

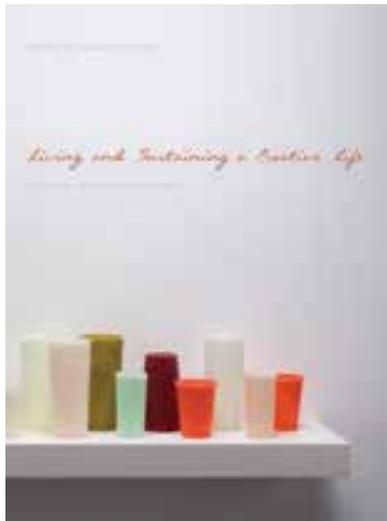
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BOOKS

Less Starving Artists share their secrets on making a living from their work

BY JEN DOLEN



**LIVING AND SUSTAINING
A CREATIVE LIFE:**
Essays by 40 Working Artists
Sharon Loudon, editor
Chicago: Intellect, 2013

Although artists are inundated with an overflow of wisdom on how to feed their muses, advice slows to a trickle on how to feed their families. Editor and artist Sharon Loudon explores the latter in this personable, easy-to-read volume of pragmatic artist testimonies. Forty essays and interviews with artists such as Amy

Pleasant, Austin Thomas, and Julie Heffernan collectively answer the question Loudon asked herself after graduating: How am I going to sustain a creative practice while trying to survive?

This down-to-earth collection offers simple nourishment: Creative people can nurture a creative life. The selections can be read at random or devoured in sequence. Fittingly, each chapter begins with a large color reproduction of the featured artist's work—

the creative life they wish to sustain—followed by their written input on how to practically support such work.

Each artist brings a unique voice to the volume. New York artist Blane de St. Croix thrives on a schedule, enjoys company in the studio, and calls himself “an artist first,” but also feels that teaching supports a dialog and keeps him “connected to the next generation.” Jenny Marketou was “surviving on a teacher’s salary with no benefits or health care,” before she transitioned into full-time status as a self-employed artist. Michael Waugh, with his English graduate degree, recalls the social difficulties of growing up “secretly dreaming of being an artist,” while Thomas Kilpper notes that an artist’s work is “25/8, not 24/7.”

Though their art—and their journeys—vary, these artists share similarities. Many live by strict schedules or self-imposed rules. Many teach, and many don’t. Some work more than one job while some live by art sales. Most discuss choices, risks, family, budgets, studio spaces, and homes. A few, like printmaker Justin Quinn, confess larger-than-life art career fantasies. “My art career is so different from this fantasy that it’s almost funny—but it’s what I have and it’s sustainable, and I’m totally into it.” Many reveal uncertainty along with satisfaction. All prioritize creative time.

JEN DOLEN is a photographer and writer based in Minneapolis/St. Paul and is an editorial assistant for Public Art Review.