subpar rate, but the artist refused it - W.A.G.E. describes this as a "boycott" - the artist remains certified: they upheld W.A.G.E. standards. An artist that accepts a subpar fee is not certified but retains the status "Active WAGENT." WAGENCY notifies institutions about payments due and follows the 30-day term of New York's *Freelance Isn't Free Act*, a regulation forwarded by the Freelancers Union. Payments are not processed via WAGENCY, but the



platform does afford the archiving of transactions, which could be integrated into backend compliance-monitoring for institutional certification.

WAGENCY is a workaround to resource limitations. W.A.G.E.'s institutional certification program is mostly "one person ... applying pressure to thousands of organizations," says Sosklone.<sup>88</sup> Even if W.A.G.E. hired more staff, "[t]here still won't be enough womanpower in W.A.G.E. to put the pressure on institutions that's needed to shift the field completely."<sup>89</sup> WAGENCY's strategic gambit is to enlist artists' direct participation in the fight for fees, dispersing pressure on galleries to respect W.A.G.E. standards and, ultimately, to certify. "Now," Soskolne explains, "it goes from being one person to being hundreds of people that are applying pressure."<sup>90</sup> This shift has implications for W.A.G.E.'s organizational identity - the organizer function is partially detached from W.A.G.E. staff, and W.A.G.E. moves from having a general constituency to a paying membership. Politically, WAGENCY integrates vertical and horizontal modes of engagement: policies architected by a core collective are spread and enforced through a distributed network. Depending on individual artists taking the decision to exercise agency, WAGENCY operationalizes the assumption that artists should take greater responsibility for transforming the culture of nonpayment: "By placing the onus on artists to make demands," writes W.A.G.E., "we're also holding them accountable for their willingness to self-exploit through their claims to exceptionality."<sup>91</sup>

WAGENCY's membership fee was set at a flat rate to "reinforce common interests,"<sup>92</sup> but W.A.G.E. has been frank about "the dual class position of artists."<sup>93</sup> As an organizing device and a policy framework, WAGENCY was designed to work within and against divisions of economic and cultural capital between artists through protocols of cross-class solidarity. Permitting WAGENCYs to shuttle between "certified" and "active" status, for example, was intended to prevent WAGENCY's membership from skewing to an exclusive club: "We don't want to create a situation in which only those who can afford to turn down opportunities can be certified."<sup>94</sup> But WAGENCY also calls on artists who are in a position to refuse subpar fees to do so as a gesture of solidarity with artists who are less able to forgo payment. W.A.G.E.'s logic was that "the 1% would take the risk on behalf of the dark matter."<sup>95</sup> At the same time, W.A.G.E., attuned to reputational economies, assumed that "big names will inspire others to sign on."<sup>96</sup>

Still, W.A.G.E. regards dark matter as its "base," and WAGENCY does not simply position "'successful' artists" as benevolent protectors.<sup>97</sup> Rather, it seeks to regulate these artists when they function as employers. Higher-profile artists frequently hire studio assistants, who are often younger artists working precariously. For assistants, the artist studio is a workplace. But here, too,

W.A.G.E. troubled the lack of standards. In response, W.A.G.E. requires Certified WAGENTS to use a customizable contract to formalize the artist-assistant relationship. Delivered via the WAGENCY platform, the WAGENCY Work Agreement provides space and context for identifying terms of employment, including worker classification, job description, minimum rates, hours, protections against harassment, health and safety provisions, and benefits. The artist assistant contract indicates WAGENCY's potential to scale across the often-concealed workforces that prop up the art world's luminosity.

