LOGISTICS OF SPACE, MATERIAL, AND TIME:
STRUGGLES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING ART PRACTICE

by

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines how artists sustain their art practice in real-life situations, despite ongoing struggles, by developing strategies that befit individual circumstances. The research originates from the reality that many young artists give up their careers due to difficulties in finding a balance between art making, living, and money-making. However, there are exceptional cases in which artists have managed to maintain their active art practice despite facing similarly difficult situations. This research began with questioning what made them different and how they acquired such differences. By setting space, material, and time as the basic elements for art making, I researched four New York based artists who have not been able to live solely on their art, therefore have had to locate other sources of income through non-art or art-related activities.

This research employs a qualitative case study approach. Accepting the impossibility of coming up with universal answers to solving the precarity in an artist’s life, I chose to investigate individual cases in an in-depth manner. I collected data through interviews over multiple sessions to elucidate each artist’s perspective on their lives and the nature of an artist’s life.
This research reveals that three basic elements—space, material, and time—are not fixed, unnegotiable conditions for art making for the participants. Rather, these artists flexibly handle these three elements depending on their given circumstances by integrating the availability of certain elements with their art practice. In so doing, the artists tend to take limitations and constraints not merely as a barrier to overcome but more as a source of creativity to enhance the uniqueness of their art practice. Overall, the artists are familiar with the constant mode of learning for the unclear path of an artist’s career.

Although the outcome of this research cannot be generalized to encompass every artist’s career, it can be of benefit to many struggling artists who have yet to figure out their own way of sustaining their practice. Also, this research can be helpful for college-level art teachers and school administrators in preparing their educational curricula to meet the practical needs of their students who dream of becoming artists as their life’s work.
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported me in completing this research.

I am very grateful for all of my four participating artists. Although I cannot reveal their identities, I can say that they are all amazing artists who shared a great deal of their thoughts about life and art. This dissertation would not have been possible without their sincere contributions.

I cannot thank enough, my sponsor, Professor Mary Hafeli for her encouragement, guidance, trust, support and inspiration in completing this research. It has been a great honor to have you as my sponsor. I will not forget what I have learned from you through this long journey.

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K.P
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Problem

New York has the largest art scene in the world. According to a survey by the online art magazine Artsy, this is because of the city’s substantial number of galleries, art museums and institutions, and art fairs (2015). Thus, every year, countless visitors flow into the city with the expectation of experiencing diverse and prolific art events. Those art events not only happen at well-known, preeminent art venues, but also proliferate as untamed experiments in non-profit institutional settings like artist-run galleries and alternative spaces. In addition, due to the congregation of world-class art schools in the city, a lot of young, would-be artists move to New York every year with dreams of success through a high quality art education (Newell-Hanson, 2016).

Ironically, despite all of this vitality, artistic aspiration and passion, New York City is perceived as one of the most challenging environments for artists to survive in. According to New York Times art critic Holland Cotter (2014), who called New York City a “punitively expensive city” for thousands of artists living and working there, this irony stems from our failure to clearly distinguish between the art industry and the art world (Cotter, 2014, para. 2). In Cotter’s argument, although the part of the art industry that consists of high-price galleries, auction houses and collectors is a small portion of the entire field (which also includes artists, teachers, students, writers, curators and middle-range dealers), it holds a disproportionate amount of power over the rest of the art world. In his view, the current market system significantly affects every aspect of art production and presentation in the city, including how artists live. Thus, according to Cotter, putting
aside the seemingly glamorous art industry, in the real lives of the majority of artists in New York, struggles and challenges are far more evident than hope. Buckley (2014) agrees, pointing out that one of the most pressing challenges for artists living in New York City is the recent gentrification that has transformed the once-affordable areas in which artist communities formerly resided. For example, in 2014, at an artist panel discussion titled “Studio in Crisis,” (held at the event space of Cabinet magazine in Brooklyn) several artists described how drastically raised rents have forced them to leave their studios in an industrial complex of Sunset Park, which at the time was being transformed into luxury condominiums for new, wealthy residents drawn to the “artsy” atmosphere of the area (Kimball, 2014).

When it comes down to the level of young artists who have just begun or tried to begin their artistic careers, the reality is even more depressing. In many cases, for those who graduated from one of New York City’s prestigious art schools, the two or three years of luxurious, creative time graduate school allows often leaves a huge amount of debt following graduation. This forces many recent art school graduates to stop making art regularly, relegating their studio practice to a part-time pursuit as they take full-time and multiple part-time jobs in order to pay the bills. In the cases of those who are luckily free from such debt burdens, another factor—New York City’s highest cost of living in the nation—is likely to block the way to a sustainable creative life (Sussman, 2017). Moreover, due to the skyrocketing price of rent mentioned earlier, having a studio space to create artwork turns out to be an unaffordable luxury, especially for low-income young artists who see more than half of their monthly income disappear for the rent of their
living spaces. Even if one is lucky enough to afford a studio, it is likely that the size will be tiny, thus limiting the kind of work that can be produced there.

As a visual artist, I have experienced similar situations. I was privileged to study art in one of the world-class art schools in New York City for two years. During this period, my classmates and I were focused on learning how to make good art. This caused us to explore diverse contemporary art theories, along with the works of artists, in order to find inspiration and influences. We applied such learning to our own art practices. Right after graduation, I was luckily invited to several artist-in-residence programs that provided me a temporary refuge for a year. During that year I was able to solely dedicate my time to art making without facing the harsh reality of living as an artist in New York City.

Upon my return to New York, I sought out a studio space. This space, which I previously considered a default setting for artists, turned out to be an unrealizable dream. After weeks of searching for studio spaces that met my budget limit, I visited one of the so-called “affordable studios” in Brooklyn. I felt deeply frustrated to see the unimaginably poor condition of it and the way artists work there. In the meantime, through conversations with fellow artists, I realized that having a studio space in New York is a huge dilemma, because even if one is lucky enough to have a suitable studio, it is very unlikely that the artist will get to work there with much frequency, due to the responsibilities of jobs taken in order to make the rent. Thus, in this light, the issue of studio space is not merely due to the rising cost of rent, but is a more complicated problem intertwined with availability and accessibility of space, as well as time and money. I began to hear that the majority of my classmates stopped making art due to
economic difficulties. It made me fundamentally wonder about the ways young artists can sustain their art practices despite the struggling and challenging conditions of this “city of art.”

**Problem Statement**

The struggles of artists in economically sustaining their lives, while also finding the time to practice art, is not a new problem, and does not occur only in the present time in New York City. Throughout the history of art, artists have constantly looked for stable conditions for their art making. Before the emergence of the modern concept of fine arts, artists worked under strong support systems offered by the church or wealthy patrons. During the 20th century, artists organized unions or collective groups to act out against and to speak for the improvement of the social environments for making, exhibiting, and selling their artworks (Bryan-Wilson, 2009; Sokol, 1999). In recent times, similar types of artist movements have continued, although details of these movements vary according to the specific issues within the lives of artists (Johnson, 2013; Vartanian, 2014). Despite the numerous previous endeavors listed above, I find the current lives of artists in New York to be significantly more challenging. This is because, ironically, contrary to the prosperity of art schools—which, according to Gleisner (2014) are generating a far larger number of artists than ever before—opportunities and support systems for emerging artists have either become obsolete or turned out to be more competitive to access, due to this increasing number of artists (Gleisner, 2014). In addition, rising living costs in New

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1 I use the term “fine arts” here as one of the types of arts that was separated, in the 18th century, from mechanical arts by disassociating itself with practical skills and crafts, in order to pursue its own sake, without any consideration of practical purpose or utility (Harrington, 2014; Kristellar, 1951).
York City exacerbate the situations of artists who have to support themselves by doing any kind of job available to them. This problem becomes more explicit as artists become frustrated, not only because of the fact that they cannot make a living from their art, but also because they do not even have sufficient room (including space, material, and time) in their lives to make art.

According to U.S. Census Bureau statistics (self-reported by artists) on the primary occupation for art school graduates in 2012, only 10% of the total 1,979,527 undergraduate art degree holders remained artists after graduation (Clements, 2014). What makes the difference between the 10% of artists who sustained their artistic careers and the 90% who gave up? Apart from the cases of artists with a privileged financial situation, in what ways do those who make up the 10% who remained artists manage their artistic careers?

This question led me to want to more closely research various cases involving those artists without privileged financial support. I wanted to focus on how artists develop their own solutions for carrying out their art practice, as well as their strategies for distributing time and energy for art making and earning income. My curiosity and desire to do research at a practical level on artists’ management of their lives and art making is linked to an essay written by the Raqs Media Collective (2009) titled “How to Be an Artist by Night.” In the essay, the Raqs Media Collective (RMC) differentiated

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2 Raqs Media Collective is an artist collective (founded in 1992) consisting of three members: Monica Narula, Jeebesh Bagchi and Shuddhabrata Sengupta. They not only make artworks but also curate exhibitions as well as write books. They wrote about artists’ education in the essay “How to Be an Artist by Night” which was one of the chapters in the book Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century (2009), edited by Steven Henry Madoff.
artists’ education from general education where students are in a preparatory period without having pressure to conduct a professional life yet—thus, practicing their majors is possible after their learning about the majors is successfully completed. However, in artists’ education, in RMC’s view, “learning to become an artist” and “being an artist” are not dividable tasks (p. 73). In their view, artists have to constantly figure out “the reason to continue to be an artist” which includes efforts to find ways to exhibit their artwork as well as “the contexts that make their work possible” (p. 74). By calling an artist’s day job and art making a “double life” and the relationship between the two a “battle,” RMC claims that the artist’s education is never completed (p. 73). They attribute this endless state of the artist’s learning to missing out on “a stable canon”—designated path for success or acknowledgement—in contemporary art practice (p. 73). In this light, RMC asserts that making art is not just physical production of artwork but also “making the conditions and initiating the networks of solidarity and sociality that enable the making of art” (p. 76). RMC’s argument clearly represents artists’ needs to constantly update problem-solving skills specifically tailored to individual cases, instead of relying on overly generalized notions of how to become an artist, such as those that are often presented in artist handbooks.

In addition to focusing at a practical level on artists’ management of their lives and art making, my curiosity about the survival strategies of artists also includes looking at how artists’ individual tactics for managing art and life may impact the nature of their art, especially artists’ intentions, choices, styles and subject matter or themes of their artwork. We learn art history in schools and at museums. The evolution of art history—especially from the late 19th and early 20th century—is based upon the unending
aspiration of artists for “something new” which has led to numerous avant-garde projects subverting existing dogmas. However, what if we were to look at those artistic choices through a different lens based on real-life and day-to-day contexts, economic motivation, and survival strategies? What if Duchamp chose to show his urinal sculpture not just to present a concept of “ready-mades,” but also because he was able to get the materials for free on the street?

Another reason that research on the practical survival of artists is necessary is the lack of academic research on topic. As I reviewed literature that related to the lives of contemporary artists, I was able to find various “artist survival” handbooks (Battenfield, 2009; Bhandari & Melber, 2009; Lang, 1998; Michels, 2001; Vitali, 1996). However, most were written in a casual manner without a deep analytical and academic approach. The authors provided self-gained knowledge on ways of landing exhibitions, securing grants, and selling artworks without consideration of the wide range of characteristics among artists and their practices. Also, while I was able to find economic data about the lives of artists from the fields of economics, sociology, and art education, these studies were more focused on job-related, career-centric aspects of art. The articles and books detailed the kinds of accessible jobs and potential income levels for artists, rather than investigating the limited support systems and the challenging economic conditions that might make finding sustainable artistic activities difficult (Frey & Pommerehne, 1989; Lena & Lindemann, 2014; Menger, 2001, 2006; Throsby, 2001; Towse, 2006; Wassall & Alper, 1990).

In the fields of art and art education, I was able to identify some clear evidence of the growing attention on art school graduates’ careers and their perspectives on art
education through several studies, including the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) and the dissertation research of Eliza Bland Lamb (2015). These two studies are more focused on artistic career paths and ways of preparing for professional careers in fields like design and commercial photography, rather than on the practical aspects of sustaining oneself through the making of art—the focus of my dissertation. More similar to my research is the work of Kirsten Forkert (2016), who studied how artists manage their art practices. Forkert interviewed artists about their individual life circumstances in relation to their methods for continuing their artistic careers in the fine arts. Her research was based in two European cities, London and Berlin, which she acknowledges hold very different, and non-comparable, socio-economic characteristics and backgrounds. As my research is based in New York, a city very different from London and Berlin, it serves to expand on Forkert’s study, thus enriching the field’s currently limited understanding of how artists sustain their studio practices.

Overall, my primary interest in artists’ lives lies specifically in situations of economic adversity, which can threaten artists’ energy and passion for making art. Within this focus, I am interested in low-income, under-established artists in particular, as there is not sufficient research on this artist population. In categorizing the career status or levels of artists there are several often-used terms—emerging, mid-career, and established—that are often confusedly used based on ages of artists (Ober, 2009). In response to MoMA PS1’s inclusion of artists who ranged in age from 20s to 80s in the museum’s 2015 “Greater New York” exhibition—a recurring show that had in previous years showcased young, emerging artists living in the New York metropolitan area—New York Times art critic Holland Cotter (2015) claimed that “the notion that an
‘emerging’ artist has to be young is discarded” (para. 3). In Cotter’s view, since there are many cases in which artists drew attention only in the late period of their careers, “older artists newly in the spotlight” should be counted as emerging artists regardless of their ages. Through my graduate school experience of having classmates who were in their 50s or 60s having levels of art career accomplishment similar to classmates in their 20s or 30s, I absolutely agree with Cotter’s non-age based approach to categorizing the career level of artists. Thus, as mentioned above, I use two terms—under-established and low-income—to describe my participant focus.

“Under-established” refers to wider range of artists than the terms “young” or “emerging.” Artist and curator Cara Ober (2009) defined an “established” artist as one who “is at a mature stage,” “has created an extensive body of independent work,” and “has reached an advanced level of achievement by sustaining a nationally or internationally recognized contribution to the discipline” (para. 12). Ober further claimed that the established artist is “considered a ‘blue chip’ artist in the market.” In my dissertation study, I approach the notion of an under-established artist as the opposite of an established artist. Therefore, under-established artists in the study are those yet to be at a mature stage in their career, yet to have a considerable amount of independent work, are in the process of pursuing an advanced level of artistic achievement by participating in various exhibitions nationally or internationally, and may able to sell their art but not enough to make a living solely from those sales. The term “low-income” only refers to the level of income derived from the artist’s practice, regardless of the amount of their income from day jobs they may hold.
Thus, the dissertation focuses on a case study of under-established, low-income artists who are based in New York City and who have built and utilized their own strategies for sustaining an art practice, despite experiencing the difficult financial conditions that challenge many other artists.

**Research Questions**

Artists often find it difficult to live on their art practices, and this necessitates locating other sources of income. This also challenges the sustainability of their artistic careers due to the inability to secure studio space, have a satisfactory budget for materials, and make sufficient time to concentrate on their art production. Therefore, what kind of strategies do low-income, under-established artists in New York build, especially with regard to space, material, and time, in order to sustain their art practice? And how do these strategies affect the nature of their art?

**Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of the study has to do with categorizing the sustainability of artists’ practice in terms of three main elements: space, material, and time. Although artists may acknowledge the importance of these three elements (see discussion of pilot survey below), there is no universal agreement on such categorization, nor many theoretical references to these categories offered in the literature.

To test the usefulness of the concepts of space, material, and time as a beginning research framework, I conducted a pilot study to understand how artists perceive the centrality of these elements or concerns within their art practice. Using a snowballing technique, I invited 50 New York City artists aged 20 to 60 to complete a survey. I
received 34 responses (68% response rate). The respondents cited space, material, and
time as the top three elements in sustaining their practice, and they ranked them in the
following order of importance: across all respondents, time was selected as most
important, then space, then material.

Many respondents suggested that making art requires other elements beyond
space, time, and material, such as commitment, creativity, philosophy, experience, trust,
and so on. My interest in space, material, and time as a beginning focus for the research
has to do with their practical nature—and I designed the study so that the data analysis
allowed for other elements, such as those others listed above, to emerge. Many of the
respondents also cited money as a basic element. Since money can often solve many
problems—it can buy space, material and even time—I decided to exclude it as part of
the specific research framework and treat it instead as a more general consideration. The
study’s focus on low-income artists’ positions and financial resources is both a challenge
and a limitation. In interpreting the survey responses, where respondents ranked space,
material, and time as the most important elements for sustaining their art practice, I
assumed that artists make adjustments in those three areas by focusing on one over the
other, as they may not be able to address all of the elements equally, given limited
financial resources. This is the focus of the dissertation: how artists choose certain
elements and give up others and how such choices influence the nature of their art or vice
versa.

As with much qualitative research, the study is also limited by its focus on a small
number of selected participants with particular characteristics—in this case, four under-
established artists who are based in a particular location, New York City, and who face
economic challenges in building and sustaining an active fine arts practice. The results of the study are not meant to be generalizable to all artists; they also are not assumed to generally represent the experiences of all artists who are under-established and struggle to survive economically.

**Significance of the Study**

I anticipate that various groups of people in art and art education will benefit from this study. First of all, struggling artists can learn from the study by looking at cases of fellow artists, and then further developing career strategies of their own. Second, art students and aspirational artists can understand the reality of being an artist, and better prepare themselves by investigating the career paths and management skills of their predecessors. Third, art teachers can introduce their students to survival strategies of early career artists, learning from the practical cases of under-established artists who are able to sustain a fine arts practice. Finally, art school administrators can more efficiently anticipate and address the needs of art school graduates when designing and implementing course curricula and students’ professional development experiences in art school.

**Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

As the dissertation attempts to shed light on unstudied areas in the lives of artists—mainly focusing on individual strategies for continuing to make art, not necessarily making money through art—I built a theoretical framework for the study by integrating ideas about and studies on artists from diverse sources in various fields such as art history, art theory, art education, economics, sociology, and philosophy. First, John
Ruskin’s (1867) political economy of art and artist collectives (Bryan-Wilson, 2009; Johnson, 2013; Sokol, 1999; Vartanian, 2014) in the 20th century and the present time are major concepts from the field of art history. Second, attempts and difficulties in analyzing the characteristics of artists as “professionals” come from the field of economics and are important points of view outside of art and art education (Frey & Pommerehne, 1989; Lena & Lindemann, 2014; Menger, 2001, 2006; Throsby, 2001; Towse, 2006; Wassall & Alper, 1990). Third, the concept of duality in the social positions of the artist is an idea the dissertation borrows from the field of sociology (Bourdieu, 1996; Deutsche & Ryan, 1984; Ley, 2003; Schuetz, 2012). In regards to the three basic elements of art making—space, material, and time—the concepts of post-studio and de-materialization of art, drawn from the fields of art history and contemporary art theory play a major role in data collection and data analysis (Green, 2001; Jones, 1996; Lippard, 1973; Pinkus, 2009; Thornton, 2009). Lastly, as mentioned previously, this study shares a great deal theoretically and conceptually with Forkert’s (2016) study on artists’ lives in terms of sustainability of their art practice in London and Berlin. Our motivations, standpoints, and approaches to the lives of artists are similar. Within the framework described above, this dissertation aims to understand the lives of low-income artists in New York—particularly the strategies they develop for sustaining their art practices.

Assumptions

I have made several assumptions in the process of designing this study. First, I assume that the certification of “artist” is decided by self-identification. Therefore, my participants were not selected based on such criteria as their educational experiences in
well-known art schools or the number of times they have exhibited their work. Second, I assume that space, materials, and time are some of the most basic elements necessary for art making—this assumption is based on the perceptions of the 34 artists who participated in my preliminary survey described above. The third assumption is that artists conceive their artwork and select and make adjustments to their use of materials in accordance with life contingency, such as limitation of space or limitation of time. This is definitely not true in all cases, as there are artists who steadily focus on their primary medium or styles regardless of changes in their working environments. In identifying participants to study in the dissertation, I intentionally sought artists who fall into this category, as I assumed that such flexibility would be one of the key factors in their survival skills. My last assumption is that New York (compared to other cities) is a challenging city for under-established, low-income artists. Although there may be agreement on this issue, it is still my assumption, as I haven’t experienced or researched cases of struggling artists in other cities.

**Assumptions to be Debated**

- Space, time, and materials are basic elements for sustaining a fine arts practice.
- Artists control and manage use of these three elements according to the kinds of artwork they produce and their economic circumstances.

**Assumptions not to be Debated**

- There is no single, set, established way of being an artist.
- Being an artist is based more on self-identification than other factors such as art school preparation, regular exhibitions, and other elements of artistic practice.
• Considering the number of fine artists in New York, very few are able to sustain themselves from income earned as a full-time artist.

Summary of Chapter I

In this chapter, I introduced the background to the problem of the research, laid out the research questions for the dissertation, limitation and significance of the study, conceptual framework, and assumptions to be debated and not to be debated for the study. Overall, the chapter covered problem of the study which is the artist’s struggle to sustain their art practice and raised the question of how artists maintain their primary profession by setting three types of need: space, material, and time. In Chapter II, which follows, I review the literature on the relationship between art and labor, economic research on the analysis of artist as a profession, sociological analysis of what kind of people artists are, art theoretical analysis of the three elements of space, material, and time, and, lastly, related studies and writing on artists’ careers.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to contextualize the topic of this research, I drew on literature from various sources, views and disciplines. The diverse sources are meant to provide both broad and in-depth understanding of historical perspectives and ongoing discussion on the lives of artists. The first section of the Literature Review takes an art historical approach because the definition of art has constantly changed and evolved over time through an active relationship with the rest of human history. Within the broad scheme of art history, the first section is focused on how the concept of art has evolved along with the concept of labor. On the other hand, the second section takes an outsider’s, or non-art professional’s, perspective. This is mostly based on how an artist can be defined, and whether art can be regarded as an occupation in the same manner as other types of professions, through a lens of economics. The second section also introduces various artist handbooks with suggested survival skills for artists. The third section touches upon several ongoing unresolved issues related to the duality inherent in the social status of artists. In the fourth section, three basic elements for art making—space, material, and time—are examined within their historical contexts, along with related issues and dilemmas among current New York artists. Finally, related studies undertaken by art and art education researchers—who focus on artists’ careers and preparation for art careers—are examined.
Art and Labor

This section begins with a fundamental question: whether the act of making art is a form of labor worthy of reward in society. Certainly, it is a grandiose and difficult question to be answered in relatively few words. The status of the artist has changed over time, and the definition of art is always shifting. Therefore, in this section, I choose to examine the relationship between art and labor, especially how the concept of art has evolved and changed over history—ranging from art in ancient Greece to contemporary art—in conjunction with the concept of labor. This relationship between art and labor leads to an exploration of a variety of scholarly views, as well as to an examination of the desired socio-cultural status of artists claimed by artists themselves, through a number of collective movements. Instead of listing encyclopedic information in a chronological manner, I highlight pivotal transition moments in history because they have been influential over a certain period in each era—from ancient times, to the classical period, to modern and contemporary times—and reflect distinct characteristics from previously dominant ideas or beliefs. This includes the division between fine arts and craft, discussion of the value of artist labor according two views—the art market and state-sponsorship of art, and the evolution of artist collectives and their role in the articulation of artists’ labor rights.

Art/Ars/Technē

Our current notions of art and labor are quite recent incarnations (Durkheim, 1965; Kristeller, 1951; Shiner, 2001). As can be seen from the origins of the word “art”
from the Latin (ars) and Greek (techne\(^1\)), art was not directly translated into “fine art” in our modern sense (Burguete & Lam, 2011; Kristeller, 1951; Shiner, 2001). Rather, art was integrated with various human activities, as Socrates saw techne as “a thorough masterful knowledge of a specific field that typically issues in a useful result, can be taught to others, and can be recognized, certified, and rewarded” (Roochnik, 2010, p. 1).

Certainly, Greek techne embraced all kinds of “human ability to make and perform” that were regarded as forms opposite to natural phenomena, but there was no clear division in awareness of art and craft (Shiner, 2001, p. 19). Thus, there was no “additional connotation of creative expression for its own sake,” as we find in the modern conception of art (Harrington, 2004, p. 10). The invention of fine arts and the division of labor both happened in the 18th century, when the Industrial Revolution accelerated separation and specialization of occupation, and fine arts diverged from craft (Durkheim, 1965; Kristeller, 1951; Shiner, 2001). Before this division, the boundary between the categories of arts and sciences was blurred, so it was very common for scholars and artists to hold more than one title to indicate their activities.\(^2\)

**Emergence of Fine Arts**

The philosopher Paul Oskar Kristeller (1951), in his seminal essay “The Modern System of the Arts,” found the origin of Fine Arts (Beaux Arts) in the eighteenth century from the work of French writer, Charles Batteux, who finally separated “the fine arts

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\(^1\) In Platonic dialogues, techne is a crucial term that refers to a wide range of human activities and concepts in human society including skill, art, craft, expertise, profession, science, and technical knowledge (Roochnik, 2010).

\(^2\) “For instance, astronomers and physicians, or mathematicians, astronomers, and physicians, or else to employ only general terms like philosopher or naturalist. Even that would not be enough. The mathematicians and naturalists were sometimes literary men or poets” (Durkheim, 1965, p. 40).
which have pleasure for their end from the mechanical arts” (p. 21). This put an end to “the ancient association of artists with mostly practical skills and crafts” and endowed art with a new character that led to “all [becoming] capable of realization and contemplation for their own sake, without regard to practical purpose or utility” (Harrington, 2004, p. 13). The new way of appreciating art coincided with the birth of aesthetics in the 18th century, which was mainly “concerned in principles with judgments of taste about sensory objects of any kind, whether or not made by human hands” (p. 13). In the period of the Enlightenment, the field of aesthetics emerged and various critical essays on aesthetics began to be written by many European philosophers, including Immanuel Kant.

**Emergence of the Art Market**

Some of the early transactions of art did not take place in the framework of what is now perceived as an art market (Howard, 2015). Most sales of artwork were carried out between an artist or craftsman and a patron. A patron was either a private individual or an institution like the Catholic Church (especially during the Middle Ages). In the case of the Church, the work of art was “site-specific” such as “a fresco or altarpiece” (para. 2). Those types of artwork were not tradable in open markets and the artist did not even hold ownership of his creation. Between the patron and the artist, there was generally a kind of contract in which the detail and features of the artwork, including “the price of materials, the subject of the piece, and the number of figures” were predetermined (para. 2). The monetary value of the artist’s labor and technique was often decided in a separate process, “through an external adjudication” (para. 2). However, as private collectors emerged, artists began to make movable artworks. Mechanisms were developed for direct
sales of artworks by artists through fairs and exhibitions, as well as through
“intermediaries such as dealers and auctioneers,” and the development of the art market
became possible (para. 3). From the 17th century on, the art market was dominated by
“professional intermediaries” and “auctions, which were rare before the 17th century,
[became] the major determinants of art values” (para. 3).

**Political Economy of Art**

From the period around the early Renaissance or late Middle Ages, “economic
networks” became increasingly crucial and influential all over Europe (Codell, 2008, p. 16). These networks held power independently from existing political authorities, and later constructed “their own political system” (p. 16). The separation of the economy from politics led to the increase of cultural activities initiated privately by groups such as wealthy patrons and non-art professionals who started organizing art exhibitions during the 18th Century.

On the other hand, in the 19th Century, public consumption of art flourished and became important for boosting “national pride and modernity” (Codell, 2008, p. 16). As Europe had gone through recurrent revolutions since 1789, such strategic promotion of art became necessary to gain a control of the masses. Art was regarded as “public goods” because it unified values, and helped to educate and socialize the working classes (Codell, 2008). In this socio-economic climate, John Ruskin initiated discussion of the political economy of art, a concept focusing on proper ways of production and consumption of art. Ruskin’s critique of 19th Century political economy³ mainly came

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³ Friedrich Engels defined political economy as “in the widest sense, the science of the laws governing the production and exchange of the material means of subsistence in human society” (Komlik, 2016, para. 3). In the narrower sense, in terms of the domain of art and culture, political economy refers to “collective
from his concern that people are singularly driven by profit. This was similar to the situation of artists, whose activities became increasingly influenced by the ideology of market value (Henderson 2000, cited in May, 2010).

It is possible to understand more clearly how Ruskin valued the labor of art and its reward from his infamous legal trial involving the painter James McNeill Whistler. According to Codell (1995), Ruskin’s attitude toward the value of artistic labor is often contradictory. Ruskin called for pricing the labor of artists based on the actual hours they spent creating, but also advocated for rewards for their “economically immeasurable quality of genius” (para. 3). He wanted the artworks of living artists to be purchased by private collectors, whereas he thought that the artworks of deceased artists should be collected by public museums. Although he admitted collectors could be motivated to purchase artworks for the investment value, he refused the idea of “the surplus value of art works” (para. 3) that is generated after the time of the artist’s production. In spite of his paradoxical arguments, to some extent, Ruskin consistently supported the power of the patron who is responsible for finding and training artists, and even ordering them what to do (Vidokle, 2013). For Ruskin, collecting was “a charitable act” (Codell, 1995, para. 4). Further, he insisted on low prices for artworks, encouraging the purchase of (state or corporate) support for art and architecture in the public sphere intended to be accessible to the widest possible public” (Codell, 2008, p.13).

Ruskin was involved in the first legal trial about the role of labor in art in history (Vidokle, 2013). In 1878, American painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler sued art critic John Ruskin, who had publicly criticized one of Whistler’s paintings, Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket (1875) as an overpriced artwork. According to Ruskin’s perspective, due to its poor quality, the painting was a product of the “ill-educated conceit of the artist” and almost close to “the aspect of willful imposture” (Whistler, 1890, p. 3). The trial became a public spectacle, as well as a public seminar on how to measure the value of art. While Ruskin claimed that art should contain certain moral value, Whistler argued that “a painting is about nothing but itself” (Vidokle, 2013, para. 7). In the trial, when asked how long he spent to make the painting, Whistler answered that although it physically took a day or two, he had gained the knowledge to create the painting throughout his whole lifetime. Whistler eventually won the trial.
cheaper pieces created by young and under-established artists (Codell, 1995). Ruskin emphasized the pure and innocent status of being an artist over the artist’s involvement in the art business (Vidokle, 2013).

Many Victorian intellectuals, including Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and William Morris, trusted the role of the state in supporting the arts (Codell, 2008). Both Arnold and Ruskin, despite their insistence on reform and improvement, respected the economic system of capitalism, with no intention of overthrowing it (May, 2010). Ruskin believed that the state could control and lead the flow of an object’s exchange value toward “a long-term ethically and aesthetically appropriate value by adjusting consumers” (Codell, 2008, p. 14) and their preferences within the economic system (Moore, 2005, cited in Codell, 2008). However, Morris rejected the whole notion of capitalism as a reliable economic system for “human aesthetic creativity and productivity” (p. 14). Rather, he insisted upon a utopian socialism where supports for the arts as creative endeavors are possible without censorship (Upchurch, 2005, cited in Codell, 2008).

**State-sponsored Art**

Instead of Ruskin’s desire for “state-sponsorship without censorship,” the relationship between art and the state fell into controversy between propaganda and artistic autonomy. This is most vividly identifiable through two major cases, which occurred during wartime in the first half of 20th Century: the Federal Art Project (FAP) in the U.S. and the National Chamber of Culture (*Reichskulturkammer*) under the Nazi regime. In the Federal Art Project, American artists worked as wageworkers, under the supervision of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA represented the Roosevelt Administration’s effort to put unemployed artists to work during the Great
Depression “in ways that would preserve their creative skills” (Grieve, 2009, p. 6).

During the eight years of the project, FAP artists created thousands of artworks, including paintings, murals, sculptures, posters and graphic arts. Especially after the U.S. entered into World War II in 1941, FAP artists became involved in the production of dioramas, posters, and manuals for the war effort or military services. Although artists’ contributions to such war-related projects were a small part of all of the activities supported by the Federal Art Project, these contributions became controversial. There was criticism that the project was too political and represented governmental hegemony over art and over the autonomous development of art. However, Grieve (2009) counter-argued that the project ended up contributing to unique cultural foundations of modern American art. She added that it was not necessary for the federal government to fund art in a time of national emergency, so the project actually changed the status of artists from “starving geniuses” to workers who addressed the “practical needs of society” (p. 6).

On the other hand, the National Chamber of Culture (Reichskulturkammer) that was founded in Germany in the autumn of 1933 under Josef Goebbels, the Minister for People’s Enlightenment and Propaganda, was “a single organization integrated with the state” (Clark, 1997, p. 61). After the Nazi regime prohibited all independent art activities, the chamber was created in order to “merge together the creative elements from all fields for carrying out, under the leadership of the state, a single will” (Clark, 1997, p. 61). The chamber admitted only “racially and ideologically acceptable artists” (p. 61).

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5 According to Clark (1997): “This organization consisted of seven chambers, for music, the visual arts, literature, theatre, the press, radio, and film. Each chamber was in turn divided into subsections; the chamber for visual arts included departments for painting, sculpture, architecture, interior and graphic design, craft associations, art publishing, sales, and auctioneering (…) Although many artists left Germany at this time, or remained in ‘internal exile,’ approximately 100,000 practitioners had joined the National Chamber of Culture by 1935, including 15,000 architects, 14,300 painters, 2,900 sculptors, and 6,000 designers” (Clark, 1997, p. 61).
Both the FAP and National Chamber of Culture were criticized for their disassociation with modern art, especially avant-garde art. As seen in the exhibition Degenerate Art (*Entartete Kunst*) which opened in Munich in July 1937, senior Nazis, including Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg, publicly mocked expressionism as well as modern art in order to “intimidate non-Nazi intellectuals” and “demonstrate [the government’s] power to enforce conformity” (Clark, 1997, p. 63). The FAP also has been considered negatively, and has been ignored, especially by modern art historians with an inclination toward “art-for-art’s sake” doctrines, as well as skepticism toward any manifest or declared political role for culture (Harris, 1995). However, Harris pointed out the absence of “extensive literature” on detailed problems of the Federal Art Project—Harris’s point refers to missing analytic accounts for the exact position of modernist art criticism and art history professionals in dealing with their concern of the threat against the autonomy of art and the “artist’s avant-garde refusal of incorporation by state or society” (p. 3). In addition, Grieve (2009) argued against the disagreement of modern art professionals with the FAP as “a result of fundamentally different and competing views of culture: highbrow versus middlebrow” (p. 3). Further, Alexander and Rueschemeyer (2005) pointed out a lack of studies covering the relationship between art and the state, as well as a lack of studies that examine the effects on other non-political aspects of the art world other than “harshly repressed” cases in authoritarian regimes (p. ix).

**Artist Collectives in the Post-war Era and After**

In addition to governmental efforts and support for the arts, artists throughout every era have themselves to some degree tried to solve their frustrations and problems by organizing different types of groups. In this section, two U.S. artist collectives in the
Post-War era, the Artists Equity Association (AEA) and the Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC) are discussed—the former being geared toward the economic concerns of artists, and the latter claiming a new paradigm in the production and circulation of art beyond commodified and object-based views of art. Two recent artist collectives in New York, Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E) and BFA/MFA/PHD are examined as well—the former claiming that art institutions should pay fees for exhibiting artists regardless of the sales of artworks, and the latter attempting to analyze the relationship between artists’ careers and art education.

**Artists Equity Association (AEA).** As World War II was ending, the governmental support for artists available through work relief programs and the accompanying exhibitions initiated during the Great Depression were no longer available. Despite the booming of the art market, collectors still preferred European artists with international reputations. Although media and art institutions started to pay more attention to living American artists and their work, the economic conditions of most artists were ignored. In addition, due to “the developing Cold War mentality,” attempts for collective action by artists were treated with suspicion by conservative politicians and art professionals (Sokol, 1999, p. 17)\(^6\). In this time of socio-cultural transition, the Artists Equity Association (AEA)\(^7\) was established to protect the economic position of American artists. To do so, AEA tried to establish “a legal service for members, a welfare fund for members with emergency needs, an initiative to get artists covered by Social Security,

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\(^6\) McCarthyism with regards to artist movements can be visualized through two cases of artist organizations: Artists’ Union and the American Artists’ Congress. These were two major artist collectives pursuing political radicalism. The Artists’ Union, organized in 1934, was perceived to be too socialist in their tactics, which included strikes and political demonstrations, along with criticism of the government. The American Artists’ Congress was even more political, fiercely opposing fascism, while many of its members were Marxists (Sokol, 1999).

