



SEEING VISUAL ARTISTS: A PORTLAND PANDEMIC REPORT

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

I am an artist.

At the beginning of the lockdowns in spring 2020, I wrote a grant proposal to study the effects of the pandemic on the arts in Portland, Oregon, a city that has long enjoyed a reputation for being a supportive home to artists of all varieties. My proposal was influenced by the increasing horrors of the pandemic and also by a number of preexisting concerns about the state of Portland's art ecosystem: In the years prior to the pandemic, several nationally recognized non-profit exhibition spaces, a handful of commercial galleries, and even a college for art had closed. It seemed that the pandemic could only make this situation worse—indeed, as I was writing my proposal, the mayor's office announced a 9 percent cut to the Regional Arts and Culture Council's \$4.2 million budget. As the uncertainties of COVID-19 intensified, I shaped my concerns into a series of questions: *How can small cities support artists? How do current models undercut the stability of an art scene? Who is responsible for the current and long-term health of an arts ecosystem?*

Yet almost a year later, when I was fortunate to receive funding to support the project, I realized that some of the queries I had posed couldn't be addressed without first gaining a better understanding what kinds of support artists in Portland really needed. While institutional perspectives on the arts aren't hard to find (all across the United States, arts organizations and funders at federal, state, and regional levels publish reports annually), I wanted to know about the needs of art producers themselves. I wanted essential information about their ages and ethnicities, if they worked full- or part-time in addition to their art practice, whether they could afford studio space. I wanted to know if the pandemic had threatened their studio time, their economic stability, or their mental health. To this end, I formulated a short survey that would provide me with a quantitative and qualitative view of their lives and practices. The answers to that survey, along with information provided by dozens of news articles and other studies, have allowed me to create a portrait of Portland's visual artists and their milieu.

This project evolved from three prior endeavors: First, in 2015, I went to Poland on a Fulbright Fellowship just as the ultra-right-wing PiS Party was voted into power. Over the course of two years, I wrote a series of reviews and essays that explicated the rapidly changing art scene within the context of Polish politics, documenting how art workers responded to ongoing abuses while still imagining models for a better future. After I left Poland, I was the 2018 SPACES Art Writer in Residence in Cleveland, Ohio, where, over the course of a month, I interviewed over a dozen art workers and wrote about the benefits and drawbacks of living in a city far from the art centers of New York and Los Angeles. Finally, after my return to Portland in late 2018, I investigated the trend in idiosyncratic, artist-run exhibition spaces, which resulted in an *Art in America* feature article that introduced these venues to a national audience, analyzed the conditions that made them necessary, and considered the extent to which they were sustainable.

Doubtlessly, the issues that Portland's art scene faces are not unique: Across the United States, there have been sharp increases in the costs of living, and in many cities, a commensurate loss of spaces and resources for the arts. While we continue to grapple with the pandemic, the

situation grows more precarious. These circumstances are compounded by the fact that mid-size cities in the US are woefully underexamined in the national contemporary art press—and yet, measured by number of artists, they are where the majority of artists in this country live and work.

Considering the many contributions that artists make to the economy, to the well-being of their communities, to innovation generally, and to the capability to envision social and political possibilities, they deserve to have the conditions of their lives seen and understood. Further, there is often a considerable gap between the factors that make a city “good for the arts” and those that make a city good *for artists*. We need to start talking about that gap, and how to build bridges across it. Every part of an art scene owes its existence to the artists who exercise their imaginative capacities and labor to make work. Without artists, galleries and museums and arts non-profits wouldn’t exist, curators and admins and ancillary staff wouldn’t have jobs, whole tourist economies would collapse. To lose sight of this fact would be to disregard the very foundation on which not just one, but several industries have been built. In assessing and making decisions about the support, stability, and health of an art scene, we must not neglect the people who are the reason it’s all here—especially in a city that has long branded itself as a creative mecca.

I am an artist. As such, some parts of this report may look different from a conventional sociological research report. My goal has been to find out how visual artists in Portland are currently operating, uncover some of the contexts that have led to their situations, and provide potential directions for future thinking, while making the information accessible to artists and art researchers, regional policy makers, and laypeople alike.

Studies are most valuable when they stimulate new questions, and I hope this one will foster conversations about artists, cities, and creative placekeeping. I am grateful to the Andy Warhol Foundation for an Arts Writers Grant in support of this project, and I am honored by the artists who answered the survey questions and revealed sensitive information for this report. Thank you to the Center for Art Research at the University of Oregon for hosting this document, the first in a series on the theme of access. I also thank Dan Gilsdorf, Anthony Discenza, and Monica Westin, early readers of this text who provided valuable feedback.

Bean Gilsdorf, September 2021

Summary

Portland is a great place for people who love art and culture. But what about the artists who reside in the metro area, is it a supportive place for them to live and work? The purpose of this study was to answer two questions: Who are the visual artists in Portland, and how have they been affected by the pandemic? The information collected from the survey concerns only visual artists, but it can be inferred that some of the quantitative and qualitative data would also be applicable to dancers, performance and sound artists, writers, musicians, and other creative workers.

In seeking to create a comprehensive picture, this report connects the data from the survey to related issues that sometimes extend beyond the boundaries of the metropolitan area and, in some cases, beyond the category of “artist.” Many social factors—such as gender, race, and household income—are at play in artists’ lives. The survey respondents’ quantitative and qualitative answers point to complex interactions between pre-pandemic structures that existed within the regional arts ecosystem and also in Portland’s general ecology.

The pandemic has only intensified the precarious situations that make it difficult for artists to create their work. Employment is among these: Only a tiny portion of Portland’s visual artists (8 percent) earn the entirety of their living through their art practice; for many, the gig economy, with its temporary, often exploitative positions, made many artists’ lives unstable. Further, respondents disclose canceled exhibitions and other lost economic opportunities that contributed to financial strain. Additionally, venue closures and event cancellations meant losing the networking opportunities that can be essential to commercial success. Artists also describe being displaced from their workspaces and studios—sometimes because they could no longer afford them, sometimes because COVID-19 made shared spaces unsafe to work in. Not least, the burdens of caretaking during the pandemic, for both children and other adults in their households, has left many respondents with little or no time or energy to make creative work. Some artists commented that they are thinking about moving away from Portland, and some are reevaluating whether they can continue to be artists at all.

If Portland has built its reputation on the labor of the creatives who live here, how can it support those people now? This report does not argue for treating artists as a protected class within the general population. There are many factors that underpin artists’ lives that also affect non-artists, and so in many cases artists will be uplifted by creating stronger social protections for all residents. These supports include affordable housing and access to free or low-cost childcare and healthcare. Nevertheless, given that the labor of creative workers is what this city has built its very reputation on, it does seem that there ought to be robust, reliable, and sustainable programs to support artists. In addition to the schemes mentioned above, these might include increased funding for institutions to create more opportunities for artists through events, exhibitions, and programming; incentivizing the retention and development of studio and live-work spaces; access to unrestricted (non-project) grants and low-interest/forgivable loans; and initiatives that advance visibility and patronship by connecting artists with the non-arts sectors.

Methodology

This report is based on a sixteen-question survey conducted online between March 29 and April 17, 2021.

The survey's design and length were based on best-practices information from Harvard University¹ and Pew Research Center.² The questions elicited both quantitative and qualitative data.

To make sure that the questions were understandable and appropriate, sixteen beta testers across a range of ages, genders, and ethnicities were recruited. They took the survey and then answered a second set of questions that evaluated the survey for clarity and relevance. Their feedback was incorporated into the survey when possible.

To reach as many potential respondents as possible, the survey was disseminated via email to key members of Portland's visual art community, who then passed it along to other visual artists, gallerists, curators, critics, and college-level instructors. The survey was also posted to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the Regional Arts and Culture Council's "Opportunities" page. In order to maintain the integrity of the data, I did not take the survey, though I am a Portland visual artist.

Considering the population of the metro area, the valid sample size for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error was 351 responses (see Appendix B: "Methodology for Estimating the Number of Visual Artists in Portland" for information about how this number was calculated). In total, after the data was compiled and cleaned for duplicates, the survey received 381 responses, surpassing the minimum.

Respondents were given the option of expanding on their answers, and their narrative statements are included in this report. Where necessary, their disclosures have been edited lightly for punctuation and spelling, and to remove recognizable details (such as the names of their employers) that might compromise their privacy.

In addition to the survey responses, research for this project includes government agency reports, national and local news articles, and university and non-profit studies on the arts that contextualize the survey data.

¹ Chase Harrison, "Tip Sheet on Question Wording," Program on Survey Research, Harvard University, November 17, 2007. https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet_0.pdf

² "Writing Survey Questions," Pew Research Center, no date. <https://www.pewresearch.org/our-methods/u-s-surveys/writing-survey-questions/>

Portland as an Arts City

Portland, Oregon, has unequivocally—and very successfully—branded itself as a city where the arts thrive. For more than two decades, the city has enjoyed a reputation as a creative hub with an “arty,” “eccentric,” and “unconventional” population whose imaginative output attracts out-of-towners and local patrons alike. Indie guides, real-estate blogs, and tourist magazines chirp, “Portland is undeniably one of the most artsy and creative cities in the country,”³ “Portland's culture is all about creativity,”⁴ and “non-conforming, artsy, creative, alternative, hipster [...] we can hardly think of what hasn't been said about Portland's particular take on American culture.”⁵ Even the AARP encourages its members to retire in Portland: “The place is quirky to the core. Fueling this extended reign are, foremost, the type of people the city draws—creative, free-spirited, stridently alternative.”⁶ The presence of the region's artists and arts institutions has been well documented, and former City Commissioner Nick Fish once remarked, “Arts and culture is not just the soul of our city, it's our competitive advantage. We attract so many people because of our creative reputation.”⁷ Indeed, a report by Americans for the Arts states that in 2015, a total of 4,647,870 people attended arts and cultural events in the Portland metro region, resulting in a total economic impact (direct, indirect, and induced spending) of \$297,899,126.⁸ Portland's City Arts Program concurs: “Culture, creativity and the arts shape Portland's identity—and fuel our economy.”⁹ There is no question that Portland's artists play an integral role in the financial health of the city.

Yet the benefits of a robust art scene go beyond mere economics. Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska, authors of “Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture,” are careful to note that “an exclusive reliance on financial measures is insufficient [...] because they are lagging indicators, and are likely to prioritize short-term performance over long-term value creation.”¹⁰ Instead, they point to the numerous enhancements that art brings to communities: The arts attract other creative industries to a city; arts participants volunteer more, vote more, and have more psychological resilience; an arts education enhances learning, remembering, problem solving, communication skills, social competency skills, and produces a more innovative workforce.¹¹ The arts “give rise to new forms of imaginaries—sets of beliefs, customs and institutions which could present an alternative to a current system, and fuel political imagination more broadly.”¹² This concept is echoed in a 2017 University of

³ Hasson Company, “12 Reasons Why Portland Made the List of the 10 Best Places to Live,” *The Local Arrow*, September 5, 2018. <http://www.hasson.com/blog/2018/09/reasons-portland-made-list-10-best-places-live>

⁴ La Carmina, “19 Photos That Prove Portland Is Weird And Wonderful,” *Business Insider*, April 2, 2014. <https://www.businessinsider.com/weird-portland-2014-3>

⁵ Hannah Brown, “Indie Guides: Portland,” no date. <http://indie-guides.com/en/guides/indie-guides-portland>

⁶ John Briley, “Great Quirky Places to Retire: 10 funky and artsy cities that free spirits will love,” *AARP Home and Family*, April 2012. <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/livable-communities/info-04-2012/great-quirky-places-to-retire.html>

⁷ April Baer, “Nick Fish on Finding Portland's Next Arts Chief.” *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, August 5, 2017.

<https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/state-of-wonder/article/nick-fish-portland-arts-regional-culture-council-director-search>

⁸ Americans for The Arts, “Arts & Economic Prosperity 5,” 2016, p. 264.

https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/NationalFindings_StatisticalReport.pdf

⁹ Portland.gov, “City Arts Program.” no date. <https://www.portland.gov/omf/cityarts>

¹⁰ Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska, “Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project,” Arts And Humanities Research Council, March 2016, p. 129. <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report>

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 99.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 64.

