

## Artists and Related Workers

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### Significant Points

- More than half of all artists and related workers were self-employed—almost eight times the proportion for all professional and related occupations.
- Artists usually develop their skills through a bachelor's degree program or other postsecondary training in art or design.
- Keen competition is expected for both salaried jobs and freelance work, because many talented people are attracted to the visual arts.

### Nature of the Work

Artists create art to communicate ideas, thoughts, or feelings. They use a variety of methods—painting, sculpting, or illustration—and an assortment of materials, including oils, watercolors, acrylics, pastels, pencils, pen and ink, plaster, clay, and computers. Artists' works may be realistic, stylized, or abstract and may depict objects, people, nature, or events.

Artists generally fall into one of three categories. *Art directors* formulate design concepts and presentation approaches for visual communications media. *Fine artists, including painters, sculptors, and illustrators* create original artwork, using a variety of media and techniques. *Multi-media artists and animators* create special effects, animation, or other visual images on film, on video, or with computers or other electronic media. (Designers, including graphic designers, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

*Art directors* develop design concepts and review material that is to appear in periodicals, newspapers, and other printed or digital media. They decide how best to present the information visually, so that it is eye catching, appealing, and organized. Art directors decide which photographs or artwork to use and oversee the layout design and production of the printed material. They may direct workers engaged in artwork, layout design, and copywriting.

*Fine artists* typically display their work in museums, commercial art galleries, corporate collections, and private homes. Some of their artwork may be commissioned (done on request from clients), but most is sold by the artist or through private art galleries or dealers. The gallery and the artist predetermine how much each will earn from the sale. Only the most successful fine artists are able to support themselves solely through the sale of their works. Most fine artists must work in an unrelated field to support their art careers. Some work in museums or art galleries as fine-arts directors or as curators, planning and setting up art exhibits. Others work as art critics for newspapers or magazines or as consultants to foundations or institutional collectors.

Usually, fine artists specialize in one or two art forms, such as painting, illustrating, sketching, sculpting, printmaking, and restoring. *Painters, illustrators, cartoonists, and sketch artists* work with two-dimensional art forms, using shading, perspective, and color to produce realistic scenes or abstractions.

*Illustrators* typically create pictures for books, magazines, and other publications, and for commercial products such as textiles, wrapping paper, stationery, greeting cards, and calen-

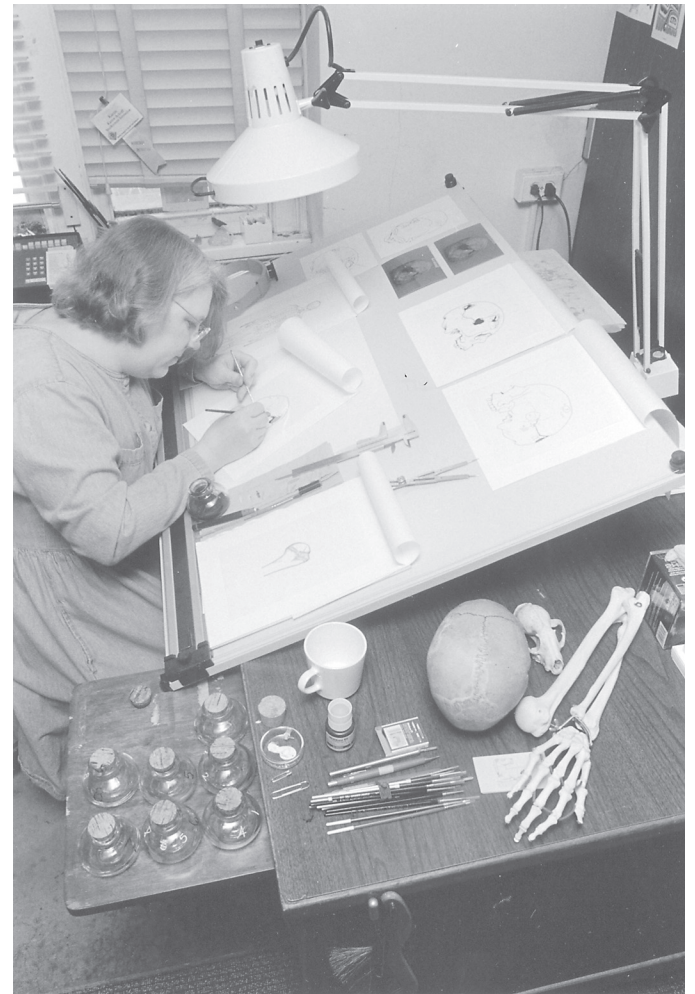
dars. Increasingly, illustrators work in digital format, preparing work directly on a computer.

