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bbk berlin press release

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The Corona Virus and its consequences

We demand an Emergency Aid Fund for Berlin's Artists!

Exhibitions and performances are being cancelled, venues closed, gigs postponed, part-time jobs in cultural institutions or in the catering trade are gone: the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic are a threat to the livelihood of thousands of artists in Berlin from all artistic fields. Nobody pays them a fixed salary and hardly any artist has the financial means to survive even a few weeks without income. For example visual artists: The average annual art-related income is only about 11,000 Euros per year, according to the KSK (Künstlersozialkasse - Artists' Social Security Fund).

Berlin's artists are a "particularly vulnerable group" when it comes to economic effects of the virus. At the same time, a particularly large number of artists live and work in Berlin, as it is a hub of artistic and intellectual work. Their survival is acutely threatened!

Berlin cannot wait until the Federal Government – as rightly demanded by the German Cultural Council and the Berlin Senator for Culture – takes action eventually. Berlin must act immediately and put its Cultural Administration in a position to respond to the emergency right now. We call on the State of Berlin to take the following measures:

- Immediate establishment of an emergency aid fund for Berlin artists through the cultural administration.
- Endowment of 1 million Euro minimum, for until May. The fund must be topped up if it is depleted and if the corona shutdown lasts longer. Ideally, it can later be refinanced with federal funds.
- Applications for immediate aid of up to 2,500 Euros can be submitted by all freelance artists residing in Berlin who can provide evidence of loss of income due to cancellations, closures, cancellations, etc. caused by corona virus or plausible justifications of expected losses.
- Appointment of an advisory board of professionally experienced artists and cultural workers. This advisory board decides on applications for immediate aid. This keeps bureaucracy low – which nobody has time for now – and guarantees qualified decisions based on actual artistic practice.

Justifiably major existential fears are spreading among Berlin's artists. Berlin can and must do something about this immediately and effectively. Helping fast = helping twice. Act now!

Zoë Claire Miller and Heidi Sill
Spokespeople of the bbk berlin