Pennsylvania study on art's impact on neighborhood well-being; authors Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert take an ecological approach, citing art as “a critical resource that people use as part of that quest for a life of value. It can provide tools for making sense of the world. It can provide opportunities to develop one's abilities or to forge connections with people like themselves or not like themselves.”¹³ And from those connections, another long-term social benefit emerges: “cultural engagement is a form of intentional social action—that is, it represents an opportunity to develop counter-narratives to the structural forces that determine individual and community well-being.”¹⁴

However, Portland's visual art scene has become more and more precarious, with an accelerated decline in the last five years. Important venues that championed the work of regional artists were shuttered, among them White Box Gallery (2017) and Bullseye Glass Gallery (2019), while the sole curatorial position at the Hoffman Gallery at Lewis and Clark College was cut (2018). After twenty-eight years of operation, the Marylhurst Art Gym closed (along with the rest of Marylhurst University, in 2018). For teaching artists, opportunities for employment have dwindled or disappeared entirely: Oregon College of Art and Craft closed in 2019, and approximately 15 full-time faculty and 8 part-time faculty in the degree program (as well as all the instructors in the continuing education program) lost their jobs.¹⁵ This was followed by a major downsizing at Pacific Northwest College of Art in 2020, with 15 percent of the staff furloughed and 9 percent of the full-time staff laid off.¹⁶ In a cruel game of musical chairs, instructors who are trying to find a seat at the remaining institutions must grab a spot that they know will be both temporary and exploitative: Fully 47 percent of the faculty at Portland State University work as adjuncts,¹⁷ and 75 percent of the teaching staff at Portland Community College are part-time, non-faculty, or non-tenure track faculty.¹⁸

This decline in stability overall has had an extensive impact on the region's art scene. Portland has the fourth-highest concentration of artists in the nation, after New York (all five boroughs), Los Angeles, and San Francisco.¹⁹ In terms of their employment, the National Endowment for the Arts notes that “artists are 3.5 times more likely than other workers to be self-employed.”²⁰ Because artists need job flexibility that allows them to produce work for exhibitions, give

¹³ Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, “The Social Well-Being of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts,” University of Pennsylvania, March 2017, p. 132.

https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=siap_culture_nyc

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 137.

¹⁵ April Baer, “Saying Goodbye To The Oregon College Of Art And Craft,” *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, May 22, 2019.

<https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/state-of-wonder/article/oregon-college-art-craft-closes-remembering/>

¹⁶ Jeff Manning, “Pacific Northwest College of Art to downsize amid financial challenges,” *The Oregonian*, June 3, 2020.

<https://www.oregonlive.com/education/2020/06/pacific-northwest-college-of-art-to-downsize-amid-financial-challenges.html>

¹⁷ Portland State University Faculty Association, “About Us,” July 18, 2016. [https://psufa.org/about-us#:~:text=As%20of%20Fall%202016%2C%2047,%25%20active%20members%20\(2\).](https://psufa.org/about-us#:~:text=As%20of%20Fall%202016%2C%2047,%25%20active%20members%20(2).)

¹⁸ College Factual, “The Portland Community College Student to Faculty Ratio & Faculty Composition,” no date.

<https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/portland-community-college/academic-life/faculty-composition/>

¹⁹ Dan Kopf, “The US Cities with the Highest Concentrations of Working Artists.” *Quartz*, October 28, 2017.

<https://qz.com/1113019/the-us-cities-with-the-highest-concentrations-of-working-artists/#:~:text=Manhattan%20and%20San%20Francisco%2C%20rich,condensed%20populations%2C%20top%20the%20list.>

The US Census Bureau category “artist” depends on self-reporting and includes visual artists, designers, actors, dancers, musicians, and others. For more information, see the May 2008 National Endowment for the Arts report “Artists in the Workforce 1990–2005,” <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/ArtistsInWorkforce.pdf>

²⁰ National Endowment for the Arts, “Artists in the Workforce 1990–2005,” May 2008, p. 2.

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/105.pdf>

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/105.pdf>

performances or lectures, and travel to residencies, they are also “less likely than other workers to have full-year or full-time employment, which partly accounts for their annual median incomes being lower than those of workers with similar education levels.”²¹ In other words, artists are more likely to be wage- and contract/gig workers—the kinds of workers who have been laid off, fired, and/or had contracts canceled due to the pandemic, to further precarity and loss of income. A 2021 factsheet generated by Americans for the Arts reported that in Oregon, “COVID-19 has devastated creative economy businesses with a loss of \$1.6 billion in revenue. In addition, 64% of all creative workers in Oregon became unemployed (43,332 people) as of July 2020.”²² This situation may interact with other factors in Portland, such as gentrification and the increased costs of living to create an impossible situation for artists: In 2020, the Portland Business Alliance reported that “wages have simply not kept pace with rising rents.” For some groups of artists these detrimental effects are compounded—the PBA further notes that the “region's communities of color have not shared equally in the region's economic growth”—African-American and Hispanic/Latinx populations in Portland are at the bottom of the median household income. The PBA also reports that 46 percent of all renter-occupied households are cost-burdened.²³

In trying to find both stopgap and long-term ways to ameliorate these difficulties, artists are not able to rely on the region’s dwindling arts institutions for support, because, compared to US cities of similar size, Portland lags in arts funding overall. A 2020 study done by the DeVos Institute of Arts Management found that the budgets of Portland’s top-ten arts and culture organizations²⁴ are only half (or even one-third) as large as those of that similarly populous cities such as Pittsburgh, Nashville, St. Louis, Denver, and Minneapolis.²⁵ This is consistent with the way in which the arts are underfunded throughout the state over time: A 2017 report by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies ranked Oregon 34th among states for arts funding;²⁶ in 2021, the NASAA ranked Oregon 29th.²⁷ This lack of funding allocated to the arts means that there are not only fewer available roles for artists to occupy within organizations (as administrators, preparators, educators, etc.), it also means less funding is available for the exhibitions and events that would normally provide direct payments to artists for their artworks.

²¹ Americans for the Arts, “Research Note #105,” October 2011, p. 1.

²² Americans for the Arts, “Why the Arts Matter in Oregon,” March 15, 2021, p. 1. <https://www.artsactionfund.org/sites/artsactionfund.org/files/2021-04/OR%202021.pdf>

²³ Portland Business Alliance, “State of the Economy,” February 19, 2020, p. 2. <https://portlandalliance.com/assets/pdfs/economic-reports/2020-VOJ-State-of-Economy-WEB.pdf>

²⁴ “Top-ten” is determined by the size of the budget; these are: Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Oregon Symphony Association, Portland Art Museum, Portland Center Stage, Oregon Historical Society, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Portland Opera, Portland Children’s Museum (which closed in 2021), Artists Repertory Theatre, and Oregon Children’s Theatre Company.

²⁵ DeVos Institute of Arts Management, “Portland Metropolitan Area Arts Ecology Study,” September 10, 2020, p. 9. <https://murdocktrust.org/app/uploads/2020/09/2020-09-11-PORTLAND-FINAL-TO-PUBLISH.pdf>. For example, the averaged budget of a Portland (pop. 2.5 million) top-ten arts org is \$10.7M, while the averaged budget of a Pittsburgh (pop. 2.3 million) top-ten arts org is \$20.4M—almost double despite Pittsburgh having about 200,000 fewer people than Portland.

²⁶ Cultural Advocacy Coalition, “Why the Arts Matter in Oregon,” February 2017, p. 1. See also: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, “State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2016,” April 2017, p. 12. <https://nasaa-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NASAAFY2016SAARevenuesReport.pdf>

²⁷ National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, “State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2021,” February 2021, p. 14. <https://nasaa-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NASAA-FY2021-State-Arts-Agency-Revenues-Report.pdf>

Portland owes a debt to its artists, a debt that will only deepen as we enter the third year of the pandemic. In a guide to cultural placekeeping, the National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response declares that "Artists and arts organizations are integral to the health and welfare of neighborhoods, towns, and cities in good times, but especially in times of difficulty [...] they are a principal asset in helping communities recover, heal, and build long-term resilience."²⁸ Eighteen months ago, when the mayor's office announced a 9 percent cut to the Regional Arts and Culture Council's \$4.2 million budget, then-City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly issued a statement: "Portland has built its 'brand' on the backs of our arts community, a multi-million dollar industry that provides thousands of jobs, is a major tourism attraction, and drives business to hotels, restaurants, and retailers across the city. But we haven't done enough to preserve or foster this community that is so essential, not just to our local economy, but to our heart and spirit."²⁹ In considering what kind of future we want for Portland's arts, we must reckon with the ways in which the city has fallen short of its promise.

The city's own branding is reliant on the labor of artists and arts workers. But who are the artists who underpin this critical facet of life in Portland? How were they making their work before the pandemic, and how are they faring now? What do they require, and what does the city need to do if it wants to continue to identify as a place where a creative, socially engaged population can thrive?

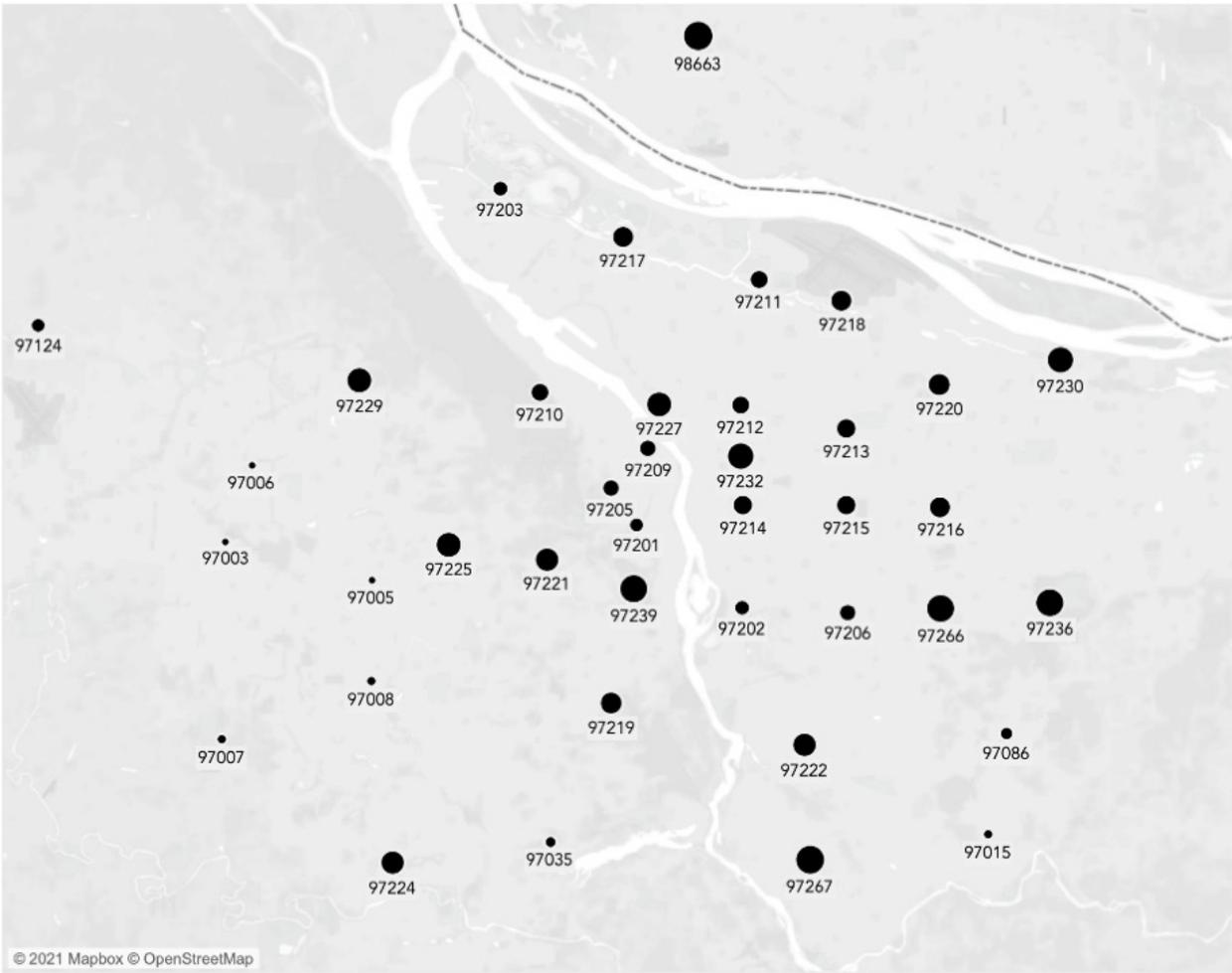
²⁸ National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response, "Cultural Placekeeping Guide: How to Create a Network for Local Emergency Action," 2017, p. ii. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/Cultural-Placekeeping-Guide.pdf>

²⁹ Chloe Eudaly, "Commissioner Eudaly's Statement on RACC Funding in the 2020-21 Budget," Portland.gov, May 20, 2020. <https://www.portland.gov/eudaly/news/2020/5/20/commissioner-eudalys-statement-racc-funding-2020-21-budget>

Portland Visual Artist Survey Data

A total of 381 visual artists responded to the survey. Below are tables that show the demographic makeup of the respondents, including location, age, ethnicity, and gender. Following that are tables that show the percentages of respondents' answers to questions about employment, housing, studio space, and the effects of the pandemic. To view the entire survey as the respondents did, see Appendix A: "Survey Questions."

Portland's visual artists are scattered across the entire metro area. On the map below, the largest dots represent the densest clusters of respondents (not pictured: 97116, 97060, 97019, 97231, 98660).



The median age of a Portland metro area resident is 38.4 years;³⁰ unsurprisingly, the largest group of survey respondents are in the 30–39 and 40–49 age range. These are also some of the most active years in an art career, so it follows that roughly two-thirds of the respondents would be from this range.