\(^7\) The AEA was founded in March 1947.
and a group health insurance plan” (p. 25). AEA was also interested in the more general issues related to artists’ rights, such as rental fees, copyright law, and the reproduction of artwork. Even further, the organization claimed the need for state and federal art projects and wanted to work with UNESCO (Sokol, 1999).

**Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC).** Bryan-Wilson (2009) claimed that American modernism was centered by a series of attempts to connect art and labor. In 1969, another organized group of artists sought to connect the two, continuing a dialogue about the issues of artists’ rights and status. They designated artists as “art workers” (p. 3). This group, The Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC), explicitly differentiated themselves from previous artists groups which existed during and after the Second World War. Unlike the AEA, the AWC refused “the aesthetic dimensions of the WPA’s social realism” and its commitment to populism (p. 3). Rather, AWC members saw themselves as in “a fragile solidarity” (p. 3), mainly questioning the way art is made and circulated within political spheres. The AWC’s actions suggested that “artwork is no longer confined to describing aesthetic methods, acts of making, or art objects—the traditional referents of the term—but is implicated in artists’ collective working conditions, the demolition of the capitalist art market, and even revolution” (p. 1). The AWC’s claims and philosophy are more clearly identifiable through a set of requests made by the group (initiated in February 1969 and revised in March 1970). The set of requests included nine demands made to all museums, and three demands with regard to the economic position of artists (Lippard, 8

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8 Bryan-Wilson (2009, p. 13) wrote about the movement: “It all started with a kidnapping. On January 3, 1969, artist Vassilakis Takis marched into New York’s Museum of Modern Art, unplugged his kinetic piece *Tele-sculpture* (1960), and retreated to the MoMA garden with the piece in hand. Although the museum owned the work, it was not, in the artist’s mind, his best or most representative work, and he had not agreed to show it in their exhibition *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age*. Takis’s protest of its inclusion without his permission became the catalyst for a wider movement.”
According to Lippard, the main points from the requests to museums can be summarized as the following:

(1) Inclusion of artists in Boards of Trustees in all museums.

(2) Free admission and extended open hours throughout evenings for museum visitors who are daytime workers.

(3) Active inclusion of underserved communities in museum activities and events while not serving only the interests of “wealthier section[s] of society” (p. 12).

(4) Equal opportunities for and representation of female artists, along with a sufficient effort to enhance gender inequality.

(5) Keeping a registry of all artists in the region that is available to the public.

(6) Contribution of museum staff to the “welfare of artists,” including “rent control for artists’ housing” and “legislation for artists’ rights” (p. 12).

(7) Artists’ control over their work, whether it is owned by them or not, to “ensure that it cannot be altered, destroyed, or exhibited without their consent” (p. 12).

In addition, three demands for improved economic conditions for artists were declared as the following:

(1) Artists or their heirs should receive rental fees for all work exhibited where admissions are charged, regardless of actual ownership of the work.

(2) “A percentage of the profit” that is made through “the resale of an artist’s work” should be paid to the artist or the artist’s heirs (p. 13).

(3) A trust fund should be made from a tax collected via “the sales of the work of dead artists (...) this fund would offer stipends, health insurance, and financial help for artists’ dependents and other social benefits” (p. 13).
**Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.) (2008-present).** While the AEA and the AWC sought after a wide range of rights and support for artists, they both ended up becoming no more than a vestige of the past. W.A.G.E. is an on-going artist collective that specifically works to secure payment from institutions where artists show their work or perform. Art critic Paddy Johnson (2013) supported W.A.G.E. by highlighting not just the labor of artists, but also their quality of life. Since for most artists making art is not an economic decision, Johnson advocated that the goal of W.A.G.E. is to make creative lives more sustainable. According to Lise Soskolne, core organizer of W.A.G.E., “an artist fee is compensation for time-limited content and services provided by artists to nonprofit arts organizations” (in Vartanian, 2014, para. 7). The artist fee is different from a stipend, which usually is to cover production expenses. Plus, the artist fee doesn’t imply “the transfer of ownership of rights from artist to organization” (para. 7).

**BFA/MFA/PHD (2014-present).** BFA/MFA/PHD is one of the most recently organized artist collectives. Its main concern is the growing population of artists who are saddled with student loan debt from art schools. Its co-founder, Caroline Woolard, has been investigating how artists have become professionalized in the U.S. since 2008. According to the previously discussed census, in 2008, more than three million artists existed in America. At that time artists outnumbered other professionals like police officers, lawyers, and doctors. Currently, every decade, one third of the artist population acquires a bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree related to the arts. According to Woolard’s study, “from 1987 to 2012, there were 1,827,087 graduates with a BFA, MFA,
or PhD in the visual and performing arts” (Gleisner, 2014, para. 3). These numbers keep growing in spite of the recent criticism of art schools described earlier.

The goal of this group is to draw attention to the problem with current college-level art education and face the reality of its outcome by visualizing the number of graduates with creative degrees. The collective is constantly exploring and accepting proposals ranging from alternative schools, labor unions, and funds for visual artists, and has not yet determined a course of action (Gleisner, 2014).

To understand the career paths of artists and the nature of their profession, it is helpful to consider more fully the artist as professional through the lens of economics, and in comparison to other occupations. I explore this comparison in the next section.

**Artist as Profession**

Barker & Woods (1999), in their book *The Changing Status of the Artist*, defined the word “artist” as “a special kind of human being that is conventionally imagined as an isolated figure of exceptional creative powers who suffers for his art,” rather than defining the word based on the specified job a person does in order to make a living (p. 7). Likewise, there are numerous definitions of an artist, yet most of them come from art theory and historical approaches. The question of whether “artist” is a profession in the eye of the current economic system has not been clearly answered. In this light, the first section of this part of the Literature Review is focused on exploring the various views of economists and their research regarding this question. In the second section, current tactics and paths artists take to survive are discussed, and an overview of recently published survival guidebooks produced by artists is presented.
Is “Artist” an Occupation?

Economists Wassall and Alper (1990) stressed the difficulty of identifying “artist” as a profession by the same standard with which other occupations are characterized according to the U.S. Census. Though it is partly due to the quantitative approach of economics, Wassall and Alper pointed out two major obstacles in analyzing the role of artists as members of the labor force. One is what qualifications a person should have to be accepted as an artist. The other challenge is that many people who claim themselves as artists often have other jobs, which in many cases provide their major source of income. The inconsistency between origin of income and self-identification makes it harder to define an artist in the labor force, especially based on the U.S. Census data, which requires one to list one principal occupation (p. 38).

Throsby (2001) drew a line between “professional and amateur practice” (p. 257). In an economic context, such separation is necessary to analyze “purposeful workers as distinct from leisure-makers” and to incorporate variables such as “the output of cultural goods, value added, employment levels, prices and other economic quantities (p. 257). In the context of sociology, attitudinal characteristics of professionals and amateurs are different, thus, professional artists with high artistic standards are more likely to contribute to the production of “work of lasting artistic value and influence” which is why “public policy toward the arts has been supported for professionals instead of amateurs in order to achieve a goal of ‘excellence and innovation’” (p. 257). Throsby also introduced a set of characteristics for measuring the professionalism of artists; he saw such conditions as necessary rather than sufficient. Those characteristics are:
(1) “evidence of peer acceptance”

(2) “appropriate educational qualification or sufficient experience in lieu of formal training”

(3) “a minimum amount time at creative work over a specified period”

(4) “earning a certain level of income from artistic work”

(5) “holding membership of a relevant credentialing or certifying body” (p. 257).

Similarly, Frey and Pommerehne (1989, cited in Karttunen, 1998) laid out eight criteria for the identification of artists, five of which—peer recognition, educational qualification, time spent on artistic work, income from artwork, and membership in an artist community—overlap with Throsby’s criteria (2001). In addition to those five, Frey and Pommerehne list artist reputation among the general public and “the subjective self-evaluation of being an artist” (cited in Karttunen, 1998, p. 5).

Moving beyond criteria for identifying “artist” as an occupation, Abbing (2002 and Towse (2006) used Human Capital Theory9 to analyze the traits of artists’ labor markets. According to Human Capital Theory, expected lifetime income plays the key role in one’s choice of occupation. For Abbing (cited in Towse, 2006), “artists may not be rational wealth maximisers”—this suggests that “artists do not prioritize maximizing profit in their creative activity, something that is widely believed and frequently stated by artists themselves” (Abbing, in Towse, 2006, p. 879). However, Towse deemed Abbing’s analysis of artists as unconcerned with wealth as just a “behavioral assumption” that is

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9 Human Capital Theory supports the idea that “investing in education leads to increased lifetime earnings for those with more years of schooling; access to better paying jobs; reduced time spent in the unemployment market; and speedier transitions to enhanced career prospects” (Wahrenburg and Weldi, 2007, cited in Maringe, 2015, p. 851).
unable to be tested (p. 879). Instead, he questioned whether artists choose their occupations based on “the private rate of return to investment in human capital” that can be calculated through “the costs of schooling and artists’ earnings” (p. 879). Further, Towse found that median incomes in the arts field are always smaller than those of qualified workers in other fields despite higher than average levels of educational attainment for artists. Also, Towse argued that due to a surplus number of art graduates with varying levels of skills and talent, employers look for the reputation of artists to come from “professionalism and high quality talent/creativity” instead of certifications or degrees (p. 879). This means that employers looking to hire artists tend to look for actual evidence and demonstrations of artists’ skills and talents, rather than assuming these qualifications based solely on completed undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The argument concerning the oversupply of artists is echoed by Menger (2006) through his references to sociologists, economists, and historians who have studied the issue. Those scholars include White and White (1965, cited in Menger, 2006) who asserted that the oversupply of artists became a never-changing state of the market due to the absent regulation of supply. The problem, described by Menger, begins with “the flow of recruits through art schools, the flow of paintings produced, and the careers of the painters,” as well as tactics of a free market leaning toward a more flexible and much riskier basis of open competition involving dealers, critics, painters and buyers (Menger, 2006, p. 782). Menger (2001), discussing several studies\(^\text{10}\) that compared artists to entrepreneurs, claimed that artistic careers run more like small businesses due to artists’ “low loyalty to organizations” (p. 249). He saw professional artistic careers as being built

through a “reputation certified by the community of peers” and “by the inner circles of experts and middlemen in the art worlds” (p. 249). Christopherson (1996, cited in Menger, 2001) pointed out the blurred line between management and labor in an artist’s job, which requires “exercising supervisory or managerial skills in addition to creative practice (Menger, 2001, p. 249).

The career changes of artists were researched by Stohs, (1989, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1992a, 199b, cited in Alper & Wassall, 2006). Stohs conducted sociological and psychological studies on graduates of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and found some aspects of their careers that related to economics. In 1981, Stohs surveyed the Class of 1963. She found that “only six percent of the fine arts majors were still supporting themselves in the fine arts 18 years after graduation” (p. 820).

**Artist Handbooks**

Most authors who have written books about the ways in which artists survive and build their careers in the environment of contemporary art acknowledge that there is no single path to succeed as an artist. Instead, each artist has to gain his or her own strategies to survive and sustain a career through numerous trials and errors after graduation from art school—where art students do not gain a sufficient perception of the reality of the art world (Battenfield, 2009; Bhandari & Melber, 2009; Lang, 1998; Michels, 2001; Vitali, 1996. These artist’s handbooks introduce a variety of ways to promote and market one’s artwork, strategies for time management in one’s artistic career, and skills and tips for interacting with institutions and socializing with art professionals other than artists themselves—such as gallerists, dealers, collectors, and curators.
Day jobs. The necessity of day jobs for artists is acknowledged by the handbook authors, who encourage artists to pursue them. In the selection of day jobs, it is highly recommended that artists consider the benefits, beyond a salary, one would get. Art related jobs such as artist assistants, art handlers, gallery receptionists, and museum guards are commonly recommended because they draw artists closer to the art world, giving them a better sense of its inner workings (Battenfield, 2009; Bhandari & Melber, 2009). In other cases, working at art supply stores, as well as at lumberyards or photography labs, is suggested due to the possibility of getting an employee discount on materials. Ironically, having a day job can give a negative impression to gallerists, who may see it as evidence of the artist’s low commitment to his or her practice (Bhandari & Melber, 2009).

Art handbook authors agree that teaching jobs are the most desirable for many artists since they ideally offer steady income, job security, and conceptual coherence between teaching art and making one’s artwork. However, in reality, competition is very strong and in some cases colleges are increasing adjunct faculty positions, making it more difficult for artists to secure full-time employment as teachers (Battenfield, 2009). In addition to the scarcity of full-time teaching jobs, Michels (2001) argued that artists who simultaneously pursue teaching and their artistic careers face the “occupational hazards of both professions (p. 201). In her view, teaching involves working through art historical reference, while those making art need to stay connected to the present.

Grants/fellowships. In addition to income from day jobs, handbook authors encourage artists to apply for funds from art or cultural organizations to support their art practice. Michels (2001) talked about grant selection processes as “mysterious and
“whimsical” (p. 186) because grant applications are usually juried by panels made up of individuals who are subjective and have their own aesthetic taste. Michels emphasizes that although artists are sometimes skeptical about the grant selection process—worrying that they might be ineligible because of a lack of impressive exhibition records, proper academic background or their age—grant award selection boards are usually made up of diverse jurors who take into account the characteristics of proposals and the artists’ ability to undertake the project. In this respect, she encourages applying for the same grants multiple times and not giving up if the proposal is not funded, since in most cases, members of a jury panel are new every year (this contradicts the artists’ conception that the same jurors reject their applications after every round). To write the grant, Vitali (1996) suggested focusing on specific and direct points without using “flowery language” or “indulging in wordiness” (p. 147). He further advised that applicants assume that the proposal reader has no knowledge of art. Verifying proper types of grants for the reputation or level of an artist’s career is also very important, because most high-profile grants programs require recommendations from well-known art professionals or look for already well-established artists in the selection process.

**Residencies and studio programs.** In addition to grants and fellowships that offer monetary support for artists, there are other types of support systems that provide free or subsidized studio space for artists. Despite their similarities in providing spaces to artists, artist-in-residence and studio programs differ based on whether artists live in the space or not. In most cases, residency programs require artists to live and work on site or live in separately arranged accommodations near the studio workspace. The residencies are in various locations throughout the world—from city centers and rural farmland to
national parks. On the other hand, studio programs (not all of them free and many partially subsidized) are mostly found in urban areas where the price of rent is expensive (Bhandari & Melber, 2009).

There are additional benefits for artist-in-residence programs other than having free or subsidized space. Communicating with other artists-in-residence, artists can “build community” and “learn new techniques” (Bhandari & Melber, 2009, p. 110). Plus, some residencies offer lectures, career mentoring, and studio visits from curators. In this light, artist residency programs help artists build their careers in terms of networking as well as socializing.

Sales of artwork. Unlike previously mentioned supports—grants, fellowships, and artist residencies for which artists apply based on specific terms—artists often support themselves by selling their artwork through galleries. Michels (2001) suggested considering three factors when selecting galleries: the types of work already represented by the gallery, the physical properties of the gallery such as size of space and quality of lighting, and the price range of the artworks the gallery sells, in terms of types of artwork the gallery would be interested in representing and exhibiting. According to Michels, when submitting artwork to galleries, it is important for artists not to limit their work to those galleries that present artwork similar to the artist’s because galleries typically seek to show a diverse range of work. It is important for artists to select a gallery with which they can share an affinity while broadening the range of types of work shown there.

Acknowledging numerous variables affecting the price of artwork, Battenfield (2009) recommended three factors to consider: “rarity, permanence and/or cost of materials, and productivity” (p. 188). Unique artwork goes for a higher price than
multiples that are reproducible. Endurance of the materials used in the artwork also allow the piece to be priced higher than a work made out of fragile materials. Labor-intensive artwork also fetches higher prices.

**Duality in the Social Status of Artists**

Perceptions of the social status of the artist vary and often conflict each other. As we reviewed in the previous chapter, economic views of artists’ lives are different from economic views of other occupations. Beyond art world and economic views of “artist” as a profession, additional lenses are useful in understanding the professional lives of artists. Therefore, in this part of Literature Review, sociological approaches to understanding artists as professionals will be mainly examined within three conflicting sub-themes: the artist in charismatic ideology, the artist as middle class, and the artist’s ambivalent positions in urban gentrification.

**Charismatic ideology.** “Charismatic ideology” is a term coined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1996) and mainly refers to artistic autonomy. His theory is based on one of the most common perceptions of the artist as a “genius” who is a unique and distinguished creative figure in isolation. This idea, rooted in the Renaissance, establishes the perception of artists and their aesthetic experience as “detached from the social” (Forkert, 2013, p. 15). Bourdieu (1996) saw that this ideology placed artists merely in the passive position of creators who can only be discovered by “cultural businessmen,” who help them to promote their artwork (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 76). The ideology of artistic autonomy may have been successful at maintaining the exceptional image of the artist, and such mythical perceptions have often been marketized (Forkert, 2013). Alexander Alberro (2003), in his book *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, discussed how
avant-garde art was associated with corporate sponsorships, especially in the period of emerging communication technologies and marketing strategies. These corporations matched the image of their new products with the image of avant-garde artists in order to more fashionably promote their products. As the production of art no longer relied on the hands of artists, especially in the case of avant-garde art in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the perception of artists shifted from that of “master” to “a recognizable brand identity” (Forkert, 2013, p. 21).