*Medical and scientific illustrators* combine drawing skills with knowledge of biology or other sciences. Medical illustrators draw illustrations of human anatomy and surgical procedures. Scientific illustrators draw illustrations of animal and plant life, atomic and molecular structures, and geologic and planetary formations. The illustrations are used in medical and scientific publications and in audiovisual presentations for teaching purposes. Medical illustrators also work for lawyers, producing exhibits for court cases.

*Cartoonists* draw political, advertising, social, and sports cartoons. Some cartoonists work with others who create the idea or story and write the captions. Most cartoonists have comic, critical, or dramatic talents in addition to drawing skills.

*Sketch artists* create likenesses of subjects using pencil, charcoal, or pastels. Sketches are used by law enforcement agencies to assist in identifying suspects, by the news media to depict courtroom scenes, and by individual patrons for their own enjoyment.

Sculptors design three-dimensional artworks, either by molding and joining materials such as clay, glass, wire, plastic, fabric, or metal or by cutting and carving forms from a block of plaster, wood, or stone. Some sculptors combine various materials to create mixed-media installations. Some incorporate light, sound, and motion into their works.



*Medical illustrators combine drawing skills with knowledge of the biological sciences.*

*Printmakers* create printed images from designs cut or etched into wood, stone, or metal. After creating the design, the artist inks the surface of the woodblock, stone, or plate and uses a printing press to roll the image onto paper or fabric. Some make prints by pressing the inked surface onto paper by hand or by graphically encoding and processing data, using a computer. The digitized images are then printed on paper with the use of a computer printer.

*Painting restorers* preserve and restore damaged and faded paintings. They apply solvents and cleaning agents to clean the surfaces of the paintings, they reconstruct or retouch damaged areas, and they apply preservatives to protect the paintings. All this is highly detailed work and usually is reserved for experts in the field.

*Multi-media artists and animators* work primarily in motion picture and video industries, advertising, and computer systems design services. They draw by hand and use computers to create the large series of pictures that form the animated images or special effects seen in movies, television programs, and computer games. Some draw storyboards for television commercials, movies, and animated features. Storyboards present television commercials in a series of scenes similar to a comic strip and allow an advertising agency to evaluate proposed commercials with the company doing the advertising. Storyboards also serve as guides to placing actors and cameras on the television or motion picture set and to other details that need to be taken care of during the production of commercials.

### **Working Conditions**

Many artists work in fine- or commercial-art studios located in office buildings, warehouses, or lofts. Others work in private studios in their homes. Some fine artists share studio space, where they also may exhibit their work. Studio surroundings usually are well lighted and ventilated; however, fine artists may be exposed to fumes from glue, paint, ink, and other materials and to dust or other residue from filings, splattered paint, or spilled fluids. Artists who sit at drafting tables or who use computers for extended periods may experience back pain, eye-strain, or fatigue.

Artists employed by publishing companies, advertising agencies, and design firms generally work a standard workweek. During busy periods, they may work overtime to meet deadlines. Self-employed artists can set their own hours, but may spend much time and effort selling their artwork to potential customers or clients and building a reputation.

### **Employment**

Artists held about 149,000 jobs in 2002. More than half were self-employed. Of the artists who were not self-employed, many worked in advertising and related services; newspaper, periodical, book, and software publishers; motion picture and video industries; specialized design services; and computer systems design and related services. Some self-employed artists offered their services to advertising agencies, design firms, publishing houses, and other businesses on a contract or freelance basis.

### **Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement**

Training requirements for artists vary by specialty. Although formal training is not strictly necessary for fine artists, it is very difficult to become skilled enough to make a living without some training. Many colleges and universities offer programs leading to the Bachelor in Fine Arts (BFA) and Master in Fine Arts (MFA) degrees. Course work usually includes core sub-

jects, such as English, social science, and natural science, in addition to art history and studio art.

Independent schools of art and design also offer postsecondary studio training in the fine arts leading to an Associate in Art or Bachelor in Fine Arts degree. Typically, these programs focus more intensively on studio work than do the academic programs in a university setting. The National Association of Schools of Art and Design accredits more than 200 postsecondary institutions with programs in art and design; most award a degree in art.

Formal educational programs in art also provide training in computer techniques. Computers are used widely in the visual arts, and knowledge and training in computer graphics and other visual display software are critical elements of many jobs in these fields.