³⁰ Census Reporter, "Portland, OR," no date. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US4159000-portland-or/>

| Age range | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 18–29 | 42 | 11% |
| 30–39 | 107 | 28% |
| 40–49 | 122 | 32% |
| 50–59 | 43 | 11% |
| 60–69 | 45 | 12% |
| 70–79 | 18 | 5% |
| 80 or over | 2 | 0.5% |
| Prefer not to answer | 2 | 0.5% |

The respondents were also from a variety of ethnicities; generally, they closely reflected the ethnicities that make up Portland’s general population, with the exception of Hispanic/Latino residents, which may be underrepresented in the survey. The table below compares the survey’s respondents to 2010 Census data³¹ for the Portland Metropolitan Statistical Area. The table reveals that the survey data aligns closely with 2010 census data; in other words, the survey’s respondents reflect the overall racial makeup of the Portland metro area.

| Ethnicity | Number of respondents | Percentage of total | 2010 Census data |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Asian | 18 | 4.72% | 5.7% |
| Black or African American | 11 | 2.89% | 2.9% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 18 | 4.72% | 10.9% |
| Mixed Ethnicity | 22 | 5.77% | 4.1% |
| Native American or Indigenous | 3 | 0.79% | 0.9% |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 3 | 0.79% | 0.5% |
| No Answer | 4 | 1.05% | n/a |
| Other | 6 | 1.57% | 4.9% |
| White | 296 | 77.6% | 76.3% |

The gender makeup of respondents is also roughly consistent with the general population. About 53 percent of respondents were women (note: percentages in this and the following tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number); women make up 50 percent of the population in Portland, per 2019 estimated census data. Women also earn 70 percent of bachelor of fine art degrees³² and 65–75 percent of all master of fine arts degrees³³ in the US.

³¹ From the US Census Bureau website data.census.gov: “The Census Bureau will not release its standard 2020 ACS 1-year estimates because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection.” The 2019 data is comprised of “experimental estimates,” so for the purposes of this study I used 2010 (non-experimental) data as a benchmark, found in the archive: https://archive.ph/20190521214830/https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1&prodType=table

³² Robert B. Townsend, “Taking Note: How About Those Undergraduate Arts Majors?,” National Endowment for the Arts blog, October 5, 2017. <https://www.arts.gov/stories/blog/2017/taking-note-how-about-those-undergraduate-arts-majors>

³³ Jillian Steinhauer, “Tallying Art World Inequality, One Gallery at a Time,” *Hyperallergic*, March 27, 2014. <https://hyperallergic.com/117065/tallying-art-world-inequality-one-gallery-at-a-time/>

| Gender | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Cisgender man | 115 | 30% |
| Cisgender woman | 201 | 53% |
| No answer | 4 | 1% |
| Nonbinary | 37 | 9.7% |
| Other | 18 | 4.7% |
| Transgender man | 5 | 1.3% |
| Transgender woman | 1 | 0.3% |

There are undoubtedly intersectional effects that shape the lives of artists in Portland. Although the data collected here parallels percentages for the general population of the Portland metro area (particularly within ethnicity), the sample sizes within categories are too small to make accurate observations. For example, only three respondents are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and it’s not possible to make inferences about the conditions of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander artists in the region using such a limited dataset. The same can be said for smaller groups within the category of gender. For this reason, the report is not able to address the many potential interactions of ethnicity, age, and/or gender with regard to other circumstances such as employment or housing (the exception to this is in caregiving, where the survey data mirrors national trends across sectors and disciplines). Further studies to address these factors are clearly needed.

Apart from their visual arts practice, artists mainly earn money through one or more part-time jobs and/or a series of freelance gigs. This is often due to artists needing to juggle short-term contract employment with the demands of an art career, such as concentrated periods of time to produce the work for an exhibition, or time away at a residency, etc.

| Prompt | Number of respondents | Percentage of total | |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|---|
| I have one part-time job | 46 | 12% | Note: all part-time and gig workers combined, 43% |
| I have more than one part-time job | 42 | 11% | |
| I have a series of gigs, contracts, and temporary jobs (I am a freelancer) | 77 | 20% | |
| I have a full-time job | 100 | 26% | |
| I am entirely supported by family money or by my spouse/partner | 31 | 8% | |
| I am currently unemployed | 53 | 14% | |
| I earn 100% of my living through my art practice | 32 | 8% | |

Apart from their visual arts practices, artists’ employment was affected by the pandemic, mainly among freelancers.

| Prompt | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| I was furloughed or my hours were reduced (for full- and part-time employees) | 72 | 19% |
| I was laid off or fired (for full- and part-time employees) | 59 | 15% |
| My freelance gigs and/or work contracts were canceled. | 118 | 31% |
| My employment was not affected by the pandemic. | 160 | 58% |

Artists received family/personal financial assistance, emergency grants, unemployment benefits.

| Prompt | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| I received family/personal assistance. | 61 | 16% |
| I received an emergency grant from an arts or cultural organization. | 75 | 20% |
| I received unemployment benefits. | 124 | 33% |
| I did not receive assistance. | 180 | 47% |

For some artists, housing was a serious concern in the period from March 2020 to April 2021.

| Prompt | Number of respondents | | Percentage of total |
|---|-----------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Has housing been a serious concern for you in the last twelve months? | 67 Yes | 314 No | 18% Yes |

Interestingly, artists believe that housing is a serious concern for others.

| Prompt | Number of respondents | | | Percentage of total |
|---|-----------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Do you think housing is a serious concern for artists in the greater Portland area? | 296 Yes | 6 No | 79 I don't know | 78% Yes |

More than a third of artists reported that studio space has been a serious concern

| Prompt | Number of respondents | | Percentage of total |
|--|-----------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Has studio space been a serious concern for you in the last twelve months? | 135 Yes | 246 No | 35% Yes |

The monthly costs of studio space are extremely varied; one artist pays as little as \$70 per month, while another artist pays \$8910 per month. The table below shows that the majority of artists pay between \$100 and \$599 per month, with the largest group in the \$300–\$399 range (the omission of a number range, for example 1300–1399, means there were zero artists in that category).

| Monthly Studio Rent, dollars per month | Number of artists |
|--|-------------------|
| \$0–99 | 3 |
| \$100–199 | 10 |
| \$200–299 | 12 |
| \$300–399 | 18 |
| \$400–499 | 10 |
| \$500–599 | 10 |
| \$600–699 | 3 |
| \$700–799 | 6 |
| \$800–899 | 1 |
| \$900–999 | 3 |
| \$1000–1099 | 2 |
| \$1200–1299 | 2 |
| \$1500–1599 | 1 |
| \$1600–1699 | 1 |
| \$3500–3599 | 1 |
| \$5000–5099 | 1 |
| \$8900–8999 | 1 |

About half of artists either experience difficulty paying for a studio space or cannot afford studio space at all.

| Prompt | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| I have dedicated studio space that I can easily afford. | 162 | 42% |
| I have dedicated studio space that I can afford with some difficulty. | 82 | 22% |
| I cannot afford studio space. | 108 | 28% |
| My practice doesn't require studio space. | 29 | 8% |

In the last twelve months, artists devoted varying time to their practices per week, including art production as well as administrative tasks such as writing applications, attending meetings, giving public presentations, etc.

| Hours devoted to practice | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1–15 hours | 142 | 37% |
| 16–30 hours | 130 | 34% |
| 31–45 hours | 53 | 14% |
| More than 45 hours | 54 | 14% |
| No answer | 2 | 0.5% |

Art production and exhibition were affected by the pandemic in various ways.

| Prompt | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| I got sick, and was not able to make art. | 28 | 7% |
| I experienced anxiety, and it affected my ability to make my artwork. | 243 | 64% |
| I experienced depression, and it affected my ability to make my artwork. | 220 | 58% |
| I experienced housing insecurity. | 38 | 10% |
| I experienced food insecurity. | 29 | 8% |
| My scheduled exhibitions were canceled. | 157 | 41% |
| My public presentations (artist lectures, class visits, panel talks, etc.) were canceled. | 123 | 32% |
| An in-progress sale of my work was canceled. | 45 | 12% |
| My studio building/space closed due to the pandemic. | 39 | 10% |
| I could no longer afford a studio space. | 37 | 10% |
| I became a part- or full-time caretaker for another adult, and had little or no time to make art. | 15 | 4% |
| I became a part- or full-time caretaker for a child/children, and had little or no time to make art. | 72 | 19% |
| My production/studio schedule was not affected by the pandemic. | 54 | 14% |

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| I had institutional opportunities to present my work online (streaming artist talk, panel, class visit). | 138 | 36% |
| I made opportunities for myself online (Instagram/TikTok videos, Facebook live, etc.). | 124 | 33% |
| I sold my work online through my website or social media. | 122 | 32% |

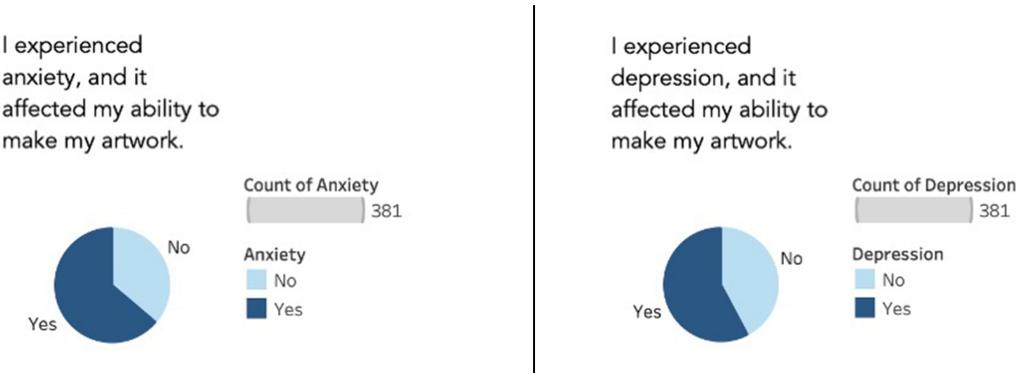
Physical and Mental Health

Surprisingly, a very small number of respondents reported illness from COVID-19 between March 2020 and April 2021. Only 7 percent responded “yes” to “I got sick and was not able to make art.” Unfortunately for these few, the coronavirus has affected them with intensity and persistence:

I got COVID at the earliest stage of the pandemic and have been diagnosed with long COVID since June 2020. I have been debilitated by the illness, unable to work and fully housebound, including being entirely isolated from my community other than online engagement.

However, fully 86% of respondents felt that their practice had, in one way or another, been disrupted by COVID-19. From March 2020 to April 2021 the majority of visual artists spent fewer than 31 hours per week on their practice, including both work production and administrative tasks like applications, meetings, and public presentations.

In particular, there was a strong response to the questions regarding mental health. Anxiety and depression were serious issues during this period. For example, 64 percent of respondents said that they experienced anxiety, and 58 percent of respondents said that they experienced depression, to the extent that it affected their ability to make their artwork:



Anxiety over my health and those around me, over social and political current events, over climate events, over the possibility of losing my job, over not being successful in my art career and personal relationships. I made less work last year than I usually produce.

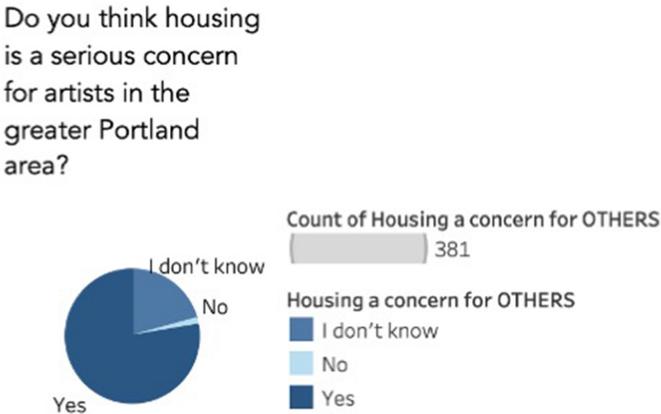
I certainly experienced anxiety and depression related to the pandemic and to increased childcare, and navigating isolation and significant changes with my children. The increased time at home/near my easel was not the gift that it seemed to be, and exhaustion and difficulty in starting or completing work contributed to the already existing feelings of distress.

Housing Insecurity

For 18 percent of the respondents, housing was a serious concern in the first twelve months of the pandemic; additionally, 10 percent experienced housing insecurity.

I exist within the homeless community where there has been much injustice. The past year has been in a word, nightmarish. I believe that art of any kind is a force for healing in times of pain, expression when words are not enough, a force for peace in times of fear. No one knows this more than the homeless community. There are many artists in the homeless community that have no forum. Please take this into consideration. Their art is powerful, their stories are real, and their lives are precarious at best.

Housing insecurity is not an immediate personal concern for most artists who responded to the survey; however, 78 percent of respondents answered “yes” to the question, “Do you think housing is a serious concern for artists in the greater Portland area?” (only 1.6 percent answered “no,” and 21 percent responded “I don’t know”).