**Artists as middle class.** Forkert (2013) argued that there is a sense that “the poverty artists experience is not ‘real poverty,’ but rather the price that one must pay for a life in art” (p. 14). The perception of artists’ economic hardship as “a choice,” not “a necessity,” also complicates the discussion of inequalities in the arts despite the clear existence of exceptional cases—including struggling artists from less privileged backgrounds. Nonetheless, Ley (2003) claimed that artists, with their high level of cultural capital, need to be positioned in the middle class, despite their low level of economic capital. Ley claimed that possession of a high level of cultural capital enables artists to hold membership in the dominant class. In addition, when it comes to the demographics of art students and artists in the U.S.—based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau in 2012—the argument that artists come from the middle-upper class seems to be stronger, as almost 80% of art students and artists in 2012 came from middle class, white families (Ferdman, 2014).

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11 As many conceptual artists in the 60’s and 70’s used industrial processes such as Xerox printings, corporations such as Xerox and Philip Morris sponsored conceptual art exhibitions through art dealer Seth Siegelaub (Alberro, 2003).
This ambivalent social position of the artist can be connected to the dualistic perception of bohemia,\textsuperscript{12} which Siegel (1987) viewed as “laying the foundations for present-day artistic identities” (p. 6). Bohemia was “a phenomenon that developed when bourgeois society was being formed and shaped” (p. 6). Bohemia was involved in many of the conflicts of bourgeois society, and challenged its limits “where the borders of bourgeois existence were murky and uncertain” (p. 11). Bourdieu (1996) also approached bohemians in a dualistic way, by seeing them as “downgraded bourgeois possessing all the properties of the dominants” as well as “destitute young people (...) often obliged to live off a second skill in order to live an art” (p. 57).

Although bohemianism emerged as a counteraction to capitalism, it has taken an ambivalent position by neither adopting nor completely refuting it (Forkert, 2016). In the 1970’s and 1980’s, one of the characteristics of artists’ lifestyles, the studio loft, became attractive to the New York middle classes (Zukin, 1989). Although artists initially began to occupy abandoned industrial buildings as a means of survival in order to work and live, media (such as magazine) images portrayed the studio lofts of avant-garde artists as “bohemian glamour” and “authentic experience”—as a result, an increasing number of members of the middle class started pursuing loft living (Forkert, 2016, p. 38). Zukin (1989) pointed out that “industrialism was transformed from an economic activity into an aesthetic or style” (p. 73). Further, Podmore (1998) saw that “the loft phenomenon

\textsuperscript{12} Bohemia emerged in industrializing Western society in the late 19th century. The term was a counteraction to social upheaval caused by mass production. Elizabeth Wilson, in her book, \textit{The Bohemianisation of Mass Culture} (1999), asserted that “the early days of bohemia were marked by a shift in the definition of the artist, whose primary function was no longer only to produce aesthetic objects, but to also lead an unconventional lifestyle - and this lifestyle transgressed society’s limits and boundaries” (p. 13). The idea of bohemia has been consistently used for resistance to dominant social norms in different eras, in particular during the post-war era, and in the 1960’s, when desires for “authentic lifestyles” soared against circulation between Fordist work ethic and consumerism (Forkert, 2016, p. 35).
created a shared habitus between artists and urban middle class people who shared the same ‘aesthetic dispositions and social practices’’’ (p. 286).

**Gentrification (victim or agency).** The positioning of artists in a specific social class has become more difficult and it causes a bigger controversy, especially in arguments related to urban gentrification. Deutsche and Ryan (1984) wrote an article about gentrification of the Lower East Side in the 1980’s. They mainly criticized how artists and the establishment of art galleries in the area contributed to the process. Deutsche and Ryan saw that artists’ relocation to, and artistic activities in, marginalized areas were deemed to be a signal for the beginning of gentrification. Not only was it a harbinger for changes to come, but artists played a role of active agency in it, as well. In the authors’ views, artists who moved to the areas by claiming themselves as a minority group who deserved support and attention from the rest of society were not in the dire situations of poor previous residents who had nowhere else to go. Deutsche and Ryan argued that artists’ identification as a minority is a kind of hypocrisy and artists neglected the real challenging issues the previous residents were facing, such as eviction and hunger.

In contrast, urban policy analyst Jenny Schuetz (2012, cited in Davis, 2013) counter-argued that the gentrification case in SoHo in the 1970’s and 80’s does not prove that “redevelopment would not have happened some other way had there been no assist from the art community” (Davis, 2013, para. 5) Schuetz investigated the correlation between gallery clusters in certain regions and the rapid transformation of the areas by scrutinizing every city block in Manhattan to see if some areas had undergone accelerated development in the years after an art gallery relocated to the neighborhoods. She found
that there was no clear connection between the two. Although development happened to some degree, Schuetz claimed that “galleries are not really the major ‘causal agent’ they get made out to be; they tend to arrive in neighborhoods already marked out for change” (para. 5).

**Three Elements for Art Making: Space/Time/Material**

In this section of the Literature Review, the three basic elements for art making that comprise the focus of the dissertation—space, material, and time—are discussed through a variety of sources from art history, contemporary art and philosophy. The constructs of space, material, and time as described here lay the groundwork for the analysis and interpretation of the dissertation’s findings in Chapter IV and Chapter V.

**Space (Art Studio)**

In what follows, the concept of studio post-1960’s is examined, especially focusing on its history and how it has evolved, been redefined, and differently utilized in the context of art history and contemporary art practice. Plus, several examples of contemporary artists who claimed Post-Studio art beyond conventional approaches to studio as physical space are presented. Lastly, the current situation of studio art in New York is debated in conjunction with recent affordable studio acts.

**Evolution of studio.** In a traditional sense, the art studio is a working space for artists where their artworks are produced (Hoffmann, 2012). The origin of the current model of the art studio can first be found in the Renaissance, when artists started to have intimate relationships with individual patrons beyond supervision of the Church over creation of art in the Middle Ages (Wallace, 2014). In this period, artists mostly produced
work based on commissions from private patrons who supported their livelihood, and the reputations of both artists and patrons were linked. Artists worked in the workroom called *bottega*, which differed from the studio (*studiolo*), which was geared more for the contemplation and study of artworks. Bottega and studiolo were separate spaces that often existed under the same roof. In the 17th century, as artists became more focused on themselves (Rembrandt, for example, painted a series of self-portraits), the studio transformed into a space of reflection where the function of bottega (work) and studiolo (study) were combined. Contemplation turned out to be a necessary part of the production of artwork in terms of ongoing reflection—artists continuously analyzed, through a series of reflection and contemplation, what they had done in their work and what needed to be improved. According to Wallace (2014), it was the French Academy system that challenged the old structure of ateliers (comprising one master and a group of apprentices) by organizing its own exhibitions, called salons. This led to a program of exhibition-based discussions focused on different aspects of artwork such as subject matter and styles. Later, in the 19th century, industrial production contributed to the emergence of lightweight, portable art materials and equipment and this significantly impacted the departure of artists from studios—for example, with the development of tube paint, artists went outside the studio to paint actual landscapes.

In the 1960’s, Andy Warhol similarly created a new model of studio, appropriating Fordism that enabled the mass production and mechanical reproduction of artwork. This model of studio, called “The Factory,” was accepted, utilized, and further developed by high-profile artists like Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst in the late 20th century (2014).
According to Hoffman (2012, p. 12), in the meantime, “the death of the studio has been proclaimed at numerous times,” especially since the late 1960’s and 1970’s when conceptual art, which saw an idea itself as a dematerialized form of art, flourished. In some cases, the production of art and craftsmanship were no longer the specialized areas of skillful artists. Rather, they were increasingly outsourced to specialists and technicians who were often not even part of an art-related field. While a classical sense of the studio for production has decreased, many artists still utilize diverse physical spaces for the purpose of association with the outside world. These spaces are “social and professional spaces” (p.13) in which artists meet various people, including curators, peer artists, dealers and collectors. The characteristics of these spaces vary and are tailored to the needs and circumstances of artists, ranging from a domestic setting like an artist’s kitchen table to public spaces (2012).

**Romanticized model of studio.** Jones (1996) claimed that our perception of the word “studio” is affected by and originated from Enlightenment humanism in conjunction with “our sense of the solitary individual and the spaces he enjoys” (p. 2). “Studio” shares the same Latin root—*stadium*—with its sibling word, “study.” In this respect, the studio reflects “a special space as well as a contemplative activity or a concentrated frame of mind” (p. 2). In contrast to similar terms like the English word “workshop,” the French *atelier*, or the Italian *bottéghe*, “studio” connotes “an individual space” (p. 3). From the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, “studio” was perceived within “the frame of individual genius” along with “a sense of isolation” (p. 4). During this period, the idea of “studio” was even further romanticized with tropes like “creative refuge” and “a sanctuary for thwarted drive” (p. 4).
Isolation v. social relation. The artist’s studio has been regarded not just an isolated space for the sole activity of the artist but also an open space for social activity between artists. Kemp (1989) found that Leonardo da Vinci emphasized the solitude of a painter, while addressing the necessity of keeping company between the study of art and mathematics. Kemp characterized this solitude and company as “a possible contradiction” (p. 289). Singerman (2010) also characterized this paradoxical state of the studio between space for isolation and space for interaction as a common nature of studio and other facilities in MFA studio programs. According to the guidelines of the College Art Association (CAA)—the professional organization for teaching art at the college level—MFA students need a private studio, though one should not fall into complete isolation without “healthy contact and interchange” (Singerman, 2010, p. 39).

Studio as “practiced” space. Despite numerous attempts to refute the myth of “creative solitude” through venues like “the social studios, salons, workshops, and factories,” authorship and perception of the studio as “a privileged site of production” remained until the postmodern period when the studio concepts of “ad hoc” and “fractured” emerged (Grabner, 2010, p. 4). This new idea of a “shape-shifting studio,” as opposed to the “sole site of artistic enterprise” (p. 4) resists a linear narrative system, which too often objectifies and organizes multiple experiences in a hierarchy via “patterns of power/knowledge” (Paley, 1995, p. 9, cited in Grabner, 2010). According to Grabner (2010), reconfiguration of the conventional notion of the studio and its non-linear expansion in contemporary art are boosted by the idea of French scholar Michel de Certeau (1984), who addressed space as “a practiced place” (p. 117). Contrary to defining a place as stable, with proper rules, Certeau defined space as mobility, with variables,
comparing it to a spoken word that can be transformed into new meanings depending on the context.

Post-studio. The term “Post-Studio” emerged in the 1960’s (Davidts and Paice, 2009). Despite the intention of continuing to challenge prior conventions and conceptions of the studio, Post-Studio stressed that actual implications and approaches vary for each artist. For Daniel Buren, it was not “a critique of the studio,” but “the critique of the fact that the artwork has to leave the studio to get exhibited” (Falb et al., 2015, p. 7). By declaring his studio as a museum and creating site-specific work for it, Buren tried to combine a place for exhibition and a place for creation. For Carl Andre as well as Robert Smithson, Post-Studio meant processes of art production outsourced to the hands of fabricators rather than artists creating their work themselves (Burton, 1969, cited in Green, 2001; Jones, 1996). Smithson also broke down the preconceived relationship between artwork, studio, and exhibition space through his land art piece, Spiral Jetty. Art critic Lawrence Alloway (1972, cited in Jones, 1996, p. 59) evaluated that work as a “post-studio system of work.” Similarly, in an educational setting, Post-Studio was perceived and employed by John Baldessari and Michael Asher as an alternative way of teaching art via concept-sharing and dialogue-based methods, going beyond medium-oriented curriculum (Thornton, 2009).

Davidts and Paice (2009), in their book The Fall of the Studio: Artist at Work, explain the difficulty of finding the origin of the term Post-Studio, although the term has become “utterly commonplace” in theoretical and critical terminology in contemporary scholarship about art. (p. 6) They asserted that “it is still challenging to determine precisely when and with whom this manner of speaking about the studio began” (pp. 6-7). Artists Robert Smithson and Daniel Buren are often regarded as the pioneers of “post-studio practices,” but neither of them actually used the term, “despite producing voluminous writings on this matter” (p.7).
**Studios in New York.** In New York, depending upon the era, artists’ studios have been congregated in different locations—the Upper West Side in the 1910’s and 1920’s, Greenwich Village in the 1930’s and 1940’s, Soho in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, Tribeca in the late 1970’s and 1980’s, and Williamsburg in the 1980’s and 1990’s (Siegel, 2010). More recently, in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, artists’ studios have been located in warehouses. But according to Siegel, in reality, many artists are too busy with side jobs necessary for making a living to come to a studio regularly. In 2013, a group of artists in the area were forced out of their studio because of dramatic rent hikes by the owners of a warehouse complex (“Genesis,” n.d.). Such an unaffordable price of rent revealed landlords’ greedy intention to replace artists with higher-paying clients who would be drawn to, as New York times art critic Holland Cotter (2014) described it, an “artsy atmosphere” (para. 7). As a response and resistance to this action, a group of artists evicted from their studios in Sunset Park organized The Artist Studio Affordability Project (ASAP) that has worked for affordable living conditions for artists. The organization also strives to broaden the support system and network for artists via collaboration with political leaders in the region and other community organizations.

**Material**

While space is one of the elements artists engage with for creating or showing their artwork, material is the element which artists physically utilize for visualizing their artistic ideas.

Art historian Monika Wagner (2001) claimed that a discussion of material as an aesthetic category has begun in recent times. She distinguished material from matter by describing the former as “natural and artificial substances intended for further treatment”
Material is the thing that offers “the parent substance for artistic creation” and holds “a reciprocal relationship with form and idea” (p. 27). According to Wagner, until around 1800, the physical sense of material was considered negatively in aesthetic discussion. Moreover, the degree of an artist’s reliance on material for the embodiment of their artwork determined a hierarchy among different fields in the arts. For example, the fine arts (painting, sculpture, etc.) were positioned at a lower level than music and poetry due to their high dependence on physical materials (paint, wood, stone) in their production. In addition, materials commonly used in the fine arts were undervalued because they were also used in a common, day-to-day, non-art context. This differed from paper, the sole material available for presenting poetic script. During this time, according to Wagner, certain aspects of the materiality of media used in the fine arts, such as the qualities of paint or the texture of stone, were elements that needed to disappear or become less visible through transformation by the artist. In this way, the subject or the figures that artists sought to depict, and not the primary visibility of the art material, were the main focus of the work.

Although Modernism is widely known for its dogmatic emphasis on the unique materiality of each medium in the fine arts, art historian Petra Lange-Berndt (2015) argued that Modernist thinkers including Clement Greenberg actually were not greatly interested in the materials themselves. For those Modernist scholars, material was merely a vehicle for bringing artists to “pure form and transcendence” so that “any remnant of the everyday” was a barrier to overcome (p. 13).

Over time, artists’ use of material has expanded beyond traditional art materials. Manco (2012) saw acceptance of alternative materials in art as a relatively recent trend.
In fact, such changes in materials for art production have taken place over the course of art history—through Modernism as well as various avant-garde movements. According to Manco, the question of the materialization of art in response to a “new industrial age” has also shifted from era to era (p. 9). In this respect, Marcel Duchamp’s concept of the “readymade,” which was very influential and inspired other artists, undermined the conservative attitude toward art material by questioning the notion of art and its context, and opened up a new perspective on the value of everyday objects.

Buskirk (2003) found the liberation of materials in art from a series of artistic endeavors to deconstruct the authoritative and dogmatic status of painting in art history. As Harold Rosenberg emphasized a canvas as a place for an event, not a picture, Allan Kaprow reached the same conclusion with Jackson Pollock’s action painting—Kaprow focused on the performative side of Pollock’s gesture while painting and this eventually inspired Kaprow’s early Happenings piece. According to Buskirk, through Pollock’s physical act of painting, Kaprow found “a form of instability that opened onto the world of the everyday,” which eventually led to “the breakdown of distinctions between different types of art, and between art and life” (p. 132). Buskirk further explains that rather than rejecting painting as some artists did, Robert Rauschenberg saw the art form as a departure point for his endeavor “to act in that gap between art and life” (p. 132). Seeing paint as just another material, Rauschenberg embraced various daily and

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14 Art historian Philip Ursprung (cited in Miccichelli, 2018, para. 1) in his essays for the catalogue of Allan Kaprow’s exhibition at Hauser & Wirth gallery in 2018, explains the progression of Kaprow from painting to performance as the following: “The story began in the 1950s when Kaprow relinquished the norms established in panel painting by implementing collages of photographs, texts, objects, and mirror fragments to expand the pictorial space. In 1958, he created his first environment, in which canvas, newspaper, tar paper, sheets of transparent plastic, colored lamps, and sounds created a space that the visitors could immerse themselves in. In 1959, he presented the first Happening with the title 18 Happenings in 6 Parts, a series of short performances in an environment where the breaks were as long as the performances.”
utilitarian materials, such a pair of socks, as equally suitable for using in a painting. Buskirk also points out that Robert Morris used his idea of Anti-Form to expand on Pollock’s process and focus on the materiality of paint. Morris went beyond these matters in painting into the “dissolution of sculpture” via “a linked exploration of material qualities and site-specific forms,” even further blurring the boundaries between artwork and its exhibiting space by dispersing works across the gallery floor or arraying them along the walls (p. 132).

In the 1960’s and 70’s, as conceptual art proliferated, the evaluation of art based on the quality of the object shifted instead to an emphasis on idea and concept. In the seminal essay “The Dematerialization of Art” (1968), Lucy Lippard and John Chandler described this shift as one from “the anti-intellectual, emotional/intuitive processes of art-making characteristic” in the 40’s and 50’s to an emphasis on “the thinking process almost exclusively” (p. 46). In their view of the conceptual art movement, artwork tended to be designed in the studio but produced elsewhere by “professional craftsmen.” This led to the notion that “the object becomes merely the end product,” which led some artists to become less interested in “the physical evolution of the work of art.” Lippard and Chandler believed that “such a trend” was facilitating “a profound dematerialization of art, especially of art as object.” They further predicted that the continuance of this phenomenon could cause the objecthood of art to be “wholly obsolete” (p. 46). Later, Lippard (1997) in her book, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, rephrased her term “dematerialization” from 1967 as she realized it was “an inaccurate term” and “reflects chaos rather than imposing order” (p. 5). She acknowledged that still commonly used materials in conceptual art, “a piece of paper or a
photograph,” are “material.” She then clarified her previous term to mean “a process of dematerialization, or a de-emphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness)” (p. 5). Pinkus (2009) pointed out that the idea of dematerialization in art reflects a wide range of artistic endeavors, from deconstruction of art objects to completion of an artwork via fabrication by a third party, and institutional critiques.