WAGENCY presents artists with a negotiating channel to which worker initiative and mutual trust are decisive. Essentially, says Sauter, the platform "facilitates the conversation" between artist and institution about fees.<sup>98</sup> But WAGENCY requires the artist to make the first move. As Soskolne explains: "The idea of WAGENCY is to flip the labour relation. ... WAGENTS don't wait for institutions to offer arbitrary fees. Instead, WAGENTS determine the cost of their own labour and request W.A.G.E. fees through the WAGENCY platform. They say, 'this is my rate,' which is the way that an independent contractor would normally work."<sup>99</sup> Artists' self-representation is performed, however, within programmed constraints: "you cannot actively request fees that are substandard."<sup>100</sup>

WAGENCY's efficacy depends on its perceived credibility. From a "communication design" perspective, says Sauter, WAGENCY's goal is to "build trust on both sides."<sup>101</sup> Using GuideStar in the calculation of artist fees, for instance, conveys that the recommend rate is based on accurate data. What Sauter calls the "trust circle" is also formed by interface familiarity: to institutions, WAGENCY ought to have the appearance of "sensible accounting software."<sup>102</sup> And upon receiving a fee request, an institutional representative is able click through to the W.A.G.E. website, which lists certified institutions and provides the fee structure rationale. While W.A.G.E. initially conceived of artist certification as "a more adversarial us vs. them approach," it came to steer away from antagonistic framing.<sup>103</sup> Whether WAGENCY prompts a nonprofit to honour one WAGENT's fee request or nudges a gallery toward institutional certification, the platform constitutes through its use a "coalition" of artists and institutions, says Soskolne.<sup>104</sup> Recognizing both of these parties have administrative lives to maintain, WAGENCY builds in incentives for users such as allowing them to track payments within their accounts. As payment data are gathered, WAGENCY could also be utilized as a research tool for aggregate reporting on the sector's payment practices.<sup>105</sup>

WAGENCY faces the challenge of network effects. Its capacity to systemically disrupt payment norms would "require critical mass."<sup>106</sup> Before launching WAGENCY, W.A.G.E. approached select artists to join, and more than 100 WAGENTS had signed on in its inaugural week. Soskolne hoped that

artists “will want ... to be seen on ... the right side of equity.”<sup>107</sup> But artists may prove to be reluctant WAGENTS for several reasons, beginning with the platform’s novelty. “[W]e’re inventing this new system that nobody has ever seen before, therefore of course it’s going to be complicated and not easy,” admits Soskolne.<sup>108</sup> Beyond user experience challenges, WAGENCY’s take-up could be inhibited by the sheer weight of the nonpayment and multiple jobholding norms - which reflect and reinforce the expectation that artists are unlikely to extract a sustainable livelihood from their practice. Artists might also fear missing out on opportunities in a highly competitive, gatekept economy of visibility. For some artists, the calculated fee, imagines Soskolne, may “be sort of a shock at first - ‘I’m not worth that much!’”<sup>109</sup> Such a reaction is, however, one of W.A.G.E.’s intentions: to recalibrate artists’ self-assessment of their value. As the platform went live, Soskolne was willing to consider WAGENCY as an experiment, or a “test of what artists really want and what they are actually willing to do.”<sup>110</sup> At a moment when so much contemporary art reaffirms the agency of historically marginalized social subjects, WAGENCY’s fate will be something of a barometer of artists’ belief in solidarity and collective agency for themselves.

WAGENCY was designed for artists but has broader labour market relevance. W.A.G.E. declares on its website: “We see the contemporary fight for non-wage compensation as part of a wider struggle by all gig workers who supply content without payment standards or an effective means to organize.”<sup>111</sup> W.A.G.E. has already presented the platform to the National Writers Union, a New York-based union of freelance writers. While W.A.G.E.’s leverage resides in the moral claims that are made by nonprofit art institutions, it is not a leap to imagine the application of a WAGENCY-like platform to other cultural production contexts, such as live music venues, or to digital labour platforms that are currently accelerating the degradation of the value of professional creative work.

