

Dear <SPEAKER>,

We are writing about your upcoming speaking engagement at the Frieze Art Fair. For the second year in a row, Frieze and its subcontractor Production Glue have hired low-wage, non-unionized workers to construct their fair, bringing in people from as far away as Wisconsin. This breaks with the industry standard: the major New York City art fairs including the Armory and the ADAA, as well as many other cultural and business expositions, employ unionized workers to construct and run their shows.

Frieze is a for-profit private event that takes over a municipal public park for two months to serve a global clientele of wealthy art collectors. The fair pays less than \$1 per square foot to lease the land from the city. With a ticket price of \$42 per day, Frieze is inaccessible to many working New Yorkers. However, despite the cheap rent and high admission prices to an event that generates millions of dollars in art sales, Frieze claims it cannot afford to pay decent wages to local workers.

Labor organizations including Teamsters Joint Council 16, NYC Central Labor Council, IATSE Local 829, IATSE Local 1, NYC District Council of Carpenters, and District Council 9 have all called on Frieze to employ their union members and guarantee local workers a fair, living wage with benefits. This demand has been repeated by City Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito (representing Randall's Island), as well as City Councilmembers Jessica Lappin and Mark Weprin and U.S. Representative Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY12). As Weprin said recently, "Frieze NY Art Fair, or any private business that chooses to use public parks, should hire local New York workers and adhere to fair labor standards."

We ask you to refuse to serve as a fig leaf for exploitation. We ask you to decline to lend cachet to an event that does not support New Yorkers, and that desperately needs the stamp of cultural seriousness to justify itself to the public. We ask you to consider speaking out publicly against Frieze's unfair labor practices during your talk at the fair. We also urge you to tell Frieze organizers that you support the position of organized labor. Alternatively, we encourage you to cancel your talk and refuse to attend the fair, and to make this choice public. If you would like to discuss the details of this situation further, we would be happy to hear from you. It takes courage to speak the truth when many wish to deny it, but rest assured that should you decide to stand up and speak out, you will not be alone.

The arts are an economic engine for New York, bringing millions of people and billions of dollars to the city each year. Yet each year, more jobs become unpaid internships, artists are denied payment for their labor, real wages go down, and benefits are lost; meanwhile, the city becomes more expensive and the distribution of wealth more unequal. We believe in the importance of holding institutions such as Frieze accountable for their impact on New York and the people who live and work here. We want to see art bloom across our city, but we know there is a better, fairer way to foster this growth.

Yours in dialogue,  
Arts & Labor  
artsandlabor.org

P.S. For more information on this struggle, see:

Arts & Labor, "NYC Labor Leaders Demand that Frieze NY Art Fair Hire Local and Union,"

<http://artsandlabor.org/frieze/>

Mostafa Heddaya, "Labor Issues in Spotlight as Frieze NY Prepares for May Art Fair," <http://hyperallergic.com/69137/labor-issues-in-spotlight-as-frieze-ny-prepares-for-may-art-fair/>

Whitney Kimball, "Unions, City Council, Congresswoman Protest Frieze,"

<http://artfcity.com/2013/04/19/unions-city-council-congresswoman-protest-frieze/>

Rozalia Jovanovic, "New York Union Members Speak Out at City Hall Against Frieze's Labor Policies,"

<http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/892257/new-york-union-members-speak-out-at-city-hall-against-friezes>

And to contact Frieze:

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