In a related discussion of conceptual art’s evolution in light of materials, ephemerality was seen as a common aspect of contemporary art. Forty years ago, Beth Houghton (1980, p. 13), then head of the Tate Library & Archive in London, pointed out “a particular importance” of documentation in contemporary art where “artists in retreat from the object” were making art that had no physical or permanent end product for exhibition—such as “performance and body art, conceptual art, mail art, earth and land art, process and serial art.” Houghton argued that these kinds of works relied heavily on diverse forms of documentation as concrete evidence that may give the art work “lasting importance” (p. 13).

**Time**

Even if an artist has a studio and enough money for materials, time is arguably the most decisive element for a sustainable art practice. As mentioned previously, I conducted a small pilot survey to verify elements artists consider as the basics for art making: the results showed that time was thought to be the most important concern, followed by space and materials. However, unlike the scholarly and practical literature on space and materials, there is a lack of such research on time as an element of art making. In what follows, I draw on diverse sources of literature from philosophy and art theory to
economics and psychology in regard to time, especially, how the use and perception of time is related to an artist’s life and practice.

**Time as the medium of an artist’s experience.** Through his book, *Negative Theology of Time*, philosopher Michael Theunissen (1991, cited in Lodermeyer, 2007b) declares the non-definability of time. In his account, time is not a physical thing we can touch, but rather “the medium of our experience” (Lodermeyer, 2007b, p. 24). Art critic Amelia Groom (2013) also supports this way of analyzing time based on “the fragmentary experience of time” due to absence of an absolute model for perceiving time in “today’s globalized geographic mobility” (p. 13). Specifically writing about artists’ experiences of time, Forkert (2013) emphasizes the fragmented use of time in artists’ lives because they tend to be involved with multiple tasks simultaneously, such as “maintaining both a job and an art career, as well as commuting between home, work and studio” (p. 65).

**Perceptions of time as labor efficiency and time as duration of artworks.** In our society, time is perceived based on predetermined units—24 hours per day, 7 days per week. However, historian George Woodcock (1944, cited in Groom, 2013) argued that the notion of measured time is a concept designed to utilize human labor more efficiently, according to the logic of an industrial system. Woodcock asserted that prior to the industrialization of society, people’s perception of time relied more on “natural cyclical passages of day to night and season to season” (cited in Groom, 2013, p. 20). By using the expression “the tyranny of the clock,” Woodcock claimed that “persistent ticking” of the clock represents the mechanical measurement of time, which the human body has been forced to become accustomed to (p. 20). In his view, measuring time with
the clock’s ticking is a form of “regulation and regimentation of life” which benefits exploitive systems of industry.

Art historian Adrian Heathfield (2009) also criticizes such endeavors to regulate human life through the mechanical measurement of time. He argues that “there was a concerted attempt to master social time by subjecting it to a definitive, universal and homogenizing measure” and such endeavors became more intense “in the advanced capitalist societies of the twentieth century” (p. 20). In Heathfield’s view, these efforts to calculate perceptions of time led to “the strict division of work and leisure time,” a binary division based only on industrial and economic productivity—seeing work time as productive and leisure time as non-productive. In response to “increasing contraction and manipulation of the latter [non-productive, leisure time],” for artists in the 1960’s and 70’s, “capital time” was a subject to be tackled through various artistic works. To suggest the “inassimilable” quality of time, these artworks made “use of unregulated temporalities,” “contingent forms,” and “improvisations” (p. 21).

As an example of “resisting time’s spatialization in cultural measure,” Heathfield (2009, p. 21) explains the art practice of Taiwanese artist Tehching Hsieh whose performance art pieces all have a duration of a year. Hsieh characterized time in his year-long performances as “art time with the quality of life” (Heathfield, 2009, p. 334). Heathfield (2009) suggests that the extremely long duration of Hsieh’s performances is

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15 According to Heathfield (2009, p. 11): “Between September 1978 and July 1986, Hsieh realized five separate yearlong performance pieces, in which he conformed to simple but highly restrictive rules throughout each entire year. In the unfolding series of these projects, punctuated by smaller intervals of unmarked life, Hsieh moved from a year of solitary confinement in a sealed cell without any communication with anyone, to a year in which he punched a worker’s time clock in his studio on the hour every hour, to a year of itinerancy spent living without shelter on the streets, to another year in which he was tied closely with a rope to the artist Linda Montano, whom he was not allowed to touch and lastly, to a year of total abstention from art activities and influences.”
the most distinctive aspect of his work, distinguishing it from other artists’ conceptual or performative work—for example, On Kawara, Roman Opalka, and Marina Abramović—that attempted to combine art and life or find art in everyday life. In Heathfield’s view, because of its long duration Hsieh’s work is not limited to “the temporality of eventhood” that is commonly found in performance art (p. 22).

**Time for artists as multi-taskers.** Turning to artists’ practical use of time in daily life, in a study of artists who hold multiple jobs in their careers Throsby and Zednik (2011) found that these artists tend to distribute their working time between three different kinds of tasks: their own art practice, an art-related day job (a job that is “not part of their core creative output but that uses their artistic skills in areas such as teaching”), and a non-art-related day job (p. 9). Throsby and Zednik acknowledge that artists spend time in their own art practice for various preliminary processes that include “preparation, practice, rehearsal, research related to their creative work” (p. 9).

As it is apparent that artists need to multi-task a great deal, a discussion of efficiency and expenses related to multi-tasking follows. In the fields of cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience, a central debate in regard to performance efficiency of multi-tasking centers on two different methods: conducting multiple tasks “sequentially (one at a time)” and operating different tasks “in parallel (simultaneously)” (Fisher & Plessow, 2015, para. 1). Although the debate has not been concluded yet, within the process of multi-tasking, there is a psychological expense, called “switch cost,” one has to pay when he or she has to move between different tasks (Kiesel et al., 2010, p. 852). The degree or severity of switch costs depends on what kinds of tasks one has to perform and in what sequences one has to conduct the tasks. Kiesel et al. (2010)
found a higher degree of switch costs in cases where one must complete arbitrary tasks in unpredictable sequences than in cases where one has to undertake estimated tasks in a predictable order or complete the same tasks repeatedly.

**Related Research on Art Graduates and Young Artists’ Careers**

While the previous sections of the literature review focused on art production as a profession and on elements of space, materials, and time in artists’ professional practices, in the following and final section, I explore research on and initiatives that have been undertaken to address the career preparation of art school graduates as they leave school and try to forge their way in the art world.

First, in the field of art education, there is rising interest in and attention on art schools’ roles in preparing students for their future careers as practicing artists. Lamb (2015) conducted case studies of four art schools in the U.S. to specifically examine how these schools put their efforts into career preparation of students. She interviewed faculty and staff, and analyzed primary source data on the schools’ websites, as well as the schools’ curricula and course syllabi. She also conducted surveys in order to understand the perspectives of art graduates. Among the findings of her study, are that: 1) art students need training for “soft skills”\(^\text{16}\), business skills\(^\text{17}\), studio skills and access to specific knowledge bases in preparation for their careers” and 2) participating art schools were offering chances of learning those skills to different degrees through their curricula.

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\(^{16}\) More specifically, “soft skills” refers to “interpersonal skills, resilience, flexibility, information literacy, professionalism, time management, self-motivation, ethics, and an ability to break down stereotypes” (Lamb, 2015, p. 220).

\(^{17}\) “Business skills” include “entrepreneurship, arts law, marketing, networking, financial management, business protocol within the field of study, job search skills and pedagogy” (Lamb, 2015, p. 220).
career-services provided by the schools, “off-campus experiences, and the college’s contributions to the field at large” (p. 220).

While Lamb’s (2015) study was focused on the administrative and pedagogical aspects of career preparation for art students in school settings, Forkert’s (2013) research examined real life situations of practicing artists. Forkert, an artist and a freelancer herself, interviewed approximately 40 artists who live and work in London and Berlin, as described previously. She conducted semi-structured interviews with the artists, mainly focusing on the relationships between their work and lives, highlighting issues such as jobs, sources of income, and time-management. This study was conducted over three years, from 2008 to 2010.

In her research, Forkert’s (2013, p. 129) main finding was related to “the economic security of artists, and the role of housing and welfare in creating this security.” She criticized a “widespread perception” that “art operates according to different rules than the rest of the economy, and so artists do not have the same material needs as other local residents, do not experience ‘real’ poverty, or are resourceful enough to live on less” (p.129). She counter-argued that such stereotypes about artists are not accurate, based on her examination of the participants in her study who were not able to depend on “sales or grants as an on-going source of support” and who emphasized “other factors – housing, the cost of living and work – as enabling their careers” (p. 129). Thus, Forkert concluded that “material conditions,” especially “housing,” play a significant role in offering the time and space for an artist’s practice.

Folkert (2013) also found that housing, rent and the cost of living affected the possibility of artists’ survival through part-time and freelance work. The artists she
interviewed in London and Berlin showed different characteristics, based on their location. Due to the high cost of housing, the artists in London reported more “frequent evictions and gentrification processes” in their lives and work (p. 129). Such precarious states of living and “being forced to move frequently” significantly influenced these artists, who therefore were unable to secure “any sense of stability or links with local artistic communities” (p. 129). Moreover, the high amount of living expenses in London forced these artists to work more hours at part-time jobs, which reduced the amount of time they had for art making. For the artists living in Berlin, where the rent is less expensive than in London, Forkert found that this reduced cost of rent made it possible for the artists to rely on only “marginal part-time employment” (p. 130). Although most of her participants did not have “regular employment,” those part-time jobs—even if they were not steady—were in “permanent contracts” (p. 130). Forkert concluded that in Berlin, due to the low price of commercial rent and the generosity of real estate developers—who allowed artists to use their property “rent-free” or at “low rent”—independent project or studio spaces could proliferate with less financial risk (p. 130).

Ultimately, Forkert (2013) found that the conditions for artists in London and Berlin are incomparable, due to such apparently different socio-economic landscapes—London is notorious for having a high cost of living while Berlin is generally cheaper but with high rates of unemployment. But she validated her research in terms of showing two “extremes” in the art world. As the focus of my study is on artists based in New York City, my research does not duplicate Forkert’s work but is connected and relevant in its purpose to show another case of artists’ professional practice focused one of the major contemporary art cities in which artists frequently consider to live and work.
In addition to Lamb’s (2015) and Forkert’s (2013) research, there is other relevant work on the career-related education of artists. In *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)*, a book of collected writings by various art professionals edited by Steven Henry Madoff (2009), the artist group Raqs Media Collective (RMC) presents a chapter titled “How to Be an Artist by Night.” In it, the authors describe the inevitable dual positions that young artists take on between their day jobs and their art practice, and detail these artists’ sense of disorientation in career making. RMC argues that many young art graduates maintain two positions: “no-collar” workers in the cultural industry during the day and artists at night (p. 73). RMC asserts that the first position is “at war with” the second position and this “battle” is relevant to many “contemporary art practitioners.” Furthermore, RMC describes this “double life” as “traumatic,” as it involves “the fear of irrelevance, obsolescence, and marginality” (p. 73). In particular, the authors describe the pressure of an artist to exhibit as being as “lethal” as the pressure of a cultural worker or entrepreneur to innovate. This pressure and sense of disorientation, in RMC’s view, comes from the absence of “a stable canon” in contemporary art practice which in RMC’s words, “no one quite knows what to do next to stay afloat in a swiftly changing world” (p. 73).

As discussed in Chapter I, RMC (2009) compares general education and education for artists specifically. In their view, the former is “a retreat, or a period of waiting” without students being burdened with “demands of a professionally productive life” (p. 73). In other words, students are in “the position of apprenticeship” which implies “a withholding or a deferral of the fullness of practice.” Students can move on to professional life once they prove “mastery over the rudiments of a calling.” Therefore, in
general education, there are two distinctive moments or phases: “being someone” and “learning to become someone.” The former requires “the successful completion” of the latter.

However, in RMC’s (2009) view such division is not applicable in art education. RMC use a different term, “artist’s education,” in arguing that artists have to manage ceaseless transformations of themselves via their art practice and working lives. From the perspective of artists, the separation between “being someone” and “becoming someone” is blurred. “The reason to continue to be an artist” is based on “an everyday rediscovery of what it is that he or she needs to do” (p. 74). RMC clarifies that artists need to learn to “constantly prepare for the unknown, for what remains to be done.” They add: “An artist’s education is never finished. School is never out” (p. 74). While the same might be said for other specialized professions in which people must constantly update their content knowledge, RMC goes further to suggest that artists in particular must expand the boundaries of art making into “generating the contexts that make their work possible.” In other words, “the work of art is not just making art but also about making the conditions and initiating the networks of solidarity and sociality that enable the making of art.”

RMC emphasizes “the diligent and enduring cultivation of the kind of intellectual ambience and the social matrix” that enables “the unfettering of artistic praxis and inquiry” along with “the material and institutional circumstances” that are related to “space, resources, and attention to the practical issues that insure the realization of artistic projects” (p. 76). These points are taken up again in Chapter V in relation to the experiences of the artists participating in this dissertation study.
Summary of Chapter II

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on selected topics related to the professional careers of artists and the conditions artists need to sustain their practice. First, the topic of art and labor was discussed, with a focus on how artistic labor was and continues to be understood, valued, and claimed. Second, a discussion of “artist” as a profession—dually focused on the economic aspects of being an artist in society as well as sociological perspectives on “artist” as a career—was presented. Third, three elements for art making and related art historical and theoretical works in regard to space, material, and time were reviewed. Finally, related research on art graduates’ and young artists’ careers was introduced.

In Chapter III, which follows, I present the methodology and specific methods for the dissertation.
Chapter III
METHODOLOGY

This study examines how low-income (derived from their art practice), under-established (yet to be able to live off their art) artists in New York develop their own strategies to continue their art practices with a clear awareness of their economic and artistic needs. These needs include finding sources of income other than unstable or infrequent profit from their own art practice, finding and securing studio space, having a large enough budget for materials, and carving out sufficient time to concentrate on art while dealing with constant challenges to the sustainability of their artistic careers. More specifically, this research investigates individual cases of artists who manage to create art continuously by making adjustments within the three basic elements for art making that are the focus of the dissertation: space, material, and time. The research also, more broadly, highlights how the study participants attempt to strike a balance between life, making money, and making art. Further, this study analyzes the relationship between participants’ art production and their life-management tactics, with a focus on how the artists’ strategies for continuous art making influence the nature of their art.

Selection of Methodology

I chose qualitative research methodology for this study because, first and foremost, the particularities of the real life issues that economically struggling artists face cannot be simply measured in “a mechanistic manner according to a set of laws” (Lancy 1993, cited in Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 233). Qualitative research enables a researcher to conduct his study in “a natural setting” with openness for what is to “be observed,
collected” (p. 233). I therefore found this methodology appropriate for my study, which richly describes the lives of practicing artists and details both how they think about their situation of balancing between making a living and making art and the strategies they develop to achieve this balance.

Moreover, although I have a personal perception of the issues that struggling artists face, based on first-hand experience, since there is a lack of academic research on the topic one of the goals necessary to achieve in the study is defining what the issues are from the points of view of other artists. According to Lancy (1993, cited in Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 232), qualitative research emphasizes “the perception of being studied” which is crucial to gain “an accurate measure of reality” through which meaning emerges through the eyes of participants in the study, not the researcher.

The uncertainty of the issue in the language of academic research spontaneously led me to choose case study as a method for my qualitative research. As Yin (1994) defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13), I perceive case study as a fitting method to deal with the ongoing work-life situations faced by artists in the study.

I selected four individual artists in New York and consider them as separate cases that each represent different single entities, as fits with the requirements of the case study method according to Stake (1995). Stake stated that the case should be “a specific, a complex, functioning thing rather than “generalities” (p. 2). My case method is structured with this recommendation in mind.
Design of the Study

Participants

In selecting participants, I first considered how seriously potential artist participants had become involved in artistic activities in New York City. I looked for artists who had built an artistic career for more than two years, at a minimum. With regards to living and working in New York City, some artists who live and work in New York occasionally decide to move to other cities for economic reasons. Moving to less expensive cities can be a strategic move that artists make in order to reduce rent costs. However, for the coherence of the study, I decided to focus only on artists who currently live and work in New York City. With these considerations in mind, I recruited four artists whose conditions met the following criteria.

Criteria for Participant Selection

I chose artists who are under-established (yet to be able to live off their art) and low-income (derived from their art practice) living and working in New York City. These artists:

(1) Have spent more than two years in New York as practicing artists.
(2) Currently do not have gallery representation, or currently have gallery representation but cannot live solely on income derived from their art.
(3) Currently have a day job to make a living, or constantly have to find term-based financial support through grants, fellowships, or other types of support.
(4) Maintain an active artistic career—meaning they show their work at least once a year or have a corresponding number of show records to the total sum of the entire years of career. (For example, some artists choose to be in hiatus in
some years, while they are more active in other years. So in this case, even if they did not have a show every year, as long as the number of entire exhibitions or participation in other types art events is equal to or exceeds their whole career years, they are qualified.

(5) Identify themselves as artists, regardless of genre, or styles, of art.

As I came up with criteria for potential participants, I realized that I needed to consider both the life situations of artists and the characteristics of their artwork. I also aimed for diversity in the artists’ backgrounds with regard to gender and culture. Since I chose interviews as a data collection method I referred to Kavle (1996), who emphasized the inevitability of constructing relationships between the researcher and respondents during the interview process. I hoped that recruiting participants with whom I have maintained relationships might be an effective strategy, as they would know me and would also know my background as an active artist. According to Kavle, participants tend to feel more comfortable and open to tell their stories when the researcher is empathetic with them.

Lastly, I examined the nature of the potential participants’ artwork, seeking artists whose art practice had been affected by or been negotiated according to the availability of material, space, and time or life contingency. I determined the extent to which the participants fit this last criterion through preliminary conversations during the recruitment stage of the study.