As WAGENCY’s developer, W.A.G.E. can also be located in the emergent space of “worker-tech” - “organising platforms ... for contract and self-employed workers to develop forms of ... mutual support.”<sup>112</sup> Initiatives range from coworker.org, to The Workers Lab, Turkothon, and worker-owned platforms, or “platform cooperatives”<sup>113</sup> - a field of worker-led innovation in which alt-labour is a key actor. To this field, WAGENCY does add merely a contract-generator for independent workers - commercial platforms such as And Co already do this. If a platform is a “performative infrastructure,”<sup>114</sup> WAGENCY distinctly enables artists to enact payment negotiations within the protective bounds of collectively set labour standards. This is not, however, to lapse into “technological solutionism.”<sup>115</sup> WAGENCY is a technical platform that is insufficient on its own: it is co-constituted by inquiry with cultural

workers, participative policy formation, conjunctural analysis, and persistent effort to convince artists to place the value of solidarity before hope in exceptionality.

### **Organizing, Expanded**

This chapter has offered an introduction to W.A.G.E. through a case study of its strategies for combating economic inequality within the US nonprofit art sector. This account, while partial, illustrates that the burden, but also the inventiveness, of organizing is high where there is no preset path, such as collective bargaining, to pursue. W.A.G.E.'s "repertoire of contention"<sup>116</sup> has spanned crafting a critical idiom around inequality in the arts; writing policy toward a more equitable distribution of resources; implementing strategy to raise labour standards; and developing a platform that harnesses the distributive properties of the internet to turn a challenge - a dispersed constituency - into a strength - multiplied pressure. Alt-labour groups such as W.A.G.E. reflect and require an expanded conception of what counts as organizing. This is not, however, to make a virtue out of the difficulties of improving workers' rights in the absence of workplace-based power. On this point, recent events provide a glimpse of a potential fresh tactic. Staff at the New Museum - an institution that W.A.G.E. has pressured, unsuccessfully, to certify - mounted a successful union drive.<sup>117</sup> This could be an opening for a new exhibition of dark-matter solidarities: unionized staff could bargain to build W.A.G.E. standards into collective agreements, traditional employees thereby using their status to support those who do not have a seat at the table. For W.A.G.E., an ongoing challenge remains artists' openness to identifying as workers. Says Soskolne, "I think we (artists) would do well to de-exceptionalize our labour ... and they (institutions) would do well by looking toward us as workers."<sup>118</sup> This does not necessitate shutting down other identifications - but it is difficult to imagine realizing greater economic equality within and beyond the arts without such a shift in collective ways of seeing.

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> W.A.G.E., "Introducing WAGENCY."
- <sup>2</sup> See Reckitt, "Support Acts," 25.
- <sup>3</sup> This building was located in Brooklyn's "Industry City." On Industry City, see Lise Soskolne, "Who Owns a Vacant Lot?"
- <sup>4</sup> Chayka, "Advocacy Group W.A.G.E. on What Its First Survey Tells Us."
- <sup>5</sup> Alberro and Stimson eds., *Institutional Critique*.
- <sup>6</sup> Stimson and Sholette, eds., *Collectivism after Modernism*.
- <sup>7</sup> Khonsary and Podesva, *Institutions by Artists*.
- <sup>8</sup> Widenheim et al., *Work, Work, Work*.
- <sup>9</sup> See Monroe, "The Artists Union of New York"; Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*.
- <sup>10</sup> Cohen and de Peuter, "Creative Accounting."
- <sup>11</sup> Vosko, *Temporary Work*, 19-26.
- <sup>12</sup> Ness, ed., *New Forms of Worker Organization*.
- <sup>13</sup> Eidelson, "Alt-labor"; Milkman and Ott, eds. *New Labor in New York*.
- <sup>14</sup> Sholette, *Dark Matter*. W.A.G.E. embraced Sholette's term to conceptualize its core constituency.
- <sup>15</sup> Soskolne in Common Practice and Andrea Phillips, *Public Assets*.
- <sup>16</sup> Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*.
- <sup>17</sup> Soskolne in Common Practice and Andrea Phillips, *Public Assets*.
- <sup>18</sup> W.A.G.E. "Introducing WAGENCY."
- <sup>19</sup> Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*.
- <sup>20</sup> K8 Hardy, W.A.G.E. Presentation at *Democracy in America*.
- <sup>21</sup> W.A.G.E., "W.A.G.E. Wo/manifesto."
- <sup>22</sup> Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 18-9.
- <sup>23</sup> Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 16, 15, 19.
- <sup>24</sup> Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 17.
- <sup>25</sup> Raunig, "The Double Criticism of Parrhesia."
- <sup>26</sup> W.A.G.E., "On Merit."
- <sup>27</sup> W.A.G.E., "On Merit."
- <sup>28</sup> W.A.G.E., "W.A.G.E.N.C.Y. Artist Certification & Coalition - Internal Draft."
- <sup>29</sup> Dean, *The Communist Horizon*, 140.
- <sup>30</sup> Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*.
- <sup>31</sup> Ross, "The Mental Labor Problem."
- <sup>32</sup> Lorey, "Governmentality and Self-Precarization."

