

Freehand art

Kim Shaw

"Get a real job," artists and creative types are continually told. Thankfully, there are many who believe that a life in the arts is the most evolved expression of human existence and an artist's right to a living simply follows.

Yet working as a freelancer in the creative arts is not easy, according to founder and trainer at Freelance Success, Monica Davidson.

Often it is a test of strength, stamina and belief in oneself, she said, as many artists are hopeless at marketing themselves or doing their tax.

But Ms Davidson is making life easier for freelancers in the art world. She has been a freelancer herself for 20 years and has spent the past 13 years teaching creative types how to survive without succumbing to the nine-to-five, wage-slave existence. Her workshops have culminated in a book that will be published in July.

"Many artists run the risk of being exploited or not taken seriously," Ms Davidson said. "My key point is that artists must think like a business. They must learn time management,

money management and the most boring but essential element: tax.

"There are special provisions in law for creative people, like the entrepreneurs' tax which offsets tax by 25 per cent. I also cover contracts and copyright and with marketing we talk about word-of-mouth [which is] how we get 95 per cent of our work."

Ms Davidson said that, judging from the Bureau of Statistics figures, there were 600,000 people working in the creative arts in Australia.

Her own career began when she was 16 and now includes more than 100 credits as producer, director, cinematographer and writer. She has also raised three daughters and said her example had given them more choices in life.

"I don't think the nine-to-five is set up for parents," she said. "I haven't always known where the next lump of money was coming from, but I have worked full-time doing what I love and have never missed the important moments in my girls' lives."

The people that flock to Ms Davidson's training courses range



Monica Davidson runs workshops to help artists build a successful business

from young artists who have recently graduated to those who have worked in the arts for years but who now wish to build up their business.

The next workshops will run at Waverley Library from February 8 to March 15. For further information visit www.freelancesuccess.com.au