In other words, even artists who have stable housing report that they perceive *other* artists as being vulnerable to housing insecurity in Portland. Perhaps this is due to the fact that gentrification, income inequality, an overheated housing market, and rising costs of living increasingly dominate everyday life in Portland.

Of course I am grateful that I have housing and some financial stability and food security. I have been supporting friends and family and neighbors including children who do not have these.

The Brookings Institution’s 2019 report “Portland Economic Value Atlas Market Scan” notes that Portland has “one of the fastest-growing metropolitan economies over the past decade, with output and job creation consistently rising faster than national benchmarks [...] yet the

regional economy is far from perfect. Income inequality is growing. Housing prices continue to rise faster than median and average wages."³⁴

I am a born-and-raised Portlander and I want to make a living as an artist in the community I grew up in. I do not plan on leaving, but between the pandemic and gentrification, times have been incredibly hard.

Common wisdom holds that artists are at least partly responsible for gentrification and displacement, but a 2016 study looked at this phenomena within thirty cities with populations of more than 2 million people over thirteen years (2000–2013), and concluded that the fine arts do not induce gentrification. In their report “Gentrification, displacement and the arts: Untangling the relationship between arts industries and place change,” authors Carl Grodach, Nicole Foster, and James Murdoch comprehensively analyzed neighborhood housing prices and values, household incomes, ages of residents, their levels of education, and even looked at differences between the “commercial arts” (the film, music, and design industries) and the “fine arts” (artists, art galleries, art schools, and museums). They found that the highest number of arts establishments overall were consolidated in affluent areas and in areas that had already gentrified, while neighborhoods that were in the process of gentrifying had the least amount of arts organizations, particularly in the fine arts. The study determined that “arts industries generally do not play a significant role in gentrification and displacement. In fact, arts industry growth is weakest in gentrifying areas and it is gentrification that predicts arts growth in most contexts.”³⁵

³⁴ The Brookings Institution, “Portland Economic Value Atlas Market Scan,” May 2019, p. 9. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019.05.21_Brookings-Metro_Portland_Market-Scan.pdf

³⁵ Carl Grodach, Nicole Foster, and James Murdoch, “Gentrification, displacement and the arts: Untangling the relationship between arts industries and place change,” *Urban Studies*, December 6, 2016, p. 3. Unfortunately, this study is paywalled; for an accessible summary, see Richard Florida, “Do Art Scenes Really Lead to Gentrification?,” *Bloomberg CityLab*, March 22, 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-22/artists-aren-t-to-blame-for-gentrification-after-all>

Cancellations

Often a professional practice in the arts requires not just the materials with which to make one's work, nor merely the time and space in which to use them—a career depends on professional connections and collaborations. Several artists who collaborate with others to produce their work reported that their projects were put on hold or canceled for reasons of health and safety:

Wasn't able to do artwork because that required close social contact, (shooting vid with crew and talent, etc.). Moved studio home because of social distancing.

My practice involves other people and driving in a car together. I couldn't do that last summer.

I am an emerging film director and I had a film production scheduled the week we were shut down due to COVID. It was a huge blow to my development. I lost months of prep work and did not get to finish the piece.

Additionally, 32 percent of respondents reported that their public presentations (artist lectures, class visits, panel talks, etc.) were canceled. Opportunities often come to artists through social connections initiated and fostered through informal networking opportunities such as exhibition openings and other community-building activities such as residencies, workshops, and productions. These gatherings put artists in proximity with other artists, administrators, curators, and funders. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this sort of activity for many artists' careers and practices.

My MFA thesis show was canceled and I feel other opportunities didn't present themselves that might have otherwise.

My practice involves performance, a tour of which was my planned income for the year, along with several cancelled residencies.

In a 2009 document entitled "Prescription for a Healthy Art Scene," curator and writer Renny Pritikin lists the critical social factors that make up a robust arts ecology; many of the recommendations on his list amount to opportunities to speak with other professionals in the field, including "Events that bring people together, scheduled multi-gallery opening nights for example," and "Social space where new ideas are being generated about art, about society, about the role of art" (see Appendix D: Renny Pritikin's "Prescription for a Healthy Art Scene"). When these are obliterated, the consequences can be long-lasting.

I lost valuable networking opportunities, as well as many other opportunities.

I was at the point of approaching galleries right when the pandemic hit, so put that on hold—I will resume reaching out when there is more stable public access to galleries.

In addition to the concomitant loss of direct income, the cancellations of production residencies, combined artist-in-residence/teaching positions, visiting-lecturer positions, and other such opportunities may stall an artist's career. These types of prospects are usually planned months to years in advance, and when they are cancelled it creates an extended period between the next round of applications and the possibility of a new opportunity—that is, if the artist is lucky enough to be awarded such an opportunity within a very competitive field.

My artist residency was cancelled.

A residency with attached income was canceled and not rescheduled.

The Alliance of Artist Communities notes, "Cancellations mean a dramatic (and immediate) gap in support for thousands of artists who had planned to be in residence."³⁶ The AAC polled fifty-five artist residency programs early in the pandemic and found that 85 percent had canceled the residencies slated for spring and summer 2020. Some of those 2020 programs were initially deferred for one year when it was unclear how long the pandemic would continue, but were later canceled altogether, as Skowhegan did in 2021. Further, an artist who was already accepted to a residency before the closure happened may find that their place is not held for a future session when the site reopens. An awardee to one of these canceled residencies will be required to submit a new application; they lose their acceptance and may not regain it in the next round, when the latest applications are assessed by a novel panel of jurors.

³⁶ Alliance of Artists Communities, "Field Survey: Cancellations and Postponements," Artist Communities Alliance blog, May 1, 2020. <https://artistcommunities.org/news/field-scan-cancellations-postponements>

Exhibitions and Sales

Nearly half (41 percent) of respondents said that their scheduled exhibitions were canceled between March 2020 and April 2021. An additional 45 artists reported that an in-progress sale of their work was canceled due to the pandemic. This fits with the general pandemic-related trends: The economist Clare McAndrew has noted that global sales of art and antiques declined by 22 percent in 2020.³⁷

I am on Social Security, and normally earn money through sales and grants. There have been no sales or grants this last year. And two of the galleries representing my work have closed permanently.

I had a major commission for individual work at an international biennale that went away because of the pandemic. This was the project of a lifetime and a heavy blow to lose.

Sales of art drastically down from previous years, making it harder to afford supplies.

I sold 10% in 2020 of what I sold in 2019.

I lost 30% of revenue in 2020.

As with residencies, some funders also put granting programs on hold, which meant that artists could not complete in-progress projects:

Many applications were delayed or shut down for finding funding for projects I already developed for in-person exhibition spaces.

Closures and/or venue capacity limitations meant that fewer patrons saw the work in person, if at all. This impairment contributed directly to decreases in income from sales, in addition to the loss of networking and promotional opportunities for artists that in-person art viewership provides. In an article for *The Art Newspaper*, Anna Brady wrote, “Lesser-known galleries and their artists are not helped by the lack of opportunity [...] online viewing is a narrower experience.”³⁸

Sales of my artwork were significantly reduced due to the lack of shows, as my works sell better in person than online.

Scheduled exhibition was delayed and had lower capacity.

Some artists pivoted to commission-based work, but this was not a panacea:

³⁷ Scott Reyburn, “Art Market Shrank 22 Percent in Pandemic Year, Study Says,” *New York Times*, March 16, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/16/arts/design/art-market-size-ubs-art-basel-report.html>

³⁸ Anna Brady, “Art market 2020: the year of cancel culture and bricks-and-clicks,” *The Art Newspaper*, November 25, 2020. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2020/11/25/art-market-2020-the-year-of-cancel-culture-and-bricks-and-clicks>

I did still have two commissions made over the year of COVID but made about 50% income from it from previous years.

Artists also report negative psychological effects owing to cancellations of exhibitions and sales:

Due to exhibition and sale opportunities being canceled or postponed I did not have the same motivation to work in my studio.

I had both national and international exhibitions and performances cancelled due to the pandemic. This in addition to personal problems and stress caused a major depressive episode and I've been unable to motivate myself to start making art or music again.

Employment

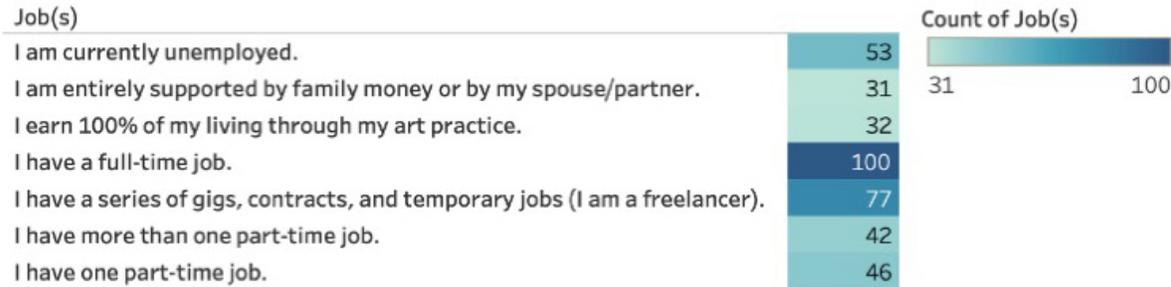
Even before the pandemic, it was notoriously difficult to make a steady living in the arts. Only 8 percent of respondents earn their entire living through their art practice. When asked, “Apart from your visual arts practice, how do you earn money?” some artists report that they were unemployed³⁹ at some point during the first year of the pandemic, which induced changes to their creative practices:

A lot of time and energy that usually goes into my practice has been taken up by job hunting, and the emotional fallout of failing to find a job.

Because I lost jobs, and did not qualify for unemployment, I found a new job almost immediately, and have switched industries completely.

Another 8 percent of artists disclose being supported entirely by family money or by a spouse or partner. However, the majority of visual artists in Portland have either one part-time job, more than one part-time job, or a series of freelance gigs, contracts, and temporary jobs.

Apart from your visual arts practice, how do you earn money?



For some artists, participating in the gig economy means having a somewhat flexible schedule that can accommodate periods of time to make art; travel to residencies; take on various other forms of work that provide social connections within the arts, such as visiting-artist gigs; and/or care for family members. Unsurprisingly, 43 percent of visual artists earn some of their living through a collection of different short-term and contract jobs. However, the detriments of this strategy frequently include zero job protections, no healthcare benefits, unpredictable income, and poor working conditions.

Job security? None, and it could all evaporate. The anxiety of needing to get more work always stands in the way of sitting down and creating just for creation’s sake, not as something to sell.

My work was affected in terms of which jobs I applied for. I had to quit because of unsafe working conditions, etc.

³⁹ Two of the respondents who checked “I am currently unemployed” clarified in the comments that they are retired.

Whether they hold freelance, full-, or part-time jobs, artists disclose that stressful working conditions are leading to burnout:

Working as an essential worker trying to take care of people I have very little support or resources and no PPE provided at any point.

I'm a [health care worker] so I'm definitely employed but overworked, especially now that I'm doing vaccines.

I returned to [a labor job] for a few weeks in the fall, but none of us felt safe doing interior work. In December, I was called up for work out of town that continued in random week-long chunks through February and was the most physically draining work I've ever done.

I feel very fortunate to have had continuous work during the pandemic. However, it has gone out the other side for me where I now have two full-time jobs (that are considered part-time by [my employer] and paid as such) and barely any time for my art practice.

Within academia, stable employment is also increasingly difficult to find. Instructors report losing jobs; many also report exploitative conditions:

I lost a full time teaching job in the arts that will not be coming back.

As a teacher I would say my workload doubled at least and our salaries and benefits were cut significantly.

I teach higher ed and the extra workload of creating online and hybrid curriculum depleted my motivation. I was not compensated by my part-time employers for the additional work of creating new course content.

[The school] canceled my class in 2020 and then gave me two co-taught classes and a small contract job, so triple the work for only about \$1000 more than I would have made teaching the one class that term.

In all, 58 percent of respondents said that their employment was affected by the pandemic.

Studio Space

To produce their artwork, 92 percent of visual artists in Portland require studio space, yet a 2020 study from the DeVos Institute of Arts Management warns that “access to space for creation and presentation is limited and shrinking” in the metro area.⁴⁰ Among artists who do have a studio, many report maintaining spaces inside their houses or apartments, or on the same property, due to the rising costs of real estate in Portland.

Studio is in my garage.

My studio is in my home, as I lost my coop space three years ago when gentrification/sale hit the large building I had a studio in for over twenty years.

My studio space has always been a nook in my house. I have never sought out external studio space as it is not accessible or affordable or even worth it, financially, to me.

My studio space is a not insignificant chunk of the living room I share with my partner in our one-bedroom home. I could not afford any other kind of studio space.

Having a studio at home provides some convenience and stability, but can be limiting in other ways: Artists report too-small spaces, distractions, and an inability to separate non-art tasks from their creative practices.

I can't afford studio space but I do have a very small space at home I can afford but is limiting to art production—also I'm a mom so my time in studio is very limited.

My studio space is in my house, it's a very half-ass situation but parts of my practice are messy so the cost of space for me would tend to be a bit higher because of the specificity of the space.