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- <sup>33</sup> Gerber, *The Work of Art*, 29.
- <sup>34</sup> Kimball, “W.A.G.E. Mocks Documenta Curator.”
- <sup>35</sup> W.A.G.E. in Greenberger, “W.A.G.E. Issues Open Letter to New Museum.”
- <sup>36</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>37</sup> Kelly and Badigannavar, “Union Organizing,” 33.
- <sup>38</sup> Kelly and Badigannavar, “Union Organizing,” 33.
- <sup>39</sup> W.A.G.E., “Introducing WAGENCY.”
- <sup>40</sup> de Peuter and Cohen, “Emerging Labour Politics in Creative Industries,” 310-12.
- <sup>41</sup> W.A.G.E. in Hadio, “ICA Philadelphia Receives W.A.G.E. Certification.”
- <sup>42</sup> W.A.G.E. in Art Workers Council Frankfurt, “Working Artists and the Greater Economy.”
- <sup>43</sup> W.A.G.E., “Introducing WAGENCY.”
- <sup>44</sup> W.A.G.E., “Introducing WAGENCY.”
- <sup>45</sup> W.A.G.E., “On Merit.”
- <sup>46</sup> W.A.G.E., “On Merit.”
- <sup>47</sup> See Lampert, *A People’s Art History of the United States*, 162.
- <sup>48</sup> See [www.carfac.ca](http://www.carfac.ca).
- <sup>49</sup> McAlevey, *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell)*.
- <sup>50</sup> W.A.G.E. “No Standards without Standardization.”
- <sup>51</sup> Soskolne, interview, 18 December, 2014.
- <sup>52</sup> W.A.G.E., “No Standards without Standardization.”
- <sup>53</sup> Sadao in Sutton, “Philadelphia’s Institute of Contemporary Art is the First Museum Certified by W.A.G.E.”
- <sup>54</sup> Soskolne in Jordan, “The Art of Fair Pay.”
- <sup>55</sup> Soskolne in Jordan, “The Art of Fair Pay.”
- <sup>56</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>57</sup> Soskolne in Risch, “W.A.G.E. Advocates for Artists Working for Fair Pay.”
- <sup>58</sup> Graham et al., *The Risks and Rewards of Online Gig Work at the Global Margins*, 12.
- <sup>59</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>60</sup> Kushner and Cohen, National Arts Index 2016, 2.
- <sup>61</sup> Soskolne in Risch, “W.A.G.E. Advocates for Artists Working for Fair Pay.”
- <sup>62</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>63</sup> W.A.G.E. in Nguyen, “W.A.G.E. Against the Machine.”
- <sup>64</sup> Soskolne in Risch, “W.A.G.E. Advocates for Artists Working for Fair Pay.”
- <sup>65</sup> Sadao in Sutton, “Philadelphia’s Institute of Contemporary Art is the First Museum Certified by W.A.G.E.”
- <sup>66</sup> Schneider, “What It Means for ICA Philadelphia to Become the First WAGE-Certified Museum.”
- <sup>67</sup> Sadao in Schneider, “What It Means for ICA Philadelphia to Become the First WAGE-Certified Museum.”
- <sup>68</sup> Sadao in Sutton, “Philadelphia’s Institute of Contemporary Art is the First Museum Certified by W.A.G.E.”
- <sup>69</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>70</sup> W.A.G.E. “No Standards without Standardization.”