**Researcher’s Role**

In this study, my role as researcher was as a non-participant. As my data collecting method was interview, I did not intervene in any existing condition or
circumstances where data for the research was collected. I let my participants choose places or set-ups for their interviews in order to make them comfortable.

**Data Collection**

I used interview as a primary method for data collection because, as Patton (1990) points out, it is useful for uncovering things a researcher cannot directly observe. According to Patton, interviews enable us as researchers to hear participants’ “feelings, thoughts, and intentions” (p. 196), which makes it possible for us to collect data regarding events and behavior that previously happened. Ultimately, according to Patton, interview is the best data-collecting tool for us to get the “other person’s perspective” (p. 196). In this respect, I anticipated that interview was going to be ideal because this study is about how artists themselves diagnose their situations and make their own plans to survive.

I used semi-structured interviews with which I was able to improvise additional questions that emerged through the responses of the interviewees. This flexibility of the semi-structured interview can provide advantages for a researcher to respond “to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

I conducted multi-session interviews with each participant. I chose the multi-session approach based on previous experience from a pilot study. In that study, I interviewed three artists in sessions that I originally expected to last between forty-five minutes and one hour. However, all three artists were very passionate about the topic of research, interview questions, and process. So I ended up spending a far longer time with each artist than I initially anticipated, ranging from two to three hours. The reason why I
attempted to separate each interview into multiple sessions for the dissertation is that I found through the pilot study that the longer the duration of the interview, the less concentration both the researcher and participants are able to hold. Thus, in order to keep the quality of the dialogue high and be well focused with the questions, I concluded that talking about separate topics during two divided sessions on different days would be more productive to draw in-depth discussion. In this light, in the first interview session for the dissertation, interview questions were dedicated to practical matters, such as the artists’ life circumstances in conjunction with their strategies for making art. The second session was dedicated to conversation on the inner nature of the artists’ art work and art practice. This separation was helpful for the analysis of the interaction between managerial decisions in life and the nature and characteristics of artwork. I did not include any visual images of the participants’ artwork, in order to maintain anonymity at the request of the participants. Due to this issue with the confidentiality of participants, even though all the participants are given pseudonyms, images of their work might be recognizable enough that they could be traced back to the artists in my study. Instead of including the images of artwork, I asked artists to describe visual aspects of their artworks and articulate concepts, processes, and overarching themes. Based on their explanation, readers can picture what their art practice may look like.

All of the conversations during the interviews were audio-recorded after consent from each participant.

**Limits of the Study (Logistical)**

This study is limited in its scale and size, as it selected only four individual artists living and working in New York. Therefore, outcomes of the study cannot be
generalized, nor can they represent the entire range of issues struggling artists face. The parameters for selecting participants were also limited, as I chose artists in my community for the purpose of connecting their personal life stories to their art practices. Thus, four participants do not represent all the situations of New York artists. Rather, those four stories of artists may serve as four individual cases through which one may be able to get a partial sense of what it is like to be a struggling artist. Lastly, this study is limited to cases within the New York metropolitan area. In this light, this study will not be able to address the universal nature of the life of artists and their struggles that might be also observable elsewhere.

**Limits of the Study (Theoretical/Conceptual)**

This study is limited in the way it frames the identification boundary of artists for the participants of the study. The definition of “artist” varies depending on self-identification, as well as on the context of the artists’ various art practices. Although I intended for my participants to be fine artists whose creative activities are not directly translated into acts of making money that can sustain them financially, the categorization can be ambiguous because a variety of different cases exist, even among self-identified artists. Further, I did not pre-categorize my participants based on specific genre or styles of art because some artists occasionally change their styles or genres of art due to various reasons, including economic difficulty and life contingency. And these unclear boundaries, and characteristics in the style of participants’ art practices, are one of the key aspects I attended to in the dissertation. Indeed, the pre-categorization of types of artists (rather than letting them claim their own category) might have disturbed the openness of this research. In addition, due to the prevalent interdisciplinary nature of art making in
contemporary art, defining my participants other than as “fine artists” may have led to an outdated approach to the topic.

Despite all the arguments made above, the selection of artist participants and their qualifications for the research were limited by my criteria listed previously as well as my desire for diversity among the participants. In this respect, this study is conceptually limited in defining, categorizing, and selecting artist participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with transcribing interview recordings. I did not approach transcribing merely to make “an exact representation of the interview,” rather I utilized it as “interpretative construction” (Kvale, 1996, p. 165), in which I collect essences of the participants’ responses—which are often scattered and spread out in different places—and put them in a more organized structure for better understanding. After transcribing the interviews and reading through the data several times, I used the constant comparative method to identify categories and themes. I color-coded transcripts to find themes relevant to the research topic, both within each case and across the four cases, in keeping with McCracken (1988) who viewed coding analysis as “the movement from the particular to general” (in Fink, 2000, para. 33).

Through my experience with the data analysis process in my pilot study, I realized that the participant interview contained the artist’s biography and history, and that this contextual information gives readers a necessary and richer understanding of selected quotes and themes from the interview data. To do this in the dissertation, I present the data as a form of narrative analysis that embraces “the process of understanding, recalling and summarizing stories” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 100).
With all of the data and information I got through transcribing, color-coding, and categorizing in themes, I conducted a cross-case analysis in order to get close to “the development of theory” beyond a stage of “categorical and taxonomic integration of the data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 187).

**Positionality**

My position is very close to the topic of the research. As mentioned earlier, I am very familiar with the issue of struggling artists based on first-hand experience as an active professional visual artist in Korea since 2008, and in the U.S. since 2010. The themes and interests in my art practice have always focused on how to live a better life through creative practice, beyond the common goals to be financially stable, or even wealthy, that are easily found in our society. Although I did not secure studio space after I graduated from the MFA Program at the School of Visual Arts, I managed to continue my art practice and develop an artistic career by developing suitable ways of art making which fit my financial situations and circumstances. In so doing, I was able to participate in numerous exhibitions and events happening at various galleries, museums, and non-profit art spaces nationwide.

In this respect, I have personal beliefs and expertise in regards to how to sustain an art practice amidst the pressure of multiple non-art related tasks and life challenges. While this first-hand knowledge and experience can be seen as a strength of the study, my own beliefs and experiences are also one of the study’s strongest researcher subjectivities, and I have had to acknowledge and carefully deal with them in analyzing and interpreting the data, and forming the findings and implications of the study. Rather than tempering my subjectivities toward the topic, I clearly address what those
subjectivities are and let them be part of the research process so that readers are aware of any potential biases I might bring to the study.

**Ethical Considerations**

As a qualitative researcher who is a “guest in the private spaces of the world,” I was careful to maintain good manners and a strict “code of ethics” (Stake, 1994, p. 244). In addition, as my data collection method, interview has “both risks and benefits to the informants.” Participants may feel their privacy invaded or get embarrassed by a certain question, or accidentally share unintended stories, so I put in extra effort to protect them (Merriam, 1998, p. 214). First of all, as all the participants for this study are professional artists, I was very careful to not harm their public personas and securing confidentiality of information for the participants. To do so, as mentioned above, I used pseudonyms for all participants’ names and any types of recognizable names of schools or institutions. In addition, I did not include images of the artworks of each participant due to the possibility that inclusion of artwork might reveal the identity of the artist. I thoroughly followed the procedure of getting consent from each participant and consistently confirmed the accuracy of information with them after I transcribed their interviews by sharing the transcripts.

**Summary of Chapter III**

In this chapter, I described the methodology of the study that includes qualitative, case study as my main research method, semi-structured interview as the data collection method, and constant comparative thematic, and narrative and cross-case analysis as data analysis methods. I also listed sample criteria for the participants and limitations of the
study. Lastly, I explained my positionality in the study, my role as researcher, and ethical considerations I have taken into account for my participants. In Chapter IV, which follows, I present the findings of interview data from the four artist participants.
Chapter IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings in this chapter pertain to the two main research questions, which are as follows:

Artists often find it difficult to live on their art practices, and this necessitates locating other sources of income. This also challenges the sustainability of their artistic careers due to the inability to secure studio space, have a satisfactory budget for materials, and make sufficient time to concentrate on their art production. Therefore, what kind of strategies do low-income, under-established artists in New York build, especially with regard to space, material, and time, in order to sustain their art practice? And how do these strategies affect the nature of their art?

Based on the research questions, data from four artists was collected through multiple sessions of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. To understand each artist’s strategies for and struggles in art making, I asked participants not only direct questions about their perceptions of the previously discussed elements of space, material, and time, but also indirect questions that touched upon their personal life, art practice, and career history before and after coming to New York. Through these indirect questions and their responses, the artists’ perceptions of space, material, and time naturally emerged. This data was very fruitful because it allowed me to see how the participants—even if they were not fully aware of the three elements at the moment—apply their own realizations and self-developed strategies to their art practice, as well as to their lives. Therefore, data
regarding space, material, and time was collected mainly in two separate ways: analysis of participants’ responses to direct questioning about these elements and data that naturally emerged from more general dialogues about their art and lives.

In this chapter, in order to represent each participant’s unique voice, the data is presented in an unfiltered way by including direct quotes from interviews. In some cases, English is not the participant’s first language—quotations in these cases are presented in the participant’s own words as much as possible (in some cases, light editing has been done for clarification). Synthetic analysis of the data, in conjunction with themes, will be presented in Chapter V.

**Organization of the Chapter**

In this chapter, a narrative approach is used for the presentation of data because, according to Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 1994), it represents “the way humans experience the world” (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 2) and is similar to the way “we compose our lives” (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 420). Although each participant’s own voice and wordings are frequently quoted, due to the nature of verbal conversation, most participants did not necessarily speak in a very organized way. Rather, in some cases, they duplicated previously mentioned information, while in other cases, they omitted necessary information. Therefore, as a researcher, in presenting the findings I chose to explain necessary information and background in advance of presenting the direct quotes of the participants. To aid the flow of dialogue, I removed some repetitious information and other information that might interfere with the core intentions of each participant’s speech. All the quotes in this chapter are directly from transcripts of interviews with each corresponding participant.
Interviews with the four participants were conducted in a similarly chronological manner, with topics ranging from the beginning of their lives and art practice to the present. The narrative presentation of data follows the actual sequence of conversation. Data is presented in four sections: Life History, Art Practice, Career History and Logistics for Art Making. In those sections, data is presented in a chain of life episodes for each participant—hence, sub-headings are included to clarify the characteristics of each episode.

In the Art Practice section, the nature of the artwork of the four participants is presented based on the three artworks they selected to talk about. As described in Chapter III, I asked all of the participants to choose three major art works or series that best represent their art practice. Three of the participants—Jun, Greg, and Luiza—chose three artworks/series based on that guideline. In contrast, the fourth participant, Angela, selected art works she felt most “happy about.” The Art Practice section resembles a typical artist talk or artist statement in which artists do not have an obligation to reveal their personal life situations. I have separated this section from the life and career history sections because I noticed that their language for describing their art practice was more prepared and professional than the language they used to talk about their lives, which was more casual and intuitive. Since this study does not include any visual images for the purpose of artist confidentiality, all four artists verbally described their art work.

As this study mainly focuses on how four artists sustain their art practice by dealing with three elements—space, material, and time—a comparison of the participants (Table 1) is included. This allows the reader to preview the more in-depth narrative data presented in the rest of the chapter. A few slots in the chart are empty because either the
artist did not directly answer the question, or it was not possible to find the answer from their indirect comments.

Table 1: Comparison of Four Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin/race</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Angela</th>
<th>Greg</th>
<th>Luiza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korea/Asian</td>
<td>Denmark/Asian</td>
<td>United States/White</td>
<td>Brazil/Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of art</td>
<td>Installation</td>
<td>Sculpture, installation, video</td>
<td>Painting, sculpture, installation, video</td>
<td>Sculpture, installation, social practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Living space</th>
<th>Nomadic</th>
<th>Used to be partially nomadic/ currently permanent</th>
<th>Used to be partially nomadic/ currently permanent</th>
<th>Permanent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studio space</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>Occasionally works on site</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exhibition space</td>
<td>Always works on site</td>
<td>Occasionally works on site</td>
<td>Occasionally works on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Storage space</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ephemeral-ity</td>
<td>Meant to be temporary</td>
<td>Meant to be temporary</td>
<td>Meant to last/be permanent</td>
<td>Meant to last/be permanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portability</td>
<td>Portable</td>
<td>Partially portable</td>
<td>Partially portable</td>
<td>Partially portable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time for art making</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Prioritized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Designated time (1 or 2 days a week)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Designated time (1 or 2 days a week)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for money making</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for other things</td>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly and daily routine</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Source of income</strong></th>
<th><strong>Part-time artist assistant job, sales of artwork</strong></th>
<th><strong>Part-time jobs (illustrator, food server), artist grants, maternity subsidy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Part-time artist assistant job</strong></th>
<th><strong>Adjunct (teaching job in art school)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Family</strong></th>
<th><strong>Wife, financially independent</strong></th>
<th><strong>Husband, financially independent for expense for art making</strong></th>
<th><strong>Wife, financially independent for expense for art making</strong></th>
<th><strong>Husband, financially independent for expense for art making</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Additional basic elements for art making</strong></th>
<th><strong>Audience/dialogue</strong></th>
<th><strong>Dialogue/sense of community</strong></th>
<th><strong>A room/chance for contemplating artwork</strong></th>
<th><strong>Networking</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Participant #1: Jun

Overview

Jun is a Korean installation artist who is now 36 years old. He moved to New York in 2009 for his graduate study at The School of Visual Arts. Eight years after graduation, he now has four gallery representations all over the world, including New York City, Mexico City, Berlin, and Madrid. Despite multiple gallery representations, he has had to take on part-time jobs to support himself because the sales of his artwork through the galleries has been unsteady, and he doesn’t want to change his style of art to make it more sellable. To make a living, he not only works part-time but also minimizes his monthly spending by living an extremely minimalist life. Three years ago, Jun began to travel more due to exhibitions and commissions in various cities around the world. As a result, his life has been extremely nomadic; he lives out of a medium-sized suitcase and a small backpack all year long. Thus, he no longer has a permanent living space in New York City but rather sub-leases a room for the short term, or stays at friends’ houses. However, he regards himself as a New York-based artist because his main gallery is in New York, and he works mostly with this gallery. He pays taxes in New York as well, not only for income from his New York gallery but also for income from foreign galleries. Jun still maintains his New York address at his friend’s residence. And although he travels to different cities throughout the year, he spends 30% to 40% of his time in New York. About a year ago, Jun married a woman who currently lives in Montreal, Canada. Due to his nomadic life, Jun does not spend time with her as much as he would like.
Jun’s art is very minimalistic, as well. He uses very small amounts of basic materials that include thin wood sticks, string, plexiglass, small chains, fishing wire, metal rods, and so on. Due to the subtle appearance of his installation work (described in more detail later), the pieces are almost invisible in gallery spaces. He titled one of his series “Room Drawing,” and creates geometrical shapes in space with only line, by hanging string from a ceiling or a wall and connecting it seamlessly with other materials. He is interested in making the exhibition space as visible as his line drawing installation by breaking the boundary between exhibition space and artwork. He sees his art practice as mainly about responding to space, therefore space is the main trigger for his art, as well as one of the most important elements. However, he values space not in the way of pursuing a traditional concept of studio where an artist, in general, needs a permanent space to create art. Rather, he prefers working with the different types of spaces that are available to him as part of commissions by collectors or through gallery exhibitions. When he had studio space in Brooklyn, he intentionally sub-leased short term studio spaces, one after another, in order to work with new and different spaces. Jun also values time as an essential aspect of his art practice. In order to maximize time to make art, he avoids working full-time jobs, despite numerous offers—he works a maximum of three days a week at paid jobs. Although he likes the idea of making a living from his art, he wants to pursue more freedom in his art practice. Jun thinks of art making and money making as separate things.

The interview with Jun was conducted in two separate sessions. Both took place at my apartment. The first session of the interview took four and a half hours and was
mainly focused on Jun’s life history and his career. The second session of the interview took three and a half hours and was mainly about his art practice.

Life History

Childhood. Jun was born in Nouadhibou, Mauritania, a country in North Africa. He was born there because his father was in the fishing industry and he had an office there. Jun has no memory of the city and the country. Later, he moved to the Gran Canary, part of the Canary Islands (a Spanish archipelago) when he was two years old. He grew up there until he was 12 years old. He has a lot of good memories about the Grand Canary. It is a very small, volcanic island, and in his school, there were only 25 students per grade. Thus, all of the students and their parents knew each other. Jun and his friends loved climbing up a nearby mountain to see the crater there and he also remembers seeing a lot of cacti and lizards. When he was in the 5th grade, he moved to Daejeon, South Korea and then realized that the Gran Canary was “paradise.” To young Jun, South Korea was a scary place where everyone seemed to be very angry and often used bad words, whereas people in Canary were very “laid-back” and kind. According to Jun,

Yeah, totally different. In Spain, generally laid-back like happy and sunny country. Especially where I grew up like Canary Islands. Small. It is like a heaven over there….I didn't realize it was a paradise until I moved to Korea (laugh)….I was shocked that just people say bad words. Like anytime. Even students. They say like just "fuck." Like "shit" (laugh).

Family. There were not any artists in his family. However, Jun cited his mother as having a strong influence on him. His mother is a “poet” and amateur photographer, and she started pursuing her career when Jun decided to major in art in college.
My mother, even though she was smart and a good student, her parents didn't send her to college because she is a woman. So she didn't have a chance to study. So we went to college together.

So when Jun was preparing to take the college entrance exam, his mother was studying with him, and ended up getting into college, where she majored in Korean Literature. His mother introduced a lot of “artsy stuff” to young Jun, as she took him to art exhibitions and showed him artistic movies. Jun said, “I think she always had interests in art. So naturally, I grew up seeing art, having an interest in it. Definitely, influence from her.” Despite there not being any artists in his family, Jun identified one of his mother’s friends, who was a painter and an elementary school teacher, as an influence on his decision to be an artist.

When she visited us, she brought some small artworks. She showed me...she was like very free spirit. She loved backpacking. She would love to go to Europe or like India in 80's. When Koreans are not traveling that much. She had also big influence on me. I wanted to be like her.