I cannot move forward in my work until I have a new studio. I live in a crowded, shared apartment for now, I am doing tiny watercolors on a corner of my desk (I'm an oil painter by vocation), but would love a live-work situation a little closer in to everything.

Normally, for my day job, I worked full time from an office. With the pandemic I have to work remotely in the only space available in my house, which is my studio. Since I share my house with others, my studio is the only space that has the privacy required for my job. I have barely been able to work on any art at all due to the anxiety of having my work computer in my studio and also due to the amount of physical space my work computer and monitors take up. I barely had enough space to work in my studio to begin with, and this made a cramped studio many degrees worse.

⁴⁰ DeVos Institute for Arts Management, “Portland Metropolitan Area Arts Ecology Study,” September 10, 2020, p. 38. <https://murdocktrust.org/2020/09/devos-institute-of-arts-management-research-on-portland-arts/>

More than one-third of respondents (35 percent) said that studio space was a serious concern for them during the first year of the pandemic. Nearly half (48 percent) of visual artists say that they either afford with difficulty, or cannot afford, a studio space.

My studio space is always of concern. It is too small for my needs, but I can't afford more—this has nothing to do with the pandemic.

About 10 percent reported that their studio building or studio space closed due to the pandemic, and another 10 percent said that they could no longer afford a studio space. Additionally, some report not being able to use shared spaces because they felt unsafe.

March–November I did not pay rent on my studio. I did not go to my studio. It was closed on and off. My studio mate left in March, so I was solely responsible for the lease agreement. I am now paying back rent on the space which is not financially feasible.

I lost my studio space and no longer have one because of the cost and pandemic.

I had to leave my studio when the lease was up, as I could no longer afford it, plus the building did not feel COVID-safe because of the behavior of some of the other tenants.

Right now a friend is letting me use space for free, but it's temporary. I'm not sure what I'll be doing after that.

It's not uncommon in the visual arts for one artist to be the leaseholder of a large space and subdivide it into smaller studios to rent to other artists, which provides an anchor and a community. In the first year of the pandemic, some of these spaces were threatened.

My studio is outside my home and supports both my own practice as well as offers space to other member artists. I had several months where my membership dropped by half, making it difficult to make rent those months.

I'm very fortunate because I've co-managed an artist studio building for the past nine years, and one of the perks is a free studio in the building. My co-manager and I were very concerned about the effect the pandemic would have on the studio early on but found that many of our tenants were able maintain their income by either working from home or from the studio, keeping the building at almost full capacity for the past year. We had a handful of tenants that had to move out, move out of state, back home, etc., but the spaces were never vacant for more than a month.

We had a handful of tenants that couldn't make rent for a 1-3 months, but we either waived it or found something for them to do around the building to offset the cost. This situation definitely hit some harder than others, and we tried to keep people in the building. It's heartbreaking some people had to move! Losing a studio is so hard.

With ever-rising real-estate costs for both domestic and commercial spaces, workspaces for artists in Portland continue to be a pressing concern. In a 2019 report on artists' housing and studio insecurity in Los Angeles, curator and policy researcher Allison Agsten writes in a similar vein, "Only when artists, policy experts, elected officials, representatives from city and county arts agencies, and developers come together will a solution for this urgent yet seemingly intractable matter become imaginable."⁴¹

⁴¹ Allison Agsten, "(Re)Inventing the Dream: Policies and Practices for Keeping Artists in Los Angeles," Arts for LA, November 2019, p. 9.
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/artsforla/pages/9064/attachments/original/1573069883/2019_Laura_Zucker_Report_%28Re%29_inventing_the_Dream.pdf?1573069883

Caregiving

Almost a quarter (23 percent) of respondents report caring for another adult or for a child/children during the first year of the pandemic to the extent that it impeded their ability to make art.

We turned my painting studio into an apartment to care for my mother.

With my child at home since last March and my partner and I both working full time (after the shelter-in-place order) my studio practice has been impossible.

Overseeing distance learning was and remains my main focus for our elementary school child. Very few studio hours in the summer with no camps or activities outside of the neighborhood.

Home-schooling grandchildren...which includes the arts, unlike the public school.

Generally, women bore the burden of this care: Twice as many women as men cared for another adult, and a third more women than men cared for children.⁴² There are interrelated, pre-COVID effects that need to be taken into account when thinking about this data: Even before the pandemic, the average woman (working full-year/full-time) earned \$0.79 for every dollar a man earned, but in the arts the ratio is worse: the National Endowment for the Arts notes that “women who work as visual artists and photographers tend to earn less than their male peers [...] women fine artists, art directors, and animators, and women photographers, earn \$0.74 for every dollar men visual artists and photographers earn.”⁴³ Under the stresses of COVID, when it became necessary to decide which adult in a household would become a part- or full-time caregiver, it was frequently the lower-earning adult who took over those responsibilities, particularly where the labor of childcare and supervised schooling was concerned—“because women typically earn less, they are the ones who take the step back.”⁴⁴ The economic consequences of working in the arts, a field that often makes less money than other jobs, are thus compounded.

Because I was not working in a visible way, and because my income was secondary in my household I stopped doing the gigs and broke contracts.

⁴² Though earlier in this study “cis men” and “trans men” are in separate categories for the purposes of demographics, in this section the group “men” here refers to both. No trans women reported working as caretakers. Nine non-binary artists report working as caretakers.

⁴³ National Endowment for the Arts, “Artists and Other Cultural Workers: A Statistical Portrait,” April 2019, p. 28. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists_and_Other_Cultural_Workers.pdf

⁴⁴ Pallavi Gogoi, “Stuck-At-Home Moms: The Pandemic’s Devastating Toll On Women,” *National Public Radio*, October 28, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/28/928253674/stuck-at-home-moms-the-pandemics-devastating-toll-on-women>

In becoming a caregiver, some artists experienced a high degree of career setbacks; *Fortune Magazine* notes that, “a massive increase in caregiving responsibilities at home and at work may jeopardize women’s ability to stay in the workforce and progress.”⁴⁵

I became support emergency childcare for five families on and off throughout the last year. In the process I have had almost no time to develop and maintain my career and connections.

It was impossible to plan ahead due to lack of childcare etc. I stopped conversations with gallerists and curators in other places because I could not guarantee my ability to complete projects. I was unable to devote time to applying for grants and other opportunities. I had to step down from ongoing/recurring gigs due to lack of time. Also managing the mental health of children who were adversely effected by the pandemic took much more time and energy than I am able to explain.

At the beginning of 2020, before the pandemic, women held about half of all jobs in the US; by the end of 2020, women held 860,000 fewer jobs than men.⁴⁶ In addition to the immediate social and economic effects, this means that women are also paying less into their social security accounts, leaving them at risk for future poverty. Many articles published in the last year review the effects of the pandemic on women’s status in the workforce; however, these frequently concern pink-collar jobs in hospitality, education, and retail; or white-collar STEM jobs (in science, technology, engineering, and medicine).⁴⁷ There isn’t much data yet on how women in the arts have fared during COVID-19, but one thing is already clear: Women’s earning potential and career progress—and thus their autonomy—is in peril, and the effects of the pandemic on women across all sectors will be long-lasting.

In this process I have become even more financially dependent and bound to my partner who earns a living wage and is not an artist.

⁴⁵ Kweilin Ellingrud and Liz Hilton Segel, “COVID-19 has driven millions of women out of the workforce. Here’s how to help them come back,” *Fortune Magazine*, February 13, 2021. <https://fortune.com/2021/02/13/covid-19-women-workforce-unemployment-gender-gap-recovery/>

⁴⁶ Annalyn Kurtz, “The US economy lost 140,000 jobs in December. All of them were held by women,” *CNN Business*, January 8, 2021. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/08/economy/women-job-losses-pandemic/index.html>

⁴⁷ See, for example, Jillian Kramer, “Women in Science May Suffer Lasting Career Damage from COVID-19,” *Scientific American*, August 12, 2020. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/women-in-science-may-suffer-lasting-career-damage-from-covid-19/>

Conclusion and Recommendations

In thinking about support for—and the long-term health of—the arts in Portland, it's important to note that the benefits of the arts to urban areas are well documented. Numerous studies demonstrate that artistic and cultural offerings attract a well-educated workforce, create a vibrant economy, and promote higher levels of civic engagement and volunteerism.⁴⁸ But, crucially, the vast majority of this research examines the impact of art's *consumption* rather than considering the conditions required for art's *production*. The implications of this lopsided analysis are essential to understanding how a city with a self-image and national reputation as a home for the arts could so blithely under-support them.

Part of the issue is measurability. It is far easier to quantify the “value” of art after it is produced and consumed than to attempt to comprehend what conditions might be necessary for its creation. Even the most passionate arts advocates often fall into the trap of emphasizing the economic benefits of the arts: For one thing, they must use the tools at hand, and data on the effects of art's consumption is plentiful; for another, funders are often governmental bodies who overlook the dynamic interplay of elements in this ecosystem in favor of simplified budgets and direct, easily demonstrable gains.

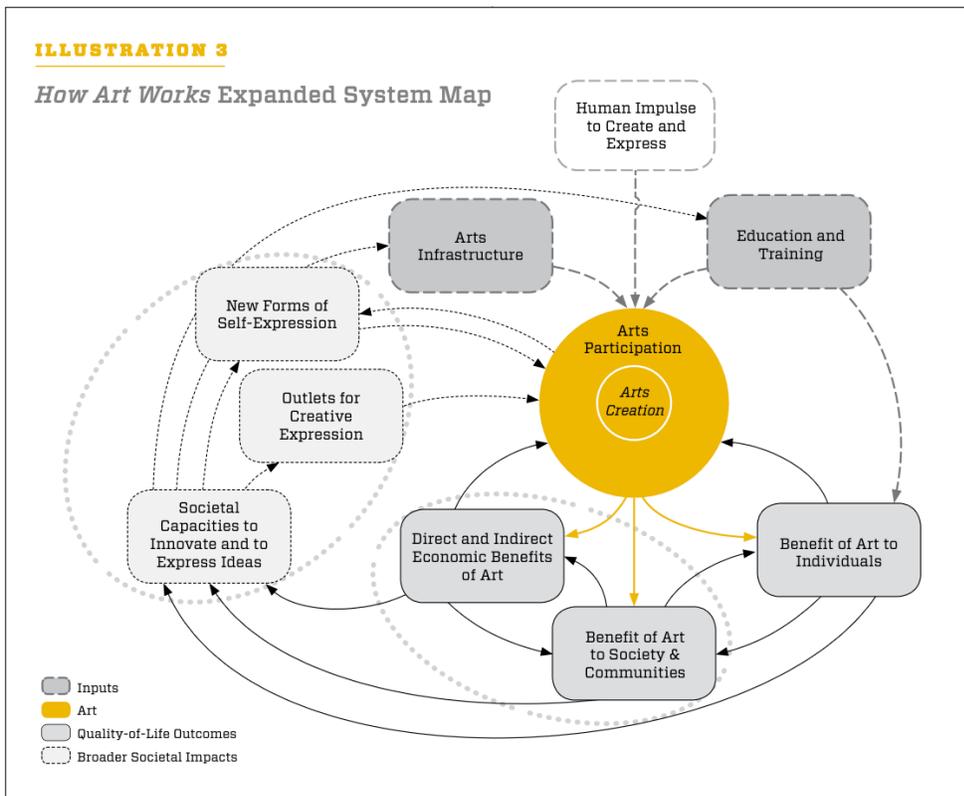
But even within arts organizations, it often seems that there is a strange reticence to speak about where art comes from. The bias toward measurability can also be seen in an emphasis on producing “outcomes”—a nebulous set of semi-quantifiable factors that situate art as a pursuit contingent upon social functions such as audience development and public recognition. But foregrounding these interests means losing sight of artists; the AHRC Cultural Value Project notes that assessment in the cultural sector has been “too closely tied to meeting the accountability needs of funders, which has had the effect of weakening its ability to inform and support cultural practitioners.” Consider the model (below) from a 2012 National Endowment for the Arts research publication entitled “How Art Works”: There is a central element labeled “Arts Creation.”⁴⁹ It is the agent that brings all of the other components into play. Without it, there would be none of the interdependent, vital effects—yet the most powerful arts institution in the United States euphemistically calls this catalyst “arts creation” instead of “artists.”

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska, “Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project,” Arts And Humanities Research Council, March 2016, p. 58. See also pages 86 and 92. <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report/>

⁴⁹ National Endowment for the Arts, “How Art Works,” September 2012, p. 17. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/How-Art-Works_0.pdf

ILLUSTRATION 3

How Art Works Expanded System Map



This linguistic framing is a problem: It takes active originators and puts them into a static, semantically distanced category; it implies a horizon so broad as to be imponderable; it disempowers artists and separates them from the fruits of their own labor. This is merely one example, but it matters how we conceptualize the work of artists, *especially within the arts*. If we don't attend to the biases that emerge from only looking at art's consumption, artists will be excluded from the social and economic profits that their work reaps for institutions, for neighborhoods, for communities, for whole cities. Therefore it's worth asking: What might happen—and how might we all benefit—if we intentionally re-centered artists within the myriad ways that we conceptualize a city that's "good for the arts"?