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- <sup>71</sup> Schneider, “What It Means for ICA Philadelphia to Become the First WAGE-Certified Museum.”
- <sup>72</sup> Schneider, “What It Means for ICA Philadelphia to Become the First WAGE-Certified Museum.”
- <sup>73</sup> Vartanian, “How Much Will Artists Be Paid Under the New W.A.G.E. Certification Program?”
- <sup>74</sup> Sadao in ICA Philadelphia, “Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania Becomes First Museum Certified by W.A.G.E.”
- <sup>75</sup> Squeaky Wheel, “Announcing W.A.G.E. Certification.”
- <sup>76</sup> Wells, “Too Weak for the Job.”
- <sup>77</sup> WSR Network, “A Comparative Analysis of the Model Alliance’s RESPECT Program.”
- <sup>78</sup> Graham and Woodcock, “Towards a Fairer Platform Economy.”
- <sup>79</sup> Fine and Bartley, “Raising the Floor,” 6.
- <sup>80</sup> Art Workers Council Frankfurt, “Working Artists and the Greater Economy.”
- <sup>81</sup> Art Workers Council Frankfurt, “Working Artists and the Greater Economy.”
- <sup>82</sup> W.A.G.E. in O’Neill-Butler, “W.A.G.E.”
- <sup>83</sup> *The People’s Cultural Plan*.
- <sup>84</sup> van Haaften-Schick, “Conceptualizing Artists’ Rights.”
- <sup>85</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>86</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>87</sup> W.A.G.E. “Introducing WAGENCY.”
- <sup>88</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>89</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>90</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>91</sup> W.A.G.E., “W.A.G.E. Mini-Summit.”
- <sup>92</sup> W.A.G.E., “W.A.G.E.N.C.Y. Artist Certification & Coalition – Internal Draft.”
- <sup>93</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>94</sup> W.A.G.E., “W.A.G.E. Mini-Summit.”
- <sup>95</sup> W.A.G.E., “W.A.G.E. Mini-Summit.”
- <sup>96</sup> W.A.G.E., “W.A.G.E. Mini-Summit.”
- <sup>97</sup> “W.A.G.E.N.C.Y. Artist Certification & Coalition – Internal Draft.”
- <sup>98</sup> Sauter, interview, 14 September 2018.
- <sup>99</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>100</sup> Sauter, interview.
- <sup>101</sup> Sauter, interview.
- <sup>102</sup> Sauter, interview.
- <sup>103</sup> W.A.G.E., “W.A.G.E. Mini-Summit.”
- <sup>104</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>105</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>106</sup> W.A.G.E., “W.A.G.E. Mini-Summit.”
- <sup>107</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>108</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.
- <sup>109</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.

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<sup>110</sup> Soskolne in Schneider, “WAGE Just Released a Calculator That Tells Artists If They’re Getting Paid Fairly.”

<sup>111</sup> W.A.G.E., “About.”

<sup>112</sup> Taylor in Deltot and Fabian Wallace-Stephens, *The Age of Automation*, 3.

<sup>113</sup> Scholz, *Overworked and Underpaid*, 155-192.

<sup>114</sup> van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*, 29.

<sup>115</sup> Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here*.

<sup>116</sup> Tilly, *The Contentious French*, 2.

<sup>117</sup> Moynihan, “Workers at New Museum.”

<sup>118</sup> Soskolne, interview, 17 August 2018.