

## **Austrian Art Fair Participation Grants for Private Art Galleries ("Messeförderung")**

### **Background**

In 2002, a programme to promote the participation of Austrian commercially run galleries in art fairs abroad was established in cooperation with the Association of Austrian Modern Art Galleries ("Messeförderung"). While this has not been the first support scheme for private galleries, past grants were given only to specific activities that were deemed to be in the public interest. This has changed, since the new grants "mainly aim at improving the market opportunities of visual artists in the Austrian and international arts markets and at improving the galleries' market orientation" (Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture).

Federal arts grants are usually administered by the Arts Division (Sektion Kunstangelegenheiten) on the basis of the Federal Arts Grants Act (Bundes-Kunstförderungsgesetz). The respective application for funding is checked for plausibility and compliance by the competent civil servant. Grant applications are administered in agreement with the Länder and local authorities ("subsidiarity principle"). The procedure is concluded with submission and subsequent checking of evidence that subsidies were used appropriately.

### **How it works**

Subject to certain criteria, a gallery can receive grants to pay for a stand at up to three art fairs per year according to a sliding percentage scale. Originally, the budget foreseen for the grant amounted to EUR 200 000. This programme is currently under revision.

The most important yardstick for the grant has been that private galleries include Austrian artists in their presentation. Until recently, the following grants covering (part of) the costs of an exhibition stand were provided for:

ARCO Madrid: EUR 220,00/m<sup>2</sup>;

ART BASEL: CHF 515,00/ m<sup>2</sup>;

ART BASEL-MIAMI: USD 530,00/ m<sup>2</sup>;

ART COLOGNE: EUR 224,60/ m<sup>2</sup>;

FRIEZE ART FAIR: GBP 237,00/ m<sup>2</sup>;

FIAC PARIS: Louvre : EUR 310,00/ m<sup>2</sup> - Palais: EUR 420,00/ m<sup>2</sup>;

LISTE 08 BASEL: Individual presentation: CHF 6.500,- - Group presentation: CHF 7.500;

### **Results**

Frequently, the grant not only helped cover the travel costs of gallery staff, but also encouraged gallery owners to invite the artists whose works are being presented at the fair, thus also improving the physical mobility of cultural professionals.

Following public criticism, which questioned the equal treatment of galleries and the choice of fairs (see e.g. thurnhofer.cc), an evaluation is currently conducted by the Ministry, which was not completed in Fall 2008. The aim of this evaluation has been, according to the Minister, "to achieve the highest possible effect" with the funding of art galleries and their participation in international fairs. (Der Standard, 31.3.2008)

The Austrian *Messeförderung* is considered a model also in other countries, e.g. it was mentioned as an instrument to combat competitive deficits in a recent study in Berlin (Kunstmarktstudie Berlin 2004, Institut für Kultur- und Medienmanagement der FU Berlin)

## **Sources**

The Federal Art Grants Act (Bundes-Kunstförderungsgesetz, FLG No 147/1988, FLG I No.95/1997, FLG I No.132/2000), as amended 05.03.2007

Press Conference of the Minister for Education and Culture, Claudia Schmied, 18.12.2007

Austrian Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture 2008  
([http://www.bmukk.gv.at/enfr/arts\\_en/glossary\\_2.xml](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/enfr/arts_en/glossary_2.xml))

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