**Beginning of studying art (high school).** After moving to Korea, Jun struggled in school. His school had an extremely competitive atmosphere where all students felt a lot of pressure to get good grades. Although his first language is Korean, his Korean was not good enough to catch up with his classmates, as he had spent his childhood speaking mainly Spanish and English in school. The sense that he was falling behind in school depressed him, and he felt his life in Korea was “miserable.” During this time, he had no dreams or aspirations for what he would do in the future.

I did not have dream. I did not know what I liked and what to study in college. One day I saw this news like designers are becoming like a trendy job in Korea. Korea was needing a lot of designers. So I thought maybe that would be interesting. So I talked with my parents. They were happy to find out that I like something to do. We went to an art institution, like Hagwonⁱ. I started to try

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¹ Hagwon is a for-profit private institution in South Korea that students often attend as an after-school program (Bousselaire, 2017).
several things and teachers said that I need to do fine arts, not design. I had to try sculpture actually. So, I tried sculpture and I loved it. I liked playing with clay. Yeah, then I decided, OK, I am going to be a sculptor. So it was in high school when I decided to be an artist.

According to Jun, during this period in high school, the sculptures he made in art class had little to do with his own creative ideas. They instead mimicked the 18th century French Academy Style replicas of Ancient Greek figures. Nonetheless, he enjoyed making sculpture due to its sensual and tactile process, that included the use of the “whole body.”

You know, it was only clay. Doing with clay, making…copying plaster Greek figures, torso. I really liked to use my hands as a tool. You have to be very sensitive, like your thumb, like tip of your thumb, tip of your nail. You use everything as a tool. And I think that was amazing. It is very direct. You don't do it through pencil or different tools, you just use all your senses. On your fingers. You use all your arms and your elbow to hit clay in the beginning. It was more related to your whole body.

Looking back, Jun guesses that the main reason his teachers recommended that he should major in sculpture was because of the lack of sculpture majors.

So teachers at that institution. They were sculptors. They were fine artists…now that I think…There were not many people who want to do sculpture. So like, 90% of students who were there wanted to be a designer.…There were some preparing for painters. Maybe 8%. There were only 2%. there were only 3 students in the class. You know if you have one or two students, the class would get closed. So I think they just wanted more sculptors (laugh).

**During college (before backpacking trip).** For undergraduate study, Jun went to one of the best art schools in Korea, which has extremely competitive admissions.

Despite the high reputation of the school, he was very disappointed in it. The quality of school facilities was very poor, and the school did not even provide materials (such as clay) to students. So they had to improvise, recycling dried clay that had been used for the college entrance art exam.
After the exam, they threw away everything, old clay. There was a place where all the old clays were there. So there was a big pile of dried clay in the middle of school. So we all had to go down and carry that to our classrooms. And it was so heavy. I hurt my back. A lot of people there hurt their back because they didn't know how to carry properly and it weighed a lot.

He said that his time at the school was disappointing because “there was nothing ready.”

A lot of the elements of a strong art education—including lessons from professors, an encouraging atmosphere for creativity, and positive influence from predecessors—were missing. He deduced that it was because of an outdated school system.

Teachers didn't show up. We just drank a lot. They forced us to drink. So I think I didn't really get to make art in the first two years. Nobody taught us and nobody forced us to make art. There wasn't any good influence. All our alumni just...they were not doing good in their careers. We were all depressed....I think that was the first two years.

During this period, June felt “lost” and it was depressing enough for him to think of switching his major to design.

I was...oh my god I had to study so much to come to this school?....I was kind of lost. I think I decided not to be a fine artist. A lot of students switched their program. So I took classes for furniture design. I was doing really good there. I got the best grade in the class. For the first two years, I thought I was gonna be a designer. I was more interested in architecture and furniture design. And then, you know, in Korea, we have to go to, it is our duty to do serving the military. I was in the military for two years.

**Backpacking trip.** After finishing required military service\(^2\), Jun went on a year and a half long solo-backpacking trip to multiple countries. He ended up being away from school for a total of four years. During this backpacking trip, he kept thinking about his life, focusing especially on whether he should become a fine artist or not. Before he

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\(^2\) In South Korea, military service is a national duty which young men should do once they become twenty years old. In the case of college students, they can choose the period of service according to their academic plan in school. Usually, students prefer finishing the service during college rather than after the college since, in so doing, they still can prepare for their professional career before graduation when they return to school. The duration of service has been shorter and shorter in recent years. Jun’s military service was for two years.
set out on his journey, in response to his questions about pursuing a career as a fine artist, Jun remembers his mother saying, “just think what is valuable for you and your life.” She recommended that he should travel before going back to school, and gave him $1500. At that time, Jun also had around $1500 in savings. Therefore, with three thousand dollars in total, Jun began a long journey.

**Itinerary.** With the goal of traveling through “the lands,” June visited various countries along the way, from Korea to the U.K.

My plan was...to start from Korea and go to Europe without any flights. Only through roads or ships. As much as possible, going through the lands. That was just my goal. I didn't have any real plans. I had direction which was Europe….So I started from China. I traveled all around China. And then Vietnam. I went through South East Asia, to India, Pakistan. So like, it was a lot of buses, jeeps, trucks. Sometimes boats, ferries. Sometimes I had to fly because they didn't have a border in between because of political reasons. They wouldn't let people in. They just close borders. I had to fly sometimes. But it was mostly through roads. I went through the Middle East, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Greece, Italy, France, Spain, oh not Spain. I didn't go there. I went to London. Yeah, that was whole trip.

**No art but real life.** During the trip, he did not enjoy big cities that much. Rather, he loved going to the countryside, and even sometimes to rural areas without electricity. Initially, he anticipated the trip to be a kind of “art backpacking,” so that in the beginning he visited famous art museums and art galleries in each city, as other art students would do. However, he “did not have much fun” in those places because he felt a repetitiveness in the contemporary art that he viewed. Jun said, “Wherever like contemporary museums or galleries I go, it was all the same. I was shocked.” Instead, Jun realized and found the true value of the trip from meeting local people through which he could gain a better understanding of the authenticity of each country’s culture. Jun said, “I was just having more fun with meeting new people even if we don't speak same language.”
Lesson from backpacking trip. In our conversation, Jun stated that his perspective on life had significantly changed through the backpacking trip, and his new view on ways of living also affected his idea of being an artist. Jun repeatedly emphasized that this experience, among many other episodes, prompted him to see his life as separated into two—before and after the trip. Therefore, in this section, the lessons Jun learned from particular experiences during the trip are described in order to understand how such experiences influenced both his decision to become an artist and ways to live a creative life.

Openness and being flexible. At the beginning of the trip, Jun was nervous about traveling alone. He felt compelled to study the language of each country in advance, and used “chains” to secure his belongings out of a worry about safety. However, over the course of the trip, he got “more loose” and tried to embrace “unexpected things” and to enjoy the moment. Below, Jun recalls being

…not very scared but…I had this tension. I was well-prepared. I even studied some Chinese because I started it from China. I studied all the cities, where to go, I planned everything in advance, before I go there. So I think the first two countries, like Vietnam, I also studied some Vietnamese….I was always scared that some people would steal something so that I had to have some chains like in my backpack. But over time, I started to get more loose and tried to enjoy more. I tried to find what is more enjoyable….So I think I enjoyed unexpected things. In the middle of Vietnam, I just started to get loose and not be ready. Just followed whoever I met during the travel. I didn't have a goal like...started to not think about the goal of what I am going to get in this trip. Because I thought I was gonna learn something in life.

Jun’s openness during the trip led to more adventure as he tried to rely on the “flow” of life, even following strangers and staying with them.

In the Middle East, I got so brave. I just went without any plan, without a guidebook, just be in the flow. Let myself...whoever take me. I just took any buses. Just followed anybody who would invite me to their home. Yeah, like in Syria, I was staying with this family without electricity. I don't even remember. We had to take so many different buses to get their homes. They were very poor.
Poor family. No electricity. My roommate would be cows and sheep. I loved it. We never got to have conversation. We just...if I woke up, I ate with them. I went to the farm with them and I helped them. Whenever I thought I have to leave, I left to the next place. Yeah, I learned how to be relaxed and I learned how to be really flexible during the backpacking. I think I got really brave by doing that.

*Making relationships/friendships.* Although Jun claimed that he was not originally very social, but rather a quiet person who preferred having a few, deep friendships rather than having a lot of friends, the trip began to change his personality. Jun became open-minded for anything that happened to him and any offers he received.

I think I did not know much about myself...I mean I did not have any problems with making friends in school. I think my personality was changing during the trip because I am not that social. I am very quiet...I have friends but I would have just few friends and really deep relationship with them....So I am not a person who is like having a lot of friends. But I think, during the trip, I tried to be more open. Even those countrysides, I couldn't have conversation. I just smiled and we ate. Like they were all speaking Vietnamese or Arabic or Indian. I was just there. I didn't understand anything but they took care of me and I could feel that. If you stay for two weeks with them, I just acted really natural.

In Vietnam, he became close friends with the workers in a hotel he originally stayed in as a guest. He ended up staying with those workers in their dormitory. There was no monetary exchange between them. There was no obligation for Jun to pay back their hospitality, nor did he need a part-time job to make money. It was just a natural friendship with no conditions:

In Vietnam, I was in this hotel. I became really good friends with workers there. I started to stay their dormitory, I ate with them for free. I worked with them in the hotel....No, I didn't make money but they just feed me for free. So I became like family...Yeah, I mean, it was not like a deal. Just naturally, they said stop paying, just eat with us. And when they needed me, they just called me "Jong! come and clean this room with us." So I started to work naturally. Whenever I wanted to leave they didn't let me. "No stay with us, please." I stayed there longer. That's how my trip became like wherever I go, I stayed with those people, local people. And just leave whenever I want. So it was becoming like very open to everything.
**Freedom, the reason to be an artist.** Although he stopped checking out contemporary art scenes in the middle of the trip, ironically the backpacking trip was the pivotal moment when he became sure that he wanted to pursue his dream of becoming an artist—a dream that he had almost given up during his first two years in college because of the poor quality of art education.

When I was backpacking, I was thinking a lot about what I should do with my life. Should I be a designer? Should I be an artist, fine artist? I started to think a lot about that. And I decided for some reasons, I don’t know why because it was a long time ago. I was sure that I would regret if I don’t do fine art.

Through the trip, Jun found the value of “freedom” and how to achieve it without constraints of money. He managed traveling for a long period of time with a very small budget—by traveling to cities with an inexpensive cost of living or engaging with random local people. And he connected this experience to his choice between two different careers in visual arts: fine artist and designer. Jun realized what he really wanted from making art was enjoying “freedom” without any pressure to make profit from it.

During the journey, I had 100% freedom. I was free from money….You know, it was really cheap even though I had to spend money, it was really cheap. It was a dollar for a meal. Three dollars for hotel. But for the most times, I spent with these families. Random families who would feed me. So I was just free….Being in this territory of design…I thought I would enjoy creative part but I would not enjoy the commercial part. So I thought you know, fine arts, at least, it is not about selling. It is important but…in fine art, you don't have to connect this sales. You just have to be into it. It is not about selling. It is just about art. You just have to be free….I kept drawing during the trip…I showed it to people sometimes….They wanted to see some drawings and they really liked it. I enjoyed that being free….producing drawings that doesn’t have really any meanings. Very intuitive drawings….If I become a designer, I have to figure out how to sell this, how to make it practical.

**Artist as traveler.** During this part of our interview, when emphasizing freedom, Jun compared an artist to a traveler. To Jun, both of them are about “being in that moment” and “being yourself” despite unclarity of the future—he further mentioned how
he connects the concept of traveling to his art practice. This comparison is described in more detail in a later section that highlights keywords of Jun’s art practice.

Actually, in my case, for me it is the same. It is about freedom. It is about “in that moment.” It is about being yourself. Over time, during the travel, you know more about yourself. Sometimes you think you know but you don’t know. You are unsure about future…nothing is clear. So for me, I think it [art and travel] exactly the same.

After backpacking trip. After the long trip and military service, Jun came back to school. Upon his re-entry, he felt a sense of loss because all of his friends had already graduated. Although his personality made him love deep relationships with fewer friends, after his experiences in school and during the backpack trip where he had short but meaningful interactions with people, he became increasingly used to the finiteness of human relationships. These experiences led him to be skilled at regulating the levels of expectation in relationships later on. When he came back, the school was the same. Nothing had changed. Perhaps it had gotten even worse. Professors still did not show up for their classes. However, Jun was different.

Yes, I was changed. So I started to make big sculptures. Huge projects. Yeah, at the same time, I was working a lot. I was always doing like, having part-time jobs. And a lot of my alumni, they were working in broadcasting companies. They were doing stage design and interior design….So I was working in a lot of construction sites, doing big projects for stages in TV shows. You know, I think I learned a lot to make big sculptures there. Yeah, I was very happy. I was very excited to not think about other stuffs. Just concentrating on things like what to make, what I liked. That was for two years until I graduated.

Planning to go to New York. As Jun was graduating from his undergraduate school, he started planning to move outside of Korea. In the beginning, he was not necessarily thinking of going to graduate school in foreign countries, but rather he was doing some research on what countries would be good for his artistic career. He was considering three countries: Spain, Germany, and the U.S.
My plan was just going outside of Korea. I did a lot of research. In Spain, they didn't have a good art program. Even they didn't have a good contemporary art scene. So I was thinking between Germany and New York. I didn't want to study a whole new language. It takes like two or three years to get in school. English. I did some basic English. So I thought it is OK. Let's go to New York.

He knew he would face uneasy economic realities in New York, but he was very confident that he could resolve them.

I knew it was going to be expensive. I've never been there but in my experience from backpacking, there is always some way you can survive. There are poor people. They are living there. So I thought there should be a way to survive.

The only issue was tuition, which his parents were not able to afford.

So I was thinking how to do it. My parents were worried that they could not support me. They were asking if I can stay in Korea. But I was very stubborn….We had to find a way. So, luckily, my uncle was doing really good with his business. It was growing. My father supported all of his younger brothers and sisters. They could go to college because of my father's support. So, my uncle was happy to help me. So OK, he will support me for the tuition fee. And the rest…my parents said that the living cost I will take care of. So that's how it was possible.

Although he knew there are many good art schools in the U.S., nationwide, he only applied for schools in New York.

Yeah, I did a lot of research. I asked some of my friends who are alumni. You know, even if you go to good schools, for example, Chicago [School of the Art Institute of Chicago], RISD [Rhode Island School of Design], eventually they go to New York. Because that is where art scene is. OK I said there is no point to go to other cities. So I applied for schools only in New York like five schools in New York. And SVA was the only place that accepted me. I said, OK. I didn't care which school. I just wanted to go to New York.

Arriving in New York (2009). Before coming to New York City, Jun anticipated that it would be a “high-tech city” where everything is very “clean” and “all new.”

However, the first scene he witnessed through the window of the bus from Newark Airport to 42nd Street made him think he was in India.
The scenery was exactly same as India. It was evening. It was getting dark. I could still see everything. Actually I liked it because I loved India, traveling in India. I traveled in India for four months. It was so comfortable for me. When I came into the city, I loved it immediately. It was like chaos. Everybody was crossing the streets under red light. So many cars. Actually, in India, in New Delhi, cabs are yellow. So those yellow cabs in New York were overlapped with the cabs in India in my mind. Immediately, I felt connected to the city.

Jun felt an immediate affinity for the city because he was reminded of his backpacking days.

I came like a backpacker. I just came with a backpack, only a backpack. The first place I went was a dormitory. I came here like a month earlier before school started. I talked with the hostel if they could give me a good deal if I stayed there for a month. For the first month, I stayed in the dormitory so that I saw these travelers, backpackers. So I felt that I was backpacking (laugh).

In terms of the art scene and culture in New York, it successfully met Jun’s expectations.

So when I was in college in Korea, a lot of my influence were magazines, art magazines from the U.S. or New York. Sculpture magazines were big influence. It was exactly the same as I expected. There were huge galleries. From huge galleries to underground culture. Yeah, that was exactly the same as I expected. Before I came to New York, one of the... I was into underground music, underground music scene in New York. I was already into it when I was in Korea. So I knew that there should be top pop culture to... Yeah, they should have all variation. Cultures. I was so satisfied. They had all these levels of culture.

As soon as Jun arrived in New York, he started working at a sushi restaurant, which asked him to give out flyers to people on the streets. Interestingly, he met a few former art professionals there.

As soon as I came here, I started working at a sushi restaurant. I was giving flyers to people on the streets as a part-time job. But, it was fun. I met a lot of people. The owner of the sushi restaurant was... like she was a curator (laugh). Yeah. I mean she doesn't do it anymore but she used to be a curator. A laundromat across from the sushi restaurant. The owner used to be an artist. He came in maybe like 80's? He wanted to be an artist. It was hard and he had family. So he had to survive so that he opened a laundromat. So it was quite shocking. I thought “oh my god.”
When conversation turned to becoming an artist, those former art professionals expressed sarcasm rather than encouragement.

Yeah. They told me like, “you know, life is hard. Let's see if you can make it” (laugh). It was quite miserable but it didn't affect me that much. They didn't matter because I always thought separately. I would think even if I open a sushi restaurant or anything. I would keep making art because...yeah. Separately. Whatever happens I am going to make art. Because it was so clear that I liked doing it. So it didn't matter.

**During grad school (School of Visual Arts).** Jun was satisfied with SVA because he was able to regularly meet with professors (unlike his undergraduate experience). And they were very “proactive,” which was unimaginable back in Korea.

SVA was actually...for me, it was very satisfying because you can meet professors. They are actually there. Compared to Korea, I saw teachers twice a year in Korea. But in SVA, I was shocked that they were proactive.

Jun stated that compared to art schools in Korea, SVA was not that academic, and the atmosphere was very “free,” so that students were able to do whatever they wanted. Simultaneously, teachers at SVA challenged Jun to try new things and to be open to new possibilities. Although he was already planning to make his previous style of art more “concrete,” and to develop it further, Jun took that challenge very positively.

