



#### DATA DISPATCH 3: ARTIST PERSPECTIVES

*“For the longest time, I made zero. But then I was putting money into [my] art practice obviously, because you can’t make something for nothing.”*

The data we’ve published so far presents just one perspective through which we can better understand commonalities in the living and working conditions of LA artists. Given its limitations however, artists’ perspectives are necessary in order to reflect the nuances that exist within this data.

The following dispatch includes words of individual LA-based artists who participated in interviews during which we presented and talked about our previously published data on [Basic Necessities and Art Earnings](#).

By complementing the data with the words of artists, the LAAC aims to offer a fuller understanding of local artists’ individual experiences.

## What are L.A. Artists saying about their Art Practice Earnings?

“2019 was the first [year] that I had gotten any money for my [art] work, it wasn’t much, \$450 in total. **I was so happy because it had never happened to me before...** I was really proud that I made something.”

“For a few years I was making a tiny amount [from my art practice], like a tiny honorarium for exhibiting. But it was small. **Not even close to how much it costs to produce things, let alone support living expenses or even rent for a studio or anything like that.**”

“I never know what exhibitions I’m going to get into or if the exhibitions are going to provide any kind of remuneration... **[My art practice earnings are] completely unknown every single year.** So it’s like every year I start again from zero.”

## How are L.A. Artists Funding their Art Practice?

“I have a full-time job now that also is very related to my art practice. I am now able to take money that I make on the side ... and then reinvest it in my practice. **Because of that, now I actually make more money off of the things I do for my practice.**”

“I go into art making [knowing] I’m not going to earn back what I put into it. I get money from [my job] and put what I can into [my art practice]. **I don’t expect any real earnings at this point from my art,** especially now.”

“I mean on a very basic, real level **my husband’s job has been a huge support.** Because of the way things have worked out in society, he ended up being the one with the high-paying job that was flexible enough that allowed us to run the family on his salary alone.”

## Are L.A. Artists Lacking Basic Necessities?

“[In 2019] I had just enough money to pay for my housing, my utilities, my communication stuff. Food was a priority. I would hope that I didn’t have to go to the doctor. In fact, one time I got mono and **my friends paid for me to go to urgent care because I couldn’t afford to go.**”

“**I’m currently blessed to have healthcare with the job I have right now, but it definitely feels like an exception to the rule.** To work within art is to make a compromise with yourself that many of the basic necessities you wish to have will be scarce if not available to you at all.”

“To take my artwork from A to B I would have to disassemble it, put it in boxes, take it with me on the metro, or get an Uber. Ubers are expensive depending on where you go. Asking a friend for their time and helping them with gas and stuff is sometimes an option but not always available. For me, **a car would be helpful but I don’t have one now. A major reason for that is due to cost.**”

## What Barriers Exist for L.A. Artists?


“I’ve had people make extremely transphobic and racist comments directly to my face because they didn’t know that I’m trans or identified that way, and that has caused a number of problems. **I also feel like it’s much harder to get work if you are publicly identified as trans** ...So I think that [explains] a lot [about where the disparities in arts practice earnings by Gender] comes from.”

“**My identity as a parent impacts my ability to earn money as an artist just because you can’t put in that time.** The art world is a lot about connections ... that’s how you learn about opportunities ... It’s totally been a struggle because I can’t get out to those events because I have a kid to take care of. I have a family to look after.”


## L.A. visual artists— tell us what you think.

How does our data compare to your experience as a visual artist in Los Angeles County? [EMAIL US](#).

**\*All published responses will be made anonymous.**

 LAAC is completely volunteer run and unfunded. We invite individuals who value our mission to invest in our longevity and future by supporting our work through our first membership offering. Become an "Early Adopter" by donating \$5, \$15, \$25, or \$50 a month. All contributions are 100% tax deductible.

**BECOME AN "EARLY ADOPTER"**

 Help us effect change by sharing this information on social media and by forwarding this email to visual artists and organizers in the Los Angeles art community.

**SPREAD THE WORD ON SOCIAL**

The Los Angeles Artist Census (LAAC) is an artist-run research initiative that gathers and publishes data about the lives and practices of LA County visual artists. For more information [visit our website](#) and [follow us](#).

Los Angeles Artist Census