

NOTES FROM:

(ARTIST) LIFE SCHOOL

**BUDGETING FOR WELLBEING
WITH KHYE HITCHCOCK ON
16 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**THE
PHYSICS
ROOM** CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

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NOTES FROM (ARTIST) LIFE SCHOOL: Budgeting for wellbeing with Khye Hitchcock on 16 September 2021



Design: Annamieke Montagne.

Khye Hitchcock (they/them) is based in Ōtautahi where they are involved in a number of local initiatives that centre community building and place. Since 2019 they have been Programme Director of The Green Lab, a non profit organisation that creates green spaces for social good. They moonlight with Te Pūtahi Centre for Architecture and Citymaking, with CNZ as a Peer Assessor, and as an independent producer/curator. They are interested in generosity, and collaborative and experimental modes of practice which prioritise community and unsettle hegemonic systems. Khye has a MFA from Elam (2012) and has held various curatorial roles including at Artspace Aotearoa, SCAPE Public Art and CoCA Toi Moroki.

Please note: these notes are accompanied by a series of slides as well as an audio recording of the talk, with Audrey Baldwin, that is available the event page on our website via the link below:

<http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/events/artist-life-school-budgeting-for-wellbeing>

PERSONAL WELLBEING TIPS: FOOD, WATER, REST, AND RENT

- Budgeting as self care. If things are in order and you're following some of these steps then you'll be making your life easier.
- Wellbeing trumps budget. Your limit is subjective and personal to you and needs to come into account.
- Wellbeing is being incorporated into economic models and terms so that a 'healthy' economy relies on the health and wellbeing of people as well as numbers.
- The myth of individualism. Even if you're working on a project by yourself, there are those around you who can and likely are supporting you. Acknowledge those people and ask for their help.
- Take inventory on the things you have control of; what to keep and what to let go of, what you want more of. Note the things that are working for you and what is making you happy.
- This extends to side jobs that you may need to pay rent. A menial job might be better to give your brain more focus time on projects.
- Be aware that our brains need chill time to process and make connections. When it's in constant overdrive, there's not often enough room for it to process the day's work (that's why you'll stay up all night ticking over weird ideas while you're trying to get to sleep).
- Put systems and people in place to keep you in check. Sometimes those are the people who will ask you if you've eaten yet or those who will hold you accountable if you say you're having a rest day/afternoon but you keep checking your emails.
- This extends to the crunch time during a project. Have someone, an assistant, a partner, someone who is physically there that makes sure you have water and food throughout a day if you're liable to forget and live off adrenaline and endorphins during the height of a project.

POST EVENT TIPS

- Don't endorse the grind culture. We are not machines and your capacity changes all the time depending on personal and environmental factors. You may not be able to rely on your productivity or capacity being the same as the day before. Check in with yourself and reassess your limits regularly.
- Audrey says "never say 'so, what's next?' to an artist or organiser at the launch/opening event." It's enough just to take a moment and reflect on a project so don't be the person to start them thinking about the next thing.

- 'Glitter crash' is a term in burlesque for the post-performance crash. This is only natural after an event or the end of a project that you've been putting time and energy into. It helps to expect this feeling and find ways to minimise or ride out its effects. Some people make sure they have a good book to escape into and some tidy the whole house to reset. Khye likes couch time, a weighted blanket and trash anime to ride out the crash.
- Add to your CV as you go. This is both helpful longterm and a pat on the back when you've achieved something.

BOUNDARIES

- People expect independent contractors to be available 24/7. Set work times, have an automatic email response, or just don't pick up the phone.
- It's important to ask for help before the big struggle comes. Preempt, set things in place and tell loved ones you're going to be a stress ball for the coming week.

MEDS AND NOPING OUT

- Therapy and medicine is OK! Find something that works for you but know that whatever it is, it's okay and totally normal.
- Learn to say no. When you have the space to say no, you can say yes.
- For Audrey, the recent lockdown has meant that a few projects have been concentrated into the same period, meaning that Audrey has had to make the choice to opt out of one. When this happens, accept that it's not possible or plausible, say no, and put energy into the ones that are.

PLANNING AND DEADLINES

- Delegate and share jobs. Offer jobs to other creatives because you don't need to do it all yourself.
- While Audrey loves herding cats, as working with artists sometimes is, she always has a contingency. Set a deadline for others that's before the actual deadline just in case.
- Think about how long it should take, add 20% more time, because things can and often do go wrong and this prevents you from over promising.
- In a budget application, make the contingency the bottom line because funders can't give you more if something goes over. If you think you're going to need a maximum of X amount of paid hours for something, ask for that. If you want to make a table, budget for two.

SHARE, APPRECIATE AND ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PEERS

- For paid labour, if everyone starts paying more, then change will happen. To shift the current culture, funders need to get used to approving more expensive projects if people are to be paid fairly for their time. Collectively we can ask for more and make that shift.
- Credit where you can't pay fairly. Vouchers, gifts. Nurture reciprocity.
- Recommend friends for gigs, and in turn, it'll come back around to you.

BUDGETING 101:

- Learn the trade offs, some things pay and some don't.
- Khye has a sliding pay scale for their own charge-out rate that depends on the project and the people behind the project. This may mean charging more for people and companies that can afford it.
- Don't forget the little costs, screws, glue etc., they add up. They can usually go under "office" or administration costs. Even if your 'office' is at home, electricity and internet still cost money.
- Ask for support from companies that want to look good as sponsors.
- Record all hours even if they're in kind. Volunteer hours still have a 'cost' can impact the cost of a project. Many funding applications will ask for total cost and the number you're asking for, these are likely to differ; your project cost may be \$40,000 but you're only asking for \$20,000.
- Keep coming back to the live budget.
- Photograph receipts. Phones can now scan them and save them as PDFs.
- Expect to underestimate on your first budgets, this gets better with practice.
- Use budget templates provided by funders where possible and talk to advisors so they know who you are and what your project is before they see the application.
- Research a funder, look at their principles and values and use their key words.
- Just because you can operate on nothing doesn't mean you should.
- Keep communications clear with those you're working with so that expectations and responsibilities of all parties are understood and in the open.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: HOW TO START OUT?

- Be places, be seen. Get rejected and keep trying. Keep emotional fulfillment. Collaborate with others, especially with those who may have had successful funding applications. Draw on your community.
- Have a side job. Art is difficult to sustain though hopefully with collective effort we can make cultural change and art can be valued in Aotearoa.
- Get your name on a successful application through collaboration.
- Look beyond CNZ. Umbrella funding and council.
- Apply for smaller parts. Ask for research funding rather than for an entire project. This will both be more realistic for funders and a smaller amount. After this is approved then you'll be more likely to get the next part of the project funded.
- Build networks, find similar people.
- Ask your local public gallery for help. Some galleries with public funding are required to help with things like proposal writing and funding applications as part of a knowledge-sharing/community building clause.
- Te Wānanga has a free business course for basics.
- Always honour the cultures of the people you're working with or for and acknowledge tikanga.

ABOUT (ARTIST) LIFE SCHOOL

(Artist) Life School is a series of seminars that bring together contemporary artists to further develop professional skills, and sets out to answer the curly questions around maintaining a practice out in the world. Ideal for recent graduates and emerging artists, each workshop will host an industry professional to discuss the realities of making, funding, and showing your work.