Tackling these questions is fundamental to ensuring that Portland can continue to *be* a place for the arts. Both the replies from the 381 respondents and the information on pre-pandemic conditions make it clear that the deleterious effects of COVID-19 have only amplified the decline that's been in effect for more than a decade. In 2018, former Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish said, "We're pricing artists out of our city and we're making it more difficult for art nonprofits to function here. If we're not careful, we're going to lose something that makes Portland very special."⁵⁰ It's evident that Portland's culture and economy relies on the arts, but the old models that artists relied on to make art production possible—cheap rent, lower costs of living, and less exploitative forms of employment, among other things—were already gone before the pandemic. COVID-19 has only thrown into stark relief the consistent, decades-long trend of decreasing stability among visual artists as a population.

⁵⁰ April Baer and Nadya Klimenko, "We Have A Lot To Lose": Portland Commissioners Try To Save Creative Space," *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, February 15, 2018. <https://www.opb.org/radio/article/creative-space-portland-save-eudaly-fish/>

How do we make a city that's good for artists? As the pandemic continues, Portland has many urgent issues to confront. Some of these, such as affordable housing and ensuring a living wage, will benefit artists among the general population, because the difficulties that many artists contend with are the same difficulties that all people in lower income brackets face. Mitigating the burdens of health care, child care, job insecurity, and exploitative working conditions will, as a matter of course, be a boon to artists as well as to other citizens.

Yet there are problems that are unique to artists, and the city needs to examine and acknowledge these as well. What follows are some recommendations that are specifically borne by the data in this report; there is no doubt that many other possibilities exist for stabilizing, retaining, and supporting artists in the region.

- Artists need stable, low-cost space to work. One way that Portland could help anchor its existing artists is by incentivizing commercial property owners to create low-cost studio and live-work spaces throughout the city. In the 2018 policy proposal “A Plan for Preserving and Expanding Affordable Arts Space in Portland,” former City Commissioners Nick Fish and Chloe Eudaly endorsed a program to offer “non-refundable credits toward a business license tax, SDC [a development charge that goes toward the administration of city services] waivers, or other benefits as appropriate”⁵¹ for providing below-market-rate creative space. However, while other policies in the plan advanced, this one withered. It should be revived.
- Artists need bigger, better, more stable arts institutions to work at, and to exhibit their artworks within. Portland can make this happen by bringing arts funding in line with other arts cities of similar size. For example, in Denver (pop. 2.9 million) this year’s operating budget of the Denver Art Museum is \$26M, while in Portland (pop. 2.8 M) the Portland Art Museum’s operating budget is \$14M. Portland’s art institutions are clearly underfunded, and enhanced support would allow them to employ artists, produce more exhibitions and events that pay artists for their labor, and attract more patrons and tourists. Portland, which holds roughly 48% of the state’s population, must lobby for, and create, more funding for the arts.
- Artists need visibility and patronship beyond their own sector. In many cities, corporate funding of the arts is significantly higher than it is in Portland, so Portland must find ways to connect art and artists to the non-arts sectors. A 2020 study by the DeVos Institute of Arts Management found that industries in Portland are growing, but are not engaged in the arts. Combined, Nike, Intel and Cambia Health donated \$26.7M in 2018, none of it to the arts—a result of “a lack of outreach by most arts organizations to executives and senior staff at major corporations.”⁵² The city can broker conversations between corporate leadership and arts leadership, and these relationships need not be limited to donations. In fact, to establish long-term initiatives, the city could incentivize

⁵¹ Nick Fish and Chloe Eudaly, “A Plan for Preserving and Expanding Affordable Arts Space in Portland,” *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, January 2018.

https://www.opb.org/pdf/a_plan_for_preserving_and_expanding_affordable_sed2e8_1526505408181.pdf

⁵² DeVos Institute for Arts Management, “Portland Metropolitan Area Arts Ecology Study,” September 10, 2020, p. 16. <https://murdocktrust.org/2020/09/devos-institute-of-arts-management-research-on-portland-arts/>

the development of paid artist-in-residence programs. These could involve more than just an artist creating a permanent or temporary artwork on site (a scheme which prevents artists who make non-conforming work from participating); these programs could be about harnessing the creativity of artists to help make a company more innovative overall through activities, workshops, lectures, and consultations. In a 2015 Theatre Forward survey of 200 corporate managers and executives, 56 percent said that “the arts can develop skills valuable in jobs outside of the creative sector.”⁵³ However, there is still a divide between the arts and other disciplines. The city can help bridge this gap by creating city-wide initiatives to link artists with other sectors.

- Artists need direct access to funding, and not only for artistic projects. Increasing funding for institutions is necessary, yet the effect for artists will be slow and gradual, so the city should ensure that artists also have access to more immediate economic support. Portland can create emergency grants to help artists meet unexpected needs, and entrepreneurial low-interest loans with options for forgiveness for art-related expenses. Artists frequently begin their careers saddled with tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt to undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and yet entry-level positions in the arts are notoriously low paying. Overall, employment in the arts (for example, adjunct teaching or administrative roles at non-profits) is often undercompensated per hours of work. Currently, most grants available to Portland artists are project grants, in which the funding is tied to production and exhibition; artists must have an unconditional plan in hand in order to receive a check. By creating grants that aren't tied to projects—grants that can instead be used to purchase equipment or pay bills or studio rent—we can keep artists in Portland, and make sure that they can continue to make art. In a recent article regarding arts institutions, Regional Arts and Culture Council executive director Madison Cario noted, “General operating support is essential. Project support is lovely and wonderful but it doesn't keep the lights on.”⁵⁴ Why not apply this logic equally to artists?

In the report “Americans Speak Out About The Arts In 2018: an In-Depth Look at Perceptions and Attitudes About the Arts in America,” the data shows that 60 percent of Americans approve of arts funding by local government, 71 percent believe that the arts improve the quality and livability of their communities, and 81 percent believe “the arts are a positive experience in a troubled world.”⁵⁵ It is possible to cultivate a set of ethical strategies for protecting, strengthening, and further developing our community of artists in a way that centers equity and builds on our existing resources. Artists have created a recognized ethos for Portland; for Portland to maintain its reputation, it must undertake new actions to foster those artists and keep them here.

⁵³ Theatre Forward, “Unmasking Business Success: Executive Perceptions of Arts Engagement and Workforce Skills,” 2015, p. 4. http://theatreforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Unmasking-Business-Success_-_Executive-Perceptions-of-Arts-Engagement-and-Workforce-Skills.pdf

⁵⁴ April Baer, “Change Coming To Public Funding For Portland Arts Groups,” *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, February 7, 2019. <https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-portland-public-funding-arts-groups-racc/>

⁵⁵ Americans for the Arts, “Americans Speak Out About The Arts in 2018: An In-Depth Look at Perceptions and Attitudes About the Arts in America,” 2018, p. 5. See also pages 4 and 26. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/Public%20Opinion%20National%202018%20Report.pdf>

Appendix A: Portland Visual Artist Survey Text

The purpose of this survey is to understand how Portland-area visual artists are coping with the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. The answers will be used to create a picture of our art ecosystem from the perspective of artists.

THIS SURVEY IS ANONYMOUS. If you are willing to speak about your experiences, there is an optional space at the end where you can enter your contact information for a follow-up conversation.

Please answer the questions as accurately and honestly as you can.

Thank you for participating! More answers mean better data, please help by emailing this survey to your Portland artist network.

I certify that:

I live in the greater Portland area.

I am a visual artist.

My age range is:

18-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70-79

80 or over

I prefer not to answer.

Apart from your visual arts practice, how do you earn money?

I have one part-time job.

I have more than one part-time job.

I have a series of gigs, contracts, and temporary jobs (I am a freelancer).

I have a full-time job.

I am entirely supported by family money or by my spouse/partner.

I am currently unemployed.

I earn 100% of my living through my art practice.

Apart from your visual arts practice, has your employment been affected by the pandemic?

Check all that apply:

No, my employment was not affected by the pandemic.

Yes, I was furloughed or my hours were reduced (for full- and part-time employees).

Yes, I was laid off or fired (for full- and part-time employees).

Yes, my freelance gigs and/or work contracts were canceled.

At any time between March 2020 and March 2021, did you receive emergency financial assistance? Check all that apply:

Yes, family/personal assistance.

Yes, an emergency grant from an arts or cultural organization.

Yes, unemployment benefits.

No, I did not receive assistance.

Has housing been a serious concern for you in the last twelve months?

Yes.

No.

Do you think housing is a serious concern for artists in the greater Portland area?

Yes.

No.

I don't know.

Has studio space been a serious concern for you in the last twelve months?

Yes.

No.

Which option best describes your studio situation?

I have dedicated studio space that I can easily afford.

I have dedicated studio space that I can afford with some difficulty.

I cannot afford studio space.

My practice doesn't require studio space.

If you pay for a separate studio space (not in your house or apartment), how much does it cost per month?

Your answer:

In the last twelve months, how many hours per week did you devote to your practice? This includes studio/production time as well as administrative time for applications, meetings, public presentations, etc.

1–15 hours

16–30 hours

31–45 hours

More than 45 hours

How has your art production and exhibition been affected by the pandemic? Check all that apply.

My scheduled exhibitions were canceled.

My public presentations (artist lectures, class visits, panel talks, etc.) were canceled.

An in-progress sale of my work was canceled.

My studio building/space closed due to the pandemic.

I could no longer afford a studio space.

I experienced anxiety, and it affected my ability to make my artwork.

I experienced depression, and it affected my ability to make my artwork.
I experienced housing insecurity.
I experienced food insecurity.
I became a part- or full-time caretaker for another adult, and had little or no time to make art.
I became a part- or full-time caretaker for a child/children, and had little or no time to make art.
I got sick, and was not able to make art.
My production/studio schedule was not affected by the pandemic.
I had institutional opportunities to present my work online (streaming artist talk, panel, class visit).
I made opportunities for myself online (Instagram/TikTok videos, Facebook live, etc.).
I sold my work online through my website or social media.

Optional: Use this space to elaborate on any of your answers.

What is the zip code where you live?

What is your gender?

Nonbinary

Cisgender woman

Cisgender man

Transgender woman

Transgender man

Other

Please specify your ethnicity:

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African American

Native American or Indigenous

White

Asian

Mixed Ethnicity

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Other

Appendix B: Methodology for Estimating the Number of Visual Artists in Portland

It was important that this survey collect a sufficient number of responses in order to achieve a sample size that would provide a high reliability of information and a low margin for error. To determine the target sample size, I first had to establish the total number of visual artists in the Portland Metropolitan Statistical Area (Portland metro area). Unfortunately, there is no preexisting count of the number of visual artists here. However, by comparing county-level demographic data with information from the National Endowment for the Arts and with US Census data, I was able to estimate the number of visual artists living in the Portland metro area. The methodology was as follows:

According to a *Quartz* analysis of US Census Data, people with artistic professions (defined by the National Endowment for the Arts to include actors, musicians, photographers, designers, painters and authors, among others) in Multnomah County (which contains the city of Portland) constitute 3.1% of the total number of persons employed.⁵⁶ In 2019, the total number of employed people in Multnomah County was 452,939; 3.1% of this population means that there are 14,042 Artistic Professionals in Multnomah County.⁵⁷

$$452,939 \times 0.031 = 14,042.$$

However, this survey was designed to elicit data from visual artists only. In 2011, the National Endowment for the Arts determined that in the state of Oregon, fine artists, art directors, and animators (the category that is closest in definition to visual artists) constituted 10% of all artistic professionals.⁵⁸

$$14,042 \times 0.1 = 1,404$$

This leaves us with 1,404 visual artists in Multnomah County. Yet according to 2019 statistics from the US Census Bureau, the population of Multnomah County constitutes only 32.7% of the total population of the Portland metro area.^{59,60} I used this percentage to estimate the number of visual artists in the larger metro region:

$$1,404 \div 0.327 = 4,294$$

By this method, I estimated that there are 4,294 visual artists in the Portland metro area. To achieve the accepted standard of 95% accuracy with a 5% margin for error, the minimum sample size for this survey was 351 participants. The total number of respondents to this survey was 381.

⁵⁶ Dan Kopf, "The US Cities with the Highest Concentrations of Working Artists." *Quartz*, October 28, 2017.

<https://qz.com/1113019/the-us-cities-with-the-highest-concentrations-of-working-artists/#:~:text=Manhattan%20and%20San%20Francisco%2C%20rich,condensed%20populations%2C%20top%20the%20list>

⁵⁷ Data USA, "Multnomah County, OR," no date. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/multnomah-county-or/>

⁵⁸ National Endowment for the Arts, "Artists and Arts Workers in the United States: NEA Research Note #105," October 2011. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/105.pdf>

⁵⁹ US Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Multnomah County, Oregon," no date.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/multnomahcountyoregon,US/PST045219>

⁶⁰ Census Reporter, "Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA Metro Area," no date.

