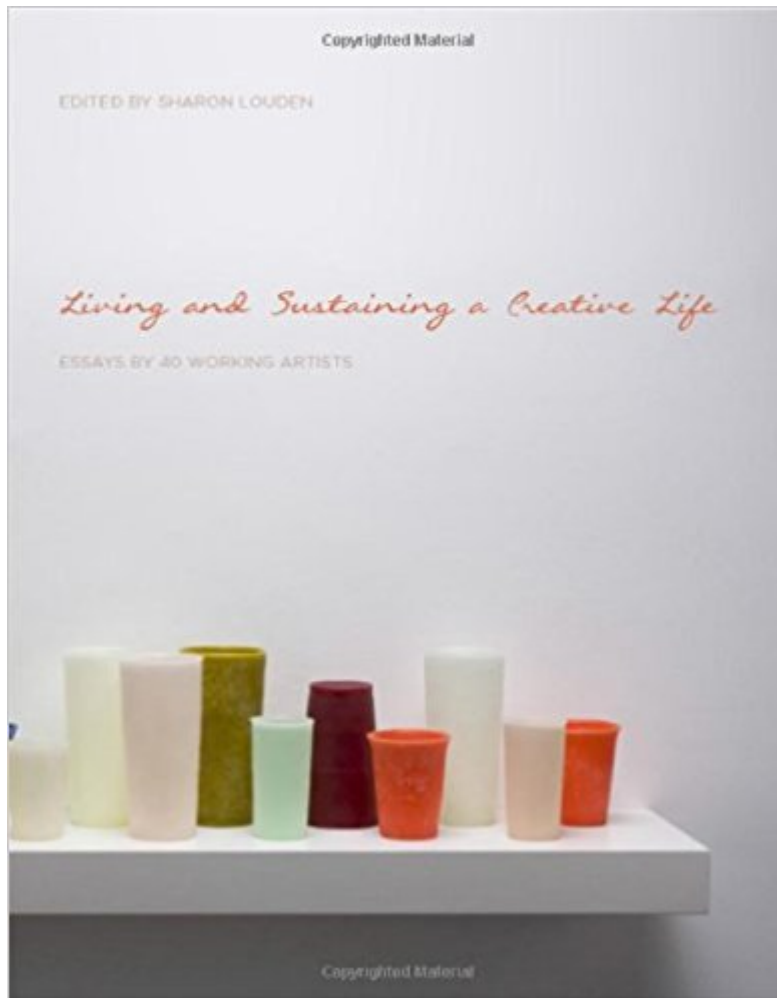




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# Living And Sustaining A Creative Life: Essays By 40 Working Artists



## Synopsis

In this day and age, when art has become more of a commodity and art school graduates are convinced that they can only make a living from their work by attaining gallery representation, it is more important than ever to show the reality of how a professional, contemporary artist sustains a creative practice over time. The forty essays collected in *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* are written in the artists' own voices and take the form of narratives, statements, and interviews. Each story is different and unique, but the common thread is an ongoing commitment to creativity, inside and outside the studio. Both day-to-day and big picture details are revealed, showing how it is possible to sustain a creative practice that contributes to the ongoing dialogue in contemporary art. These stories will inform and inspire any student, young artist, and art enthusiast and will help redefine what "success" means to a professional artist.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Extraordinary. . . . Louden has initiated a public discussion of how an artist can persist. It's an essential question in a field that no one chooses for its assurance of financial rewards. In many ways, Louden's book helps us to answer the question, 'How does an artist make a living today?' . . . Louden makes an important contribution to the discussion of how art is made now by the vast majority of artists at work. The book is a reality check prompting us to recall that invention doesn't happen without determination. As these artists' testimonies so vividly show, history, theory, and criticism are activities dependent ultimately on the hard-won production of art." (Art Journal)