Those who want to teach fine arts at public elementary or secondary schools must have a teaching certificate in addition to a bachelor's degree. An advanced degree in fine arts or arts administration is necessary for management or administrative positions in government or in foundations or for teaching in colleges and universities. (See the statements for teachers-postsecondary; and teachers-preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Illustrators learn drawing and sketching skills through training in art programs and through extensive practice. Most employers prefer candidates with a bachelor's degree; however, some illustrators are contracted on the basis of portfolios of their past work.

Medical illustrators must have both a demonstrated artistic ability and a detailed knowledge of living organisms, surgical and medical procedures, and human and animal anatomy. A 4-year bachelor's degree combining art and premedical courses usually is preferred; a master's degree in medical illustration is recommended. This degree is offered in only five accredited schools in the United States.

Evidence of appropriate talent and skill, displayed in an artist's portfolio, is an important factor used by art directors, clients, and others in deciding whether to hire an individual or to contract out work. The portfolio is a collection of handmade, computer-generated, photographic, or printed samples of the artist's best work. Assembling a successful portfolio requires skills usually developed in a bachelor's degree program or through other postsecondary training in art or visual communications. Internships also provide excellent opportunities for artists to develop and enhance their portfolios.

Artists hired by advertising agencies often start with relatively routine work. While doing this work, however, they may observe and practice their skills on the side. Many artists freelance on a part-time basis while continuing to hold a full-time job until they are established. Others freelance part time while still in school, to develop experience and to build a portfolio of published work.

Freelance artists try to develop a set of clients who regularly contract for work. Some freelance artists are widely recognized for their skill in specialties such as magazine or children's book illustration. These artists may earn high incomes and can choose the type of work they do.

Fine artists advance professionally as their work circulates and as they establish a reputation for a particular style. Many of the most successful artists continually develop new ideas, and their work often evolves over time.

## Job Outlook

Employment of artists and related workers is expected to grow about as fast as the average through the year 2012. Because the arts attract many talented people with creative ability, the number of aspiring artists continues to grow. Consequently, competition for both salaried jobs and freelance work in some areas is expected to be keen.

Art directors work in a variety of industries, such as advertising, public relations, publishing, and design firms. Despite an expanding number of opportunities, they should experience keen competition for the available openings.

Fine artists mostly work on a freelance, or commission, basis and may find it difficult to earn a living solely by selling their artwork. Only the most successful fine artists receive major commissions for their work. Competition among artists for the privilege of being shown in galleries is expected to remain acute, and grants from sponsors such as private foundations, State and local arts councils, and the National Endowment for the Arts should remain competitive. Nonetheless, studios, galleries, and individual clients are always on the lookout for artists who display outstanding talent, creativity, and style. Talented fine artists who have developed a mastery of artistic techniques and skills, including computer skills, will have the best job prospects.

The need for artists to illustrate and animate materials for magazines, journals, and other printed or electronic media will spur demand for illustrators and animators of all types. Growth in motion picture and video industries will provide new job opportunities for illustrators, cartoonists, and animators. Competition for most jobs, however, will be strong, because job opportunities are relatively few and the number of people interested in these positions usually exceeds the number of available openings. Employers should be able to choose from among the most qualified candidates.

## Earnings

Median annual earnings of salaried art directors were \$61,850 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$44,740 and \$85,010. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$32,410, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$115,570. Median annual earnings were \$67,340 in advertising and related services.

Median annual earnings of salaried fine artists, including painters, sculptors, and illustrators, were \$35,260 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$23,970 and \$48,040. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$16,900, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$73,560.

Median annual earnings of salaried multi-media artists and animators were \$43,980 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$33,970 and \$61,120. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$25,830, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$85,160. Median annual earnings were \$58,840 in motion picture and video industries.

Earnings for self-employed artists vary widely. Some charge only a nominal fee while they gain experience and build a reputation for their work. Others, such as well-established freelance fine artists and illustrators, can earn more than salaried artists. Many, however, find it difficult to rely solely on income earned from selling paintings or other works of art. Like other self-employed workers, freelance artists must provide their own benefits.

## Related Occupations

Other workers who apply art skills include architects, except landscape and naval; archivists, curators, and museum technicians; designers; landscape architects; and photographers. Some computer-related occupations, including computer software engineers and desktop publishers, may require art skills.

## Sources of Additional Information

For general information about art and design and a list of accredited college-level programs, contact:

► National Association of Schools of Art and Design, 11250 Roger Bacon Dr., Suite 21, Reston, VA 20190. Internet: <http://nasad.arts-accredit.org>

For information on careers in medical illustration, contact:

► Association of Medical Illustrators, 5475 Mark Dabling Blvd., Suite 108, Colorado Springs, CO 80918. Internet: <http://www.ami.org>