

ARTnews

art talk

Croutons for Breakfast

After **Sharon Loudon** graduated with an M.F.A. from Yale in 1991, she moved to Brooklyn, took a job as an administrative assistant, and found herself buried under debt and struggling to make rent, with no time for her art. She longed for professional advice, but her peers were no help. "Artists weren't sharing much back then," she recalls. "Nobody was talking about money, for example, and even now, so many art-school graduates have these ideas about how working artists make a living that are very, very far from the reality."

Determined to foster a different experience for future generations of artists, Loudon has spent the ensuing years encouraging discourse about living and working in the art world. She currently teaches at the New York Academy of

Art, where she organizes the Professional Practice Series of lectures and panels. And now she has compiled essays and interviews from 40 artists who speak candidly about the logistics of their lives, in *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life*, published by Intellect Books.

Contributions range from predictable to shocking, in-control to overwhelmed. Some artists have full-time jobs; many are parents. Missouri photographer **Julie Blackmon**, known for surreal tableaux that parody domestic life, admits that she has yet to learn how to balance her passion for art making and motherhood. "When your own kid is telling you he thinks maybe he should go to the dentist, or that he had to



Telling it like it is: Sharon Loudon, editor of *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life*.

eat croutons for breakfast because he couldn't find anything else," she writes, "I know I've gone too far."

Of course, a lot of creative types support themselves by teaching, but the education sector is not for everybody. New York artist **Erik Hanson**, for one, says that he has

"paid the rent in a variety of ways," from working for the Census Bureau and selling items on eBay to "being a foot model (don't ask)." Others, like **George Stoll** and **Will Cotton**—who signed on with Mary Boone Gallery in 1999 and has since created an album cover and a music video for **Katy Perry**—are able to support themselves entirely through their artwork. Still, even a seemingly established art career, Cotton insists, is as temporary as anything. "It's just very up and down," he tells Loudon. "There are good months and bad—still."

Ultimately, Loudon hopes her book will debunk a few misconceptions about the lives of artists. "If you were working a day job in the past, you were considered a failure as an artist," she says. "That's no more. An artist is an artist is an artist. And part of being a writer or an artist or a dancer is that we already have the gift of entrepreneurialism. So if we can share our stories and break down that guard and that insecurity, then maybe we can make some good things happen for ourselves." —Emily Nathan



The Power of Now, 2008, by Julie Blackmon, who writes about the difficulty of juggling her photography and her son's eating habits.