"Contributions range from

predictable to shocking, in-control and overwhelmed. Some artists have full-time jobs; many are parents. . . . [Louden is] telling it like it is. (ARTnews) "A strikingly frank book that removes the veil of mysticism surrounding the artistic life. (Hyperallergic)" Consisting of 40 essays, this book presents the realities of the creative life over time, as reported by practicing artists. The stories take the form of interviews, narratives, and statements, and convey in frank, authentic form the joys and challenges of being an artist.... Aspiring artists and students will be inspired by these essays, and professionals will see themselves in many of the stories being told. Anyone considering a career in art can profit from reading this book. It also provides insight into the world of art as a commodity, and the challenges of balancing business, relationships, and the creative life.... Highly recommended." (CHOICE) "Anyone serious about a career as an artist must read this book." (Adam Sheffer, partner, Cheim and Read Gallery) "Too often the story of how an artist makes art and a living is advertised as either a step into an abyss of debt and dementia or a glamorized Bohemia misunderstood by a general public. Yet what these artists demonstrate in this valuable book is that the common bond for us all who aspire to a well-lived life is blood, sweat, and tears. From artists living off sales of their work to those who teach and those who search for paychecks in odd jobs, the desire to create is never extinguished. (Franklin Sirmans, Terri and Michael Smooke Curator, Los Angeles County Museum of Art) "From surprisingly frank sharings on the struggles of starting out as young artists to the challenges of making time and space for creation, the artists in *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* share with candor and heart just what it takes to be an artist today." (Anne Pasternak, president and artistic director, Creative Time) "Sharon Louden has gathered together in this book an exceptionally diverse range of artists' experiences in order to illustrate, in a manner otherwise inaccessible, the inherent tensions that artists face in constantly balancing their drive to devote core time and energy to creating new work and their wish to share that work with the world with the complexities, as well as the joys, of their personal and family lives. (Michael Straus, chairman, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts) "I applaud artist Sharon Louden for assembling this fascinating compilation of artist testimonies. It provides a refreshing, honest look at the myriad ways that artists shape and feed their lives and evolve authentic, generative practices in a society that does not always make it easy for artists to subsist and fully contribute. *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* is thus an inspiring, unexpurgated resource for artists beginning their careers as well as any individual seeking to recalibrate his or her daily life to pursue a more purpose-filled existence. (Olga Viso, executive director, Walker Art Center) "Louden's collection offers valuable lessons on striking a balance between the

need to make money and the need to make art; for if making art is the primary concern, making money becomes a means to an end—*not the end itself*. . . . Though written about the unique experience of fine artists, *Living and Sustaining A Creative Life* is worth the read by anyone seeking to build a life of artistic intention without ignoring the need for monetary sustenance." (Courtney M. McSwain, writer and storytelling consultant)

—Sharon Loudén's book, *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life*, is a collection of short personal narratives of 40 female and male working artists, which unfold the everyday realities of balancing the need for being creative with the need for survival. Each story is presented as a small chapter starting with a photograph of a representative artwork. As a result, the book is both interesting to read and visually arresting. The book . . . contribute[s] to an understanding of who artists are and what their work entails. (Work, Employment and Society)

Sharon Loudén is a practicing, professional artist living and working in Brooklyn. Her work has been exhibited at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Birmingham Museum of Art, Neuberger Museum, and the Weisman Art Museum, among other venues, and it is held in the public collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Weatherspoon Art Museum, and National Gallery of Art.

As a professional artist, I was very taken with this refreshing book of essays about the practical side of making a living as a visual artist. My path of making a living as an artist has been as unique and unexpected as many of the stories represented in Loudén's book, and I found myself feeling validated and supported. As in my experience, the book shows how serendipity, hard work, luck, talent, and building relationships play a part in developing the careers of artists. There are quite a few essays included, and each path and perspective shared was interesting in its own way. The editor, Sharon Loudén, presented the pieces in a straightforward manner, forgoing too much opinionated commentary that can take away from the clarity of the material. In fact, my favorite thing about the book was how each author stuck to the topic (making a continuous living as a visual artist) without intellectual discourse. The mystery of creativity is a powerful and wonderful part of being an artist, but the day to day workings and the meanderings of a career are a thing of fascination, too. This book celebrated the functional side of art, presented by professionals who can instruct by honest experience rather than didacticism. It was at times funny, surprising, and triumphant. I recommend it to artists at the dawn of their possible careers or artists who've been at it for a lifetime.