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US38900-portland-vancouver-hillsboro-or-wa-metro-area/>

Appendix C: Qualitative Data – Visual Artists Speak

In their optional responses to the survey, visual artists contributed narratives of their experiences during the first year of the pandemic. Selections and excerpts from their responses appear in prior sections of this report; below are their complete responses, loosely organized into themes.

Illness

I got COVID at the earliest stage of the pandemic and have been diagnosed with Long COVID since June 2020. I have been debilitated by the illness, unable to work and fully housebound, including being entirely isolated from my community other than online engagement.

The illness has also affected my ability to make art, as the extremely debilitating illness of Long COVID has kept me fighting for survival on the worst days and not able to sit at an easel for hours most days.

Reactions the Pandemic

I worked every day and still made art there was no time for me to fret.

I devoted more time to growing/raising our own food, including egg laying hens and more vegetable garden space. I did not experience food/housing insecurity, but it took time away from making art. I also devoted time for making masks for friends and neighbors early in the lockdown, and that included a lot of time procuring materials as they were quite hard to come by. One of my projects was a collaboration with a scientist, and we were not able to meet in person due to the lockdown, and that had an impact on the direction of my work. My co-op gallery shut down for two months then opened for very limited hours (which continues). But overall, I was not severely affected by the pandemic.

The pandemic has been weirdly good for my practice. Because my project, co-directed with a colleague, allows for one of the only ways people can safely gather we have been constantly busy either making new work ourselves or helping institutions present other artists' work. We have used collaboration and commissions to redistribute some of the funding and professional opportunities that have come our way.

Philanthropic and market-based support for art is bankrupt, pun intended. What is needed is robust public funding, direct from the NEA to artists, removing the terrible "public-private" gatekeeper initiatives that depend on the rich gaming the tax code. This was true before the pandemic, and laid bare after.

Of course I am grateful that I have housing and some financial stability and food security. I have been supporting friends and family and neighbors including children who do not have these.

I have since developed a lovely home studio (that was not affected by the pandemic). And I did take time during the summer (when we were rather home-bound) to finally create a web site for my portfolio.

The pandemic has been enormously productive for me. I feel some guilt around this but it has caused changes in my life that have allowed greater focus and clarity.

Money is tight, obviously. I have ideas for a community where dedicated artists could live and work affordably (real, not fake affordable) in exchange for community cultural work (for partial rent). I cannot stop thinking about this. I have ideas!

I have been grateful to have meaningful and fulfilling work to do in my studio throughout the pandemic.

I had two opportunities to contribute to pandemic-related art projects that supported non-profit gifts to artists. Artists pulled together to support one another.

I have helped supported other artists financially and morally when I could. I've supported local arts institutions by donating art and, when possible, donating money or purchasing work during fundraisers.

Many artists in the Portland area experienced difficulties. I've been fortunate. I'm retired and receive Social Security and retirement income after a lifetime of teaching in University Art Departments. I have a partner who helps to alleviate the financial burden.

Strangely the pandemic has enabled me to focus entirely on a big project that was already in the works before the pandemic hit. Luckily I do not have to pay for my studio spaces. The grant I received was not an emergency grant but I did receive partial funding for my project.

I shifted a lot of the time I would have spent making to researching (techniques, academic journal articles, images, etc.) toward new projects.

I've been lucky and have also been the recipient of the moral generosity of others—an advisory group, a women's critique group, and an artist's group that addresses art world issues. Many local artists had it more difficult than I.

Emotional Toll

It was difficult to be mentally inspired or physically robust enough to produce art during such a dismal year.

I was not able to produce new personal work or find the mental energy to be in the studio during 2020. I used my time and energy to initiate a collaborative fundraiser for an institution. Having a consuming administrative project kept me focused and sane.

The seriousness of the world epidemic made me question the value and meaning of my art, and art in general during this crisis. I know better than this, but negative thoughts like this arose anyway. Also, questions of worthiness, when my situation was more fortunate than many - WHY couldn't I produce more work?

I exist within the homeless community where there has been much injustice. The past year has been in a word, nightmarish. I believe that art of any kind is a force for healing in times of pain, expression when words are not enough, a force for peace in times of fear. No one knows this more than the homeless community. There are many artists in the homeless community that

have no forum. Please take this into consideration. Their art is powerful, their stories are real, and their lives are precarious at best.

I had one show but no one really came. Art just seemed like a waste to time. I'm a [health care worker] so I'm definitely employed but overworked, especially now that I'm doing vaccines. Anxiety over my health and those around me, over social and political current events, over climate events, over the possibility of losing my job, over not being successful in my art career and personal relationships. I made less work last year than I usually produce.

In this process I have become even more financially dependent and bound to my partner who earns a living wage and is not an artist. I feel less connected to a greater art world and more isolated. And I feel ashamed that I haven't been able to utilize this time more, like so many of my single, childless friends.

Cancellations

My practice involves performance, a tour of which was my planned income for the year, along with several cancelled residencies.

My MFA thesis show was canceled and I feel other opportunities didn't present themselves that might have otherwise.

I lost valuable networking opportunities, as well as many other opportunities.

I was unable to learn new techniques as I had planned because workshops were cancelled.

A residency with attached income was canceled and not rescheduled.

Last spring photo shoots were canceled but they resumed last summer.

I was at the point of approaching galleries right when the pandemic hit, so put that on hold—I will resume reaching out when there is more stable public access to galleries.

My artist residency was cancelled.

Wasn't able to do artwork because that required close social contact, (shooting vid with crew and talent, etc.). Moved studio home because of social distancing. In terms of the studio space question it wasn't a problem with cost, it was because I didn't want to not social distance in a shared studio situation.

I am an emerging film director and I had a film production scheduled the week we were shut down due to COVID. It was a huge blow to my development. I lost months of prep work and did not get to finish the piece. I was not able to reschedule it due to the limitations of filming indoors and the creative involved a number of key crew people.

After months of delays, I just had to let it go and finally pivoted and moved on to produce and direct a small outdoor production. This coincidentally had to be postponed due to the wild fires and smoke pollution, making it unsafe to be outside. At that point all I could do was laugh at the situation!

Finally a few weeks later, the smoke cleared and I was able to film. It was a nail biting couple of weeks but the crew hung in there and we made it happen. The whole experience made me feel ever so grateful for this work and really cherish those opportunities to direct when I can.

My practice involves other people and driving in a car together. I couldn't do that last summer.

My work showed in a gallery but the gallery was closed for half of it and even it was open attendance was heavily hit.

Exhibitions and Sales

In one case, a one month gallery showing of my art had severely limited attendance because of COVID restrictions.

I lost 30% of revenue in 2020.

Due to exhibition and sale opportunities being canceled or postponed I did not have the same motivation to work in my studio.

I happened to have a very lucrative commission through the year that kept me busy inside. Overworked in the beginning after losing my job and then had to stop for several months because of a repetitive stress injury.

I was very lucky to have had little disruption in my day job, and actually had a pretty major increase in art sales during the pandemic. I primarily sell prints priced between \$50 and \$400. Other artists that I know—not necessarily in Portland—had a similar experience: It seemed like people realized they were going to be in their homes way more than they had ever been, and staring at blank walls was not what they wanted to be doing.

Overall I've been lucky to have steady work and a few commissions as well as savings during this time to get me through. I didn't feel much hardship besides the emotional strains everyone has been experiencing to some degree.

I had a museum show in a museum that was open by appointment only.

I found that my in-person exhibition opportunities were not negatively affected by COVID—especially after the first few months. In fact, I noticed that my sales increased substantially through my gallery and a group show.

My experience is fairly unique. I have no dependents and own my home and attached studio. I was able to have two solo shows bookending the pandemic and recently sold enough work to get through the year, barely. I received funding for a project in 2019 and built that into future planning.

I had a major commission for individual work at an international biennale that went away because of the pandemic. This was the project of a lifetime and a heavy blow to lose.

Museum exhibition was not fully canceled but moved to online only. Gallery exhibition rescheduled a few month later.

Sales of my artwork were significantly reduced due to the lack of shows, as my works sell better in person than online.

In another case, a large portion of my yearly sales went through [a gallery] which maintained an online presence and had effective but limited in-person visitation throughout the pandemic. I was also able to maintain limited and distanced in-person studio visitation to individuals purchasing art directly from me. Overall sales were good due to an uptick in people purchasing art for their homes.

I am on Social Security, and normally earn money through sales and grants. There have been no sales or grants this last year. And two of the galleries representing my work have closed permanently.

My NYC show was postponed and we eventually decided to go forward, but I could not go. I have always sold at my openings, so this really affected the outcome. Also, because of the delay, the body of work felt a bit old to me. COVID and ongoing protests and Oregon fires changed my work. There was a lot of terror where my studio was, on different levels, for different reasons. Eventually I had to move it, all through the pandemic. I was able to show some of the new work online with three separate exhibitions and galleries—the galleries tried for sure!—but that felt really strange.

I moved a show farther out because I need more time to work—progress is very slow during the pandemic and I struggle to focus/progress.

Online sales were sparse, but the only real sales I had all year.

Two of my three galleries closed their doors.

I had one gallery that represented me close this year and one gallerist leave a different gallery which impacted my ability to sell my work as easily when they left.

My shows were either cancelled or postponed. I was able to do limited work to prepare for exhibitions. It took me about five months to begin to have any social distancing "contact" with participants for my projects. Finally I got started again. Some of my work can be done at home on the computer. I don't feel that I lost too much ground, just a one to two year delay. I had less opportunity to show my work in person to others.

Many applications were delayed or shut down for finding funding for projects I already developed or in-person exhibition spaces.

A project of mine was put on indefinite hold.

I had both national and international exhibitions and performances cancelled due to the pandemic. This in addition to personal problems and stress caused a major depressive episode and I've been unable to motivate myself to start making art or music again. I accepted a part time remote teaching job which has further impacted my time and energy for art making. I have a piece in an upcoming show which has been rescheduled more than once due to the pandemic but it looks like it is finally happening.

My 2020 scheduled exhibition was postponed to 2021.

I've sold a few, mostly small, paintings over the past year and the gallery sales have been much lower than usual. I hope some of the pictures in the June show will sell. I am in a financial free-fall at the moment, unsure if I qualify for unemployment as I work full-tilt in the studio until June, almost relieved to not be allowed back [to indoor employment] until at least May, but also with no idea where the money for my share of the bills will be coming from, let alone what I yet need for frames and paint.

I applied for public art commissions and sought out commercial art opportunities.

I did still have two commission made over the year of COVID but made about 50% income from it from previous years.

I participated in several group shows in 2020. One never opened to the public. Distance learning in fall 2020 was much more challenging. I switched to working second shift in the studio after my partner returned home from work. Though I do not expect my art career to support my family, sales pay for materials and some bills. I sold 10% in 2020 of what I sold in 2019. I have not recovered but overall I am grateful for my reasonably low overhead.

Scheduled exhibition was delayed and had lower capacity.

Sales of art drastically down from previous years, making it harder to afford supplies.

Employment

Besides maintaining a studio practice, I worked on line with an arts writer and curator I had gotten a grant (from the OAC) to produce.

There was no employment item to check for "retired." I live off savings, Social Security, and the occasional sale.

I have an art book deal and have been working on that all year, plus making fanzines. I am BARELY making enough to live on, and am supported by my partner. If that weren't the case, I would absolutely have needed other additional hustles.

My work was affected in terms of which jobs I applied for. I had to quit because of unsafe working conditions, etc.

My full time job because more hours as an educator—having to quickly transition to online learning and the amount of additional hours that is has cause me to have NO time for my creative work or a summer off to have to work on my creative work.

I have housing through family. This has actually been a better year for work for me, all piecemeal independent gigs. Job security? None, and it could all evaporate. The anxiety of needing to get more work always stands in the way of sitting down and creating just for creation's sake, not as something to sell.

I rarely sell work and have always paid my expenses by working service jobs. Early in the pandemic I was more inspired than ever, making tons of new work. As the pandemic continued I lost a lot of will, especially because most opportunities to share my work were in DIY spaces.

I have not been fired by my employer BUT I have not been able to work for nine months and have had to apply for disability pay, which has been drawn out and difficult (multiple denials and appeals) with the insurance company.

I had left both my jobs before the pandemic and then have been unable to find new work once the pandemic set in. We have been able to live off my spouses employment and the stimulus money coming in.

As an adjunct teacher, I was already operating at a high level of chaos with little support. The adjustment to remote teaching was more stressful the first term. However, since I adjunct at three universities over eighty miles apart in a single term, I often face a lot of regular job-related stress that was actually somewhat alleviated by being able to work/teach from home. Once getting over those initial anxious hurdles of the pandemic, I found myself with more mental space and time to dedicate to the studio and other arts related admin surrounding my practice. I believe the harder part for me will be going back to this untenable schedule.

Teaching gigs were canceled; exhibits were canceled or moved online.

I teach higher ed and the extra workload of creating online and hybrid curriculum depleted my motivation. I was not compensated by my part-time employers for the additional work of creating new course content.

I lost a full time teaching job in the arts that will not be coming back.

