

## Defining being a professional when your creative practice is unpaid

I belong to a generation when sportsmen were defined by being amateur (competing for the love of the sport) or professional (competing for money) and it's a description I've found it hard to break away from. Actually the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus definition of 'professional' uses words like competent, worthy, authorised and masterly as well as paid. There is little doubt, however, that private galleries who ask for exhibition applicants to be 'professional' will be considering a different meaning of the word than a publicly funded or not for profit organisation making the same request. In a recent workshop I attended of 'arts professionals', four out of the twelve attendees did not use their creative practice to generate their income which led me to consider how important it was for an individual to develop their own method of assessing what it is to be professional. I've worked out my own list of what it is to be a professional and like many other people with multiple strands to their creative practice, I don't think it's about the money. For me these are the things which separate a 'strand of interest' from being a hobby.

- A professional can earn money from what they do.
- A professional is knowledgeable, expert, skilled.
- A professional is prepared to share or articulate his knowledge, expertise, skills.
- A professional is autonomous.
- A professional has considered opinions which can contribute to debate about their chosen field of practice.
- A professional is credible and occupies a position of trust.
- A professional seeks to continually develop and validate their competencies.
- A professional produces high quality processes and outcomes which are delivered in a timely, appropriate way.
- A professional is prepared to operate in the public domain for at least some of the time.
- A professional leaves a legacy by creating work or having interactions which are meaningful.