There are many wonderful things about this book. Each artists chapter reveals the layers of what it

means to balance life as an artist. The term working artist can mean many, many things. Defining what is a "working artist" is indeed one of the great intangibles of learning what it is to be an artist. The bottom line is we all figure it out and define it in different ways. Sharon's book illuminates the various ways artists define what it is to be and do and function as a working artist. The essays, most narrative in form, peel back the layers of daily life and work. They reveal the sometimes precarious balance that artists walk with their daily practice, their business and their personal lives. I wish I'd had this book when I was at NYU. It would have demystified the artistic world I so desperately wanted to be a part of. Now many years later I have figured out the daily ins and outs of what it means to move through life as an artist. But back in school this book would have been an invaluable tool in putting a creative life together bit by bit as it works for the individual. I say it should be required reading for art students of all disciplines. It's filled with insight that one only gets from experience. It's a rare gift to get an inside view of the path to come. I loved every page. Wonderful book.

As a young artist and nonprofit arts professional who graduated with an art degree, I wish I could have read this book when I was in undergrad! It has still been an insightful and timely read for me 10 years after graduating. I thought it would be more of a how to guide and describe specifically how to make money in art, but it is much more. The book is a collection of personal essays from working artists who each describe their personal challenges, practices and approach to work life balance. I have appreciated the sincerity and honesty of the essays. There are many books about arts marketing and trade publications offering specific advice for specific arts markets and strategies for making a living as an artist. What's different about *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* is the personal approach, which is helpful for understanding how working artists have individually designed their careers with work-life balance and economy in mind. The art field is truly unique encompassing such a wide variety of talents, interests, and micro economies. I've enjoyed the variety of perspectives and experiences compiled in this collection. The life of a working artist is as much about lifestyle as it is about breadwinning and I think this title articulates both the challenges and possibilities of earning a living with one's art, while maintaining creative perspective, practice, and having a life. The essays are concise and well edited, it's a quick read, with a human voice, peppered with a few swear words and humor, while maintaining seriousness, depth and being informative. Most of the essays express struggle at different levels, some overcome and some outstanding, but without a negative or depressing vibe. If you're an artist looking for a bit of insider art business advice, without specific numbers or a bit of creative self help, without a cheesy angle or

positive inspiration and ideas to keep trucking in your arts career, this collection of essays is for you. I would highly recommend this title to art students or as a gift for a recent graduate looking for what to do next. University art school educators will find excellent contemporary group discussion points to prepare students for entry into the field. “professionally” A seasoned artist will hopefully find comfort in the like minded struggles we all share and feel motivated reading the well written, entertaining behind the scenes essays.

As a non-practicing artist, only at the moment, this book has inspired me to dust off my talents and polish them a little. A fantastic read but it does not stop there. These artists actually exist, they are not dead yet, they are still practicing artists. You can look them up on the internet and contact them. Just reading about them and researching their work encouraged me enough. It has caused me to pull out one of my husband’s books on business planning and now I’m on my way. Keeping in contact with other artists I studied with, and others I’ve met over the years are also a great encouragement and of the utmost importance. This book invoked again that passion that started it all in the beginning. The best book for artists who want to make a living out of their passion for the creative things in life. Highly recommended. The only book of its kind so far.

If you’re an artist and expect to make a career out of it, you should read this book. You’ll hear from 40 other artists how they balance business and art in order to sustain themselves and be happy. These essays paint a realistic panorama on what to expect while living as an artist and how to juggle it with the ever important mission of paying the bills and being able to continue making art.

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