As a teacher I would say my workload doubled at least and our salaries and benefits were cut significantly.

I feel very fortunate to have had continuous work during the pandemic. However, it has gone out the other side for me where I now have two full-time jobs (that are considered part-time by [my employer] and paid as such) and barely any time for my art practice. My health benefits are held hostage in that if I were to quit one of these "part-time" positions, I would no longer have benefits (and no one needs to lose health benefits during a pandemic). I also am able to provide benefits to my partner who is a contract worker, does not have insurance, and did lose his job (twice) during the pandemic.

I want to elaborate that I received [two emergency grants], both \$500, and only once. While it was helpful, it is also just a gesture, not a sustaining help. With the pandemic, it seemed people who were wealthy or had expendable income became more likely to support the arts, so it was easier or more possible to sell works online or create content that people wanted to participate in (workshops on Zoom, etc). Because I lost jobs, and did not qualify for unemployment, I found a new job almost immediately, and have switched industries completely. I no longer look for work in the arts but do take freelancing jobs and commissions as a result of my longstanding work as an educator and artist in Portland.

I work as a direct support provider and an adjunct professor. [The school] canceled my class Spring 2020 and then gave me two co-taught classes and a small contract job, so triple the work for only about \$1000 more than I would have made teaching the one class that term. Then after experiencing burn-out from that and working two other gig jobs, when the term was over I found out I was being no-cause evicted in June 2020, a loophole in the eviction moratorium. It was

incredibly hard and expensive to find a new place and then work to get back on my feet. The people I am a caregiver for were experiencing extreme isolation, lack of resources and in one case I was a person's only direct support system for a majority of their needs, which was a lot of pressure, especially when they had a pest control issue we had to handle alone.

Though I was employed the whole time, my brother had open heart surgery February 2020 and that was very stressful and I had to help him recover using all my vacation days. Then the vet discovered my dog had a splenic mass and needed surgery or he would bleed to death when it ruptured, then over the summer I broke up with my partner of eight years who had lost all his income, he moved out and I had to hold my mortgage on my own, then my dog had even more medical issues, then Oregon was on fire, my house almost flooded, then my dog ended up dying in December after everything, and I am now in a lot of debt from vet bills and balancing my mortgage and all other bills by myself. I have had a really rough time getting through the year and more and more seems to keep piling on. The last few weeks have felt better (since getting my tax return and stimulus money).

A lot of time and energy that usually goes into my practice has been taken up by job hunting, and the emotional fallout of failing to find a job. I'm lucky right now, thanks to UI [unemployment insurance] benefits, but the stress of an endlessly moving goalpost on how long that's available is taking a toll. I was "food or electricity?" poor in an earlier part of my life, and a lot of trauma from that has re-emerged. I didn't know I was carrying that. There are days when it's been crippling. I also feel like I can't make plans until I have more stability, which has inhibited my studio practice and is a self-defeating cycle.

My furlough was thankfully very minor and very temporary.

I had to spend more time than normal working at my full-time job due to the effects of COVID. However, was very productive during the two month closure period.

I lost an arts job that I had just secured a month prior to the pandemic starting. The studio I was hired at has since closed due to financial strain put on the studio from the pandemic.

I have to elaborate in narrative because I don't know how to quantify any of this. I can't sort whether my studio practice was upended by anxiety or depression. I felt exceptionally inefficient. I went on long furlough from my recent contract gig. I have a tiny home studio and my wife was on medical leave when the shutdown began. Two of my daughters were schooling and working from our home as well. I was doing even more cooking and house-tasks than usual, on top of feeling plain distracted all the time. I spent hours, days trying to apply for unemployment (it came through in late summer). I returned to [a labor job] for a few weeks in the fall, but none of us felt safe doing interior work. In December, I was called up for work out of town that continued in random week-long chunks through February and was the most physically draining work I've ever done. My gallery called to ask if we could reschedule my next solo from [spring] to [summer]; I was grateful.

A lot of my art opportunities were based around in-person events both music and community based. I have plans to start some projects up again this summer and take more time for my work but it has been a rough year. I feel very exploited and underpaid by every system I work within. Working as an essential worker trying to take care of people I have very little support or resources and no PPE provided at any point. I want to work on some sort of writing project

about my experience as a caregiver and an artist and the intersecting exploitation of the art world and the inequities that caregivers and people with disabilities face.

Reevaluating Positions and Practices

In early COVID I spent more time making things, studio based works, then in May, pivoted to making space for others to show things.

I lost all avenues for work and tried to get unemployment but I have been battling for my backlog since December 2020. Grants and trying to sell work have been the only way I have been able to survive. I am a born-and-raised Portlander and I want to make a living as an artist in the community I grew up in. I do not plan on leaving, but between the pandemic and gentrification, times have been incredibly hard.

I generally was thrust into reevaluating my place in my current community, what does and doesn't offer me, and what kind of relationship I want to have going forward with art production and the traditional commerce that entails.

Have decided to leave Portland and return to New York because of lack of job opportunities and upward mobility in Portland metro, and housing costs are now close to the same.

As the world was on pause I spent time experimenting with new mediums, forms, and ideas.

Addressing community problems within my culture has taken priority over my visual art at this moment. The BLM George Floyd Protests this summer really created space for work to be done.

I chose not to participate in the art scene during this time.

During the pandemic, I've been essentially isolated. I made art in new forms at home as well as continued painting in my studio, wrote about art, took writing workshops, and workshops on non-violent communication, made a video with images and spoken words, created an opportunity for a virtual studio presentation. Making art and keeping busy in some form helped to keep my anxiety at bay. Because of my age, I had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Studio Space

I own a home with a shop and spare rooms for studios.

Studio in house.

Studio is in my garage.

We bought a tiny house 45 years ago that we rented out. For the last three years it has been my studio. \$1000- represents taxes, insurance and utilities.

We own our studio space.

My studio space has always been a nook in my house. I have never sought out external studio space as it is not accessible or affordable or even worth it, financially, to me.

My studio space is a not insignificant chunk of the living room I share with my partner in our one bedroom home. I could not afford any other kind of studio space.

My studio space is always of concern. It is too small for my needs, but I can't afford more—this has nothing to do with the pandemic.

I can't afford studio space but I do have a very small space at home that is limiting to art production—also I'm a mom so my time in studio is very limited.

My studio is in my home, as I lost my coop space three years ago when gentrification/sale hit the large building I had a studio in for over twenty years.

Right now a friend is letting me use space for free, but it's temporary. I'm not sure what I'll be doing after that.

I lost my studio space and no longer have one because of the cost and pandemic.

Affordable studio space is still a huge concern. With all the empty city owned spaces, Portland should make them free work studios for artists and pay artists through federal grants. The mayor's office is working on potential scenarios with oversight by Sam Adams.

My studio was in the downtown West Side core. Due to the deteriorating nature of downtown I have moved my studio to my new residence.

March-November I did not pay rent on my studio. I did not go to my studio. It was closed on and off. My studio mate left in March, so I was solely responsible for the lease agreement. I am now paying back rent on the space which is not financially feasible.

My studio space is in my house, it's a very half ass situation but parts of my practice are messy so the cost of space for me would tend to be a bit higher because of the specificity of the space.

Normally, for my day job, I worked full time from an office. With the pandemic I have to work remotely in the only space available in my house, which is my studio. Since I share my house with others, my studio is the only space that has the privacy required for my job. I have barely been able to work on any art at all due to the anxiety of having my work computer in my studio and also due to the amount of physical space my work computer and monitors take up. I barely had enough space to work in my studio to begin with, and this made a cramped studio many degrees worse. In addition, we were planning a group show that would travel through Europe, and that has been on hold as has much of my networking.

I had to leave my studio when the lease was up, as I could no longer afford it, plus the building did not feel COVID-safe because of the behavior of some of the other tenants. I cannot move forward in my work until I have a new studio. I live in a crowded, shared apartment for now, I am doing tiny watercolors on a corner of my desk (I'm an oil painter by vocation), but would love a live-work situation a little closer in to everything.

My situation is a bit different. My studio is outside my home and supports both my own practice as well as offers space to other member artists. I had several months where my membership dropped by half, making it difficult to make rent those months. However, the space was able to remain open for studio members for the duration and has provided low-cost work space and

refuge for all my members. [...] I was able to pass along relief grant funds to them for one of the hard months last year. Gallery closures were a major hit to my practice.

I'm very fortunate because I've co-managed an artist studio building for the past nine years, and one of the perks is a free studio in the building. My co-manager and I were very concerned about the effect the pandemic would have on the studio early on but found that many of our tenants were able maintain their income by either working from home or from the studio, keeping the building at almost full capacity for the past year. We had a handful of tenants that had to move out, move out of state, back home, etc., but the spaces were never vacant for more than a month. Most of our new tenants were working from home and needed a safe place to work. Change of scenery is something we hear a lot.

Having a home studio, I was able to continue to work the same (if not more) hours in the pandemic, however the lack of in-person opportunities and community feedback, along with the absolute grief of this time has affected my ability to make work. Prior to the pandemic I participated in a small twice-monthly critique group and that consistent feedback is also very missed.

We had a handful of tenants that couldn't make rent for a 1-3 months, but we either waived it or found something for them to do around the building to offset the cost. This situation definitely hit some harder than others, and we tried to keep people in the building. It's heartbreaking some people had to move! Losing a studio is so hard.

Caregiving

Home-schooling grandchildren...which includes the arts, unlike the public school.

Childcare is the biggest obstacle to art-making, pandemic or not.

My partner took on more of the child care/distance learning responsibilities. My gallery sold work from which I received commission.

I also had a baby during the pandemic, which I affected my art production schedule way more than the pandemic did. That, and any work I have time to do needs to bring in as much money as possible so we can make up for the loss of gigs over the past year.

Maybe it was a privilege to not need to work to survive, but I became support emergency childcare for five families on and off throughout the last year. In the process I have had almost no time to develop and maintain my career and connections.

I certainly experienced anxiety and depression related to the pandemic and to increased childcare, and navigating isolation and significant changes with my children. The increased time at home/near my easel was not the gift that it seemed to be, and exhaustion and difficulty in starting or completing work contributed to the already existing feelings of distress.

Having to stay home with children out of school for a year has massively impacted artist mothers (usually this burden has been on the female parent) ability to make art, focus on their career, continue to work a job which helps them support their art practice, etc. This is HUGE!

We turned my painting studio into an apartment to care for my mother. The clay studio became storage for construction supplies.

With my child at home since last March and my partner and I both working full time (after the shelter-in-place order) my studio practice has been impossible. I also lost my mother and have fallen further into depression.

Overseeing distance learning was and remains my main focus for our elementary school child. Very few studio hours in the summer with no camps or activities outside of the neighborhood.

It was impossible to plan ahead due to lack of childcare, etc. I stopped conversations with gallerists and curators in other places because I could not guarantee my ability to complete projects. I was unable to devote time to applying for grants and other opportunities. I had to step down from ongoing/recurring gigs due to lack of time. Also managing the mental health of children who were adversely effected by the pandemic took much more time and energy than I am able to explain. Because I was not working in a visible way, and because my income was secondary in my household I stopped doing the gigs and broke contracts.

Appendix D: Renny Pritikin's "Prescription for a Healthy Arts Scene"

This 2009 text was penned by Renny Pritikin, former chief curator at the Contemporary Jewish Museum and former director of the Richard L. Nelson Gallery and the Fine Arts Collection at the University of California, Davis. He understood that a functioning art scene has many interconnected parts; this list provides a starting point for identifying the strengths and weaknesses within a regional arts ecosystem.

1. A large pool of artists—there's a critical mass or tipping point that makes a scene.
2. Teaching opportunities that help support the pool of artists.
3. Active art schools that feed into the pool of artists and give artists teaching opportunities.
4. Studio space that's affordable, as well as live/work law that allows artists to occupy light industrial spaces.
5. Alternative spaces that give exhibition opportunities and residency opportunities for new art and ideas.
6. Adventurous art dealers who take on new artists, support artists with sales.
7. Adventurous collectors to buy locally and buy new work, make their collections available to students.
8. Sophisticated writers to document, discuss, and promote new ideas/continuing regional development.
9. Publications for them to write for.
10. Newspaper critics who are thoughtful and sophisticated and talented.
11. Fellowships and grants available for artists and writers.
12. Accessible museums and curators to talk to each other and do studio visits with local artists.
13. Interested audiences who attend all of the above and read about it.
14. Access to specialized materials or businesses (such as high-tech materials in the SF Bay area or film industry in LA).
15. Social space where new ideas are being generated about art, about society, about the role of art.
16. Hangouts/parties/salons/lecture series/restaurants/bars where a sense of community is manifested.
17. Articulate artist leaders.
18. Heroes, iconoclasts, villains (people everyone love to hate).
19. Artists in residency opportunities.
20. Progressive political climate that encourages art, as opposed to, say, Giuliani using his office to go after the Brooklyn Museum.
21. Opportunities for artists to get involved in politics.
22. Opportunities for public art (city or private).
23. Events that bring people together, scheduled multi-gallery opening nights for example.

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