**Change of style of art and living.** In New York, while he was at SVA, Jun had to make changes in his style of art and in his lifestyle because of his new circumstances. Back in Korea, Jun was making “big sculptures” by using “heavy materials” such as “concrete” and “metal.” These materials were not provided by the school, either. It was convenient for him to procure such materials in Korea because there is a district called Eulji-ro where all the hardware and heavy materials are traded at decent prices. However, there is no place like Eulji-ro in New York. Instead, Jun would have to order the materials needed from factories in the Midwestern U.S. Plus, the studio he was given at
SVA was too small to make such large-scale works, and in the end, he did not have the money for such materials. Income he earned from part-time jobs was not enough. The lack of money led him to start living in his studio.

Secondly, the studio was tiny and I had no money. I was busy with making...you know just to get food. Just to earn money for my apartment. In the second month of school, I had to give up my apartment because I had to work too much. I couldn't produce art work. So I decided to stay, to live in the studio in school. I don't know how long I stayed there, but I think...three or four months? I was living in school.

Along with the lack of money, he could not find any interesting, affordable materials in stores, so he started collecting objects and materials on the street.

So I didn't find anything interesting, like interesting materials in the stores. So naturally, I started collecting things in New York, you know if you live here, you can see all these piles of trash, recycling you know, furniture on the streets. There are tons of them. So, it was not just me. It was like a lot of SVA students just were collecting trashes (laugh). So we were like going out in groups. It was like every Thursday I think. OK let's go! (laugh)

**Collecting materials.** Although Jun had never collected materials from the street for his art before coming to New York, he really enjoyed it. He and his classmates discovered the areas in New York where they could find the best materials.

So, first, we started in Chelsea because our school is in Chelsea. It was normally between 7th and 9th Ave. Very residential area. It was very interesting. They threw away all kind of stuffs, like a lot of furniture. You know, there was a trash day and there was a recycling day. So we went normally for the recycling days. So a lot of wood and materials came out. And there was so many interesting objects.

Sometimes, Jun and his classmate picked up some materials for others.

You know, every artist has their own tastes. So I would only collect linear, geometrical stuffs like metal rods, wood sticks. If I find a bicycle wheel, that's mine. My friends picked it up for me. If I find something that interest my friends, I picked it up for them. So sometimes, when I came to studio, there were some stuffs in my studio that they left (laugh).
In terms of transporting found objects, Jun and his classmates carried them mostly by hand. However, sometimes when there were big and heavy materials like furniture, they used a hand cart from the school and called for extra help from friends who might be around the area or in school at that time. During these material collecting trips, they walked around the area and then back to school. During his first year at SVA, Jun only made art out of found objects collected from the street, and he did not buy anything on his own. However, he stopped working with found objects because he realized that “too many people” were working in this way.

**Death of an unknown artist.** One day, during a material collecting trip, Jun and his friends encountered the entire artistic legacy of an unknown artist being put out on the sidewalk immediately after her death.

One time, there were a lot of paintings, like tons of paintings were thrown away. And they were still throwing away…from this house. And we went in and asked, "What is going on? Why are you throwing these nice paintings?" They said that the artist died. She was very old. She kept painting and she just died but nobody knew her. She didn't have families. So the landlord was just emptying the house. It was all going to the bin. So we were like quite depressed (laugh)….The landlord said she was very old….Yeah. He said like we can take anything. So we all went in and just looked at studio and saw what we can take but there was nothing interesting but just so many paintings. There was a big container outside. The (paintings) were all going there. It was quite shocking.

**Ephemerality of artwork.** In Korea, as Jun was making large sculptures with heavy materials, he could not store them. He had to cut them down into small pieces, and he sold these materials to Gomulsang, a second-hand store in Korea. Jun thinks of this period as the beginning of his experience with ephemeral art, in that he came to not own or keep his work.

I think in the beginning, I thought I was more traditional sculptor. Making a sculpture and then keeping it. But it was sad to throw away all the art works but I
had to let it go. I can make it again. So I was getting used to it, slowly. Right now, it is very natural for me to throw away.

In response to the question about whether he would have kept sculptures he made in Korea if he had enough money, Jun said, “If I had a big storage or money, I would have kept them.” However, he further pointed out that the situation is changed now. Jun said, “But now it is different. My work has changed. I don't need to store it. Even if I have more money now, I just don't need to.”

**Reality of artist.** Jun wished that his MFA program would have taught more about how a real “artist[s] life would be like after graduation.” He thinks that graduate school was more focused on the matters of how to make art and what to make than “how to live” and “survive as [an] artist.” He sees himself as a very lucky case, but he said it is difficult to navigate the “art scene” in terms of what kind of “commercial art galleries” or “non-commercial institutions” artists can work with, especially when they have no previous experience. Jun added that sometimes, it is very “dangerous to work with a wrong person.” For Jun, once students graduate, it feels like they start from “zero-base,” as they have no idea where to start.

**Art Practice**

In this section, Jun’s art practice is described based on three different art series he chose to discuss. During the interview, while explaining his artwork, Jun used several keywords to emphasize certain parts of and elements in his work. In order to facilitate an understanding of Jun’s philosophy as an artist, a discussion of those keywords follows Jun’s perceptions about his work.

**Overall nature of Jun’s art.** Jun makes three-dimensional “drawings in the air” by using basic materials like “metal rods, strings, plexiglass, wood sticks, thin chains,”
and so on. He makes installations using those materials in response to a “space” he faces. Jun compares his work to drawings because his art is mostly very linear. Although these pieces are technically three-dimensional structures, they look like flat, two-dimensional lines. In regards to the nature of his art practice, Jun said “most of works, I respond to the space. And also, my work itself creates space. So I would say I create space within space.” As he always creates installations in response to given spaces, his installation always “changes” every time he sets it up. He characterizes his practice as “intuitive” and “improvising,” although it requires a great deal of control in the use of material. He usually creates geometrical shapes or structures with straight or proportionally curved lines that are embodied three-dimensionally only through specific physical tension and balance. In order to make seamless and flawless shapes, Jun rotates between materials that have different weights, rigidities, and flexibilities.

**Three major art works.** As in Jun’s art practice, there is no clear boundary between completed pieces. Jun chose to talk about three different series of his pieces that he feels are most representative.

**Artwork #1 - Room Drawing Series (2010-present).** Jun started this series during the last semester of graduate school—he graduated from his MFA program in 2011. Before then, he was working with found objects and making “minimal” sculptures. However, all of a sudden, he was able to see many subtle visual elements in the space (his studio). Previously, he focused on his sculpture, not paying much attention to the space surrounding it. His work and space were separate concepts. Yet, he started realizing that many elements in space are very “present.”

So I started to see like cracks on the walls, windows or doors...were too present for me. So I couldn't avoid it. So at one point, I had to open, I would say open my
range. So I thought I would have to bring everything in the space. Whatever exist. I had to bring it. Even the light, and shadows it creates. I decided to bring everything into my work. So there is no border between space and my work.

Those already existing elements in the space became apparent to Jun and he decided to bring every visual element existing in the space into his work. Jun recalls that at SVA, during open studio at the end of every semester, all of the students are very eager to create a very slick and clean space by sanding bumps on the wall, filling nail holes, and repainting the wall with a white color so that their artwork can be more vividly visible, not interrupted by any other unintended visual elements. However, Jun did not do any kind of cleaning. He did not fill the holes or repaint the wall. Instead, he responded to those unintended elements. I started to respond by extending the line of the crack on the wall…I would draw a line, a pencil line or I would attach a string like from the end of the crack…I would cut a plexiglass that is the size of the window and hang it in the studio. So they were mostly very thin. They were not very visible.

Most of Jun’s interventions and responses to the space were not immediately visible, and were comprised of thin lines and geometrical shapes. Therefore, when viewers walked into his studio, at first they did not see anything. They would feel like they were just standing in an empty studio. It looks like an empty space but if you stay little longer, you started to see some lines and yeah, then they follow the lines and they will see some things that I created. Then they get confused if some lines were already there or were these created by the artist? So it was a kind of…I think I was having fun erasing the border between me and the space.

**Artwork #2 - Surface Water Series.** In 2013, Jun started to include printed images of water surfaces in his installation. It was during the time he was participating in a residency in Vienna, Austria and he was still working on his room-drawing installation series—which he had been doing since graduate school. Since the room-drawing
installation dealt more with inner spaces, he became interested in bringing in some elements from “outer space.”

Danube river was near the residency and I just started to take a picture from the bridge and I thought the surface of the water was...when I printed it out, I thought it was interesting because you can kind of feel the deepness of the water when it is printed big but it was just a thin paper. So I thought like the space behind the paper existed. You feel that there could exist something but actually it is just air.

After he printed images of water out on a large paper, he considered the depth of water, as well as the flatness of paper. He liked this duality, as it felt like there was another space behind the paper. He started adding his photographs of water surfaces to his room-drawing installation in order to give it “another dimension.” However, due to the “subtle” nature of his work, he found it difficult to include images as part of his installation. As Jun pointed out: “Cause my work is very visually, very subtle. I am very careful about what to include in the work as photography. Because I think images are so strong that could dominate the space.”

**Artwork #3 - Found Gesture Series.** Jun no longer produces this series, but it was the first series he made when he moved to the U.S. in 2009. In this series, Jun made “fragile sculptures” by simply making different objects lean against each other. He composed the works from random items he collected from his neighborhood. He didn’t keep the sculptures. He threw them away after documentation.

I collect some interesting objects around where I live or the gallery. I just collect these random objects. Maybe broken mirrors or a piece of glass or like broken chairs, stuff like that. And I start to make these sculptures, hmm, how can I explain? Very fragile sculpture? Which is made by these objects leaning to each other and balancing like...yeah just balancing each other to create a form. So delicate that even if you walk by, it would just fall apart. So I take images [photos] and then I don't know...I don't keep them. I just throw them away.
Key aspects of Jun’s art. When Jun was talking about his art practice in our interviews, in addition to describing each of the three art series, there were several words and phrases he repetitively used to explain of the nature of his art practice. In this section, several of these words and phrases are further explained.

Mark as memory (space). Jun frequently interprets certain spaces as containing evidence of the existence of people. For example, Jun describes how he would approach some dirt or nail holes left in the space and imagine the memories embedded within them.

I always thought that space that we live in is a big part of people's identity. And when I was in undergrad, I kind of imagined that we live in some memories as mark in the space….It's kind of, you know when we live in a space, we can leave some dirt or a hole on the wall. Yeah, we leave marks. We leave traces. But I thought those were not only just physical marks but I imagined that they were memories. There were thoughts in those things.

Perception of time. Jun thinks that his work is involved with a different perception of time because the subtlety of his installation influences the duration of time it takes for viewers to comprehend it. He said, “the experience of viewers is all about time because first you see only a few lines, you have to spend time to figure out what those lines are.” Since Jun blurs the boundary between existing visual elements and his own creation, viewers need more time to see and understand his work than they might with those of other artists.

Control and intuition, illusion and physical. As Jun creates geometrical shapes by seamlessly hanging strings from the ceiling and connecting those strings with each other, or with metal rods, wood sticks, or weights, his work requires very accurate measurements and knowledge of materiality and physics, such as the laws of gravity. This gives him very strong control over his installation. However, Jun simultaneously explained his process as “intuitive” because the design of the shapes is not pre-planned,
but spontaneously emerges in his mind when he is facing a new space. Also, he interprets his installation as “illusional” because the subtlety of his art makes it difficult to clearly distinguish his installation from the exhibition space. Yet, at the same time, Jun explains his work as “physical” because one has to move within and around the space to view and feel the whole installation, causing a strong physical experience.

Right, it is a lot of control, measurement but also intuition. I mean the border of that. I am doing both. So it is also very illusional but at the same time, it is very physical. Everything is balanced. If one thing is missing, I think the structure will lose tension.

**Balance/domination (choice of material).** Jun uses materials such as string, weights, dowels, paint, graphite pencils, and plexiglass, all minimally. When he chooses certain materials, it is most important for those implements not to visually “dominate the space.” He is interested in making a proper balance between his work and the space. This intention leads him to choose to create thin lines in a space, which result in a minimal amount of visual action/intervention in the space on Jun’s part. In the case of some object-based sculptures, Jun thinks that the sculpture occupies the space. However, he doesn’t want his work to occupy any space. That is why he chooses it to “remain as lines.” Those lines Jun creates “divide space.” The lines make another space within space, and sometimes they connect these sub-spaces with each other. The lines’ meaning is not limited to the ones Jun makes with his materials, but extends to include the space’s naturally-produced lines, such as the edge of shadow.

Yeah, so, for me, it is important to not dominate the space, so I want to make good balance between, you know, the space itself and my work. So there are not many materials I can use. That has to be very thin and...So basically I create lines, you know. If it is like an object, if it is a sculpture, I see the sculpture occupies the space and I don’t want to occupy any space. So it needs to remain as lines. You know, these thin lines, they divide space. I mean, in a way, it also occupies the space to some extent, but in a way, it could be regarded to be
dividing spaces. So they divide space. They create space and connect spaces in
the actual space. So that's why I want to keep everything as line. As thin lines. So
I use all kinds of lines that I know. Even from shadows of the strings, thin chains.

Jun values the “physicality of material” very much. When he makes certain
shapes or structures for an installation, he always has to deal with their physical
feasibility. Preferring to minimize the use of unnecessary materials, Jun doesn’t use any
supporting elements that might visually interfere, such as brackets. He keeps very
seamless connections between different materials and the surface, and wants viewers to
be curious about how he attached those together. He explains: “It's a conversation
between three. So the space, material, and me.” He uses different materials, depending on
what shapes he wants to create.

Visual poem (Japanese haiku). Jun compares his art practice to poetry. He is
especially interested in Japanese Haikus, which he thinks hold parallels to his art practice
in terms of strict rules and restrictions. As Jun deals with limited visual elements and
unavoidable physical laws to make a drawing in space, he connects such gesture to the
way a poet makes a poem with limited words and sentences in Haiku.

I think I was very interested in Haikus, Japanese Haikus. I thought it was exactly
what I was doing. Like keep very minimal and you know, Haiku has these rules
like how many words and how many sentences. So these poems have restrictions.
They have to deal with those restrictions with few words. And yeah, that's when I
first started to think my work could be, yeah, like what poems are doing. Not all
poems but I was more thinking about Haiku.

Artist as traveler. Connecting to his backpacking trip experience, Jun claimed that
his art career and his life are journeys, similar to a boat trip in the ocean. He finds the root
of this metaphor from his family background that most of the family members had been
involved in the fishing industry.
I have this concept that my art career and my life is journey, like a boat journey, in the ocean. So maybe it is influence from my family...my father and my grandfather...even my mother's side, they were all in the fishing industry....They took me to this ship also when I was a kid...I had this concept that I am doing a journey in the ship. And it is going to be a long journey. So my exhibition titles are mostly related to that...like words that they use. Yeah, I always compare to that.

**Career History**

This section details the history of Jun’s artistic career—focusing on the period when he had his first gallery show in New York City to the present. In addition, other types of life issues related to his survival strategies in New York are discussed, such as part-time jobs, his nomadic lifestyle, time management and money management, along with his perception of the art scene in New York. Lastly, direct analysis of three elements of space, material, and time follows, along with Jun’s suggestions about the basic conditions for art making.

**Career path.**

*Getting the first gallery representation in New York.* During the last open studio in graduate school at SVA, Jun met people from the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Arts who were looking for artists for a graduate student show. The director of the museum, located outside of New York City, in Peeksville, and one of the curators came to see his work and asked him to participate in the show. Jun accepted the invitation. This eventually led to him getting his first gallery representation—later, the director of the museum opened an art gallery on the Lower East Side in New York City and Jun became one of the artists represented there.

They were planning to open a gallery. So the wife, she was in charge of the museum and the husband, he was planning to open a commercial gallery. So they asked me if I would like to be part of the gallery. You know, I was graduating and
I wanted to apply for artist visa to stay in New York. So I just said, yes, of course. I had no idea how commercial gallerists work.

Through his friends at this time, he often heard depressing stories about how some commercial galleries did not treat artists well and did not pay them properly. However, Jun was very satisfied with the people from his New York gallery.

Sometimes I hear like my friends working with commercial galleries and they don't treat them well or don't pay them. But, I am saying I am lucky because they are like really good people. Very enthusiastic in art. They are like very supportive. I would say that they are my supporters.

His gallery was commercial, so the priority was selling artwork. But the director and staff did not pressure Jun to make work that was sellable. They liked his work and trusted Jun’s artistic talent.

For my first show, I couldn't think what to do. My work was just very, almost invisible installation in the whole room. I couldn't prepare the show because of pressure that I have to make something sellable. So I asked for meeting and I said if it is OK to not sell anything because I wouldn't be able to make anything. They were like very open to it. They said, "of course, do whatever you want. We will try to sell. We can't promise but it is fine if that's what you want.” I don't think most of commercial galleries would do that.

In addition, the gallery supported Jun by loaning him money when he was without. Jun recalled, “They also supported me like when I didn't have any money, they gave me some money in advance and offset it later when my work was sold.”

**Career preparation aside from gallery representation.** In his last semester at SVA, as he was preparing for post-graduate life, Jun did not rely solely on getting gallery representation, since at that time he had no idea whether it would happen. Instead, he planned for the future on his own by applying for artist residencies such as Smack Mellon, Art Omi, Sculpture Center, and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) Swing Space. Jun was accepted into LMCC and spent a year there. He also had a studio
in Bushwick that led to his participation in a show at Brooklyn Information and Culture (BRIC). He was fairly successful right after graduation. Jun did not worry about his post-graduation life.

Yeah, I was not really nervous at all or stressed about it. I just did what I have to do, applying for residencies. I wanted to stay but if I couldn't and if I have to go back to Korea, it was OK with that, too…I also had some other galleries who were interested, like much smaller galleries in Brooklyn. I was thinking maybe…they could also support visa. When I was graduating, I already kind of knew that I would not have a big problem getting a visa.

**Application for opportunities.** Even though he has been frequently invited to participate in shows through his galleries, Jun has been constantly applying for opportunities up until the past year. The main reason for applying for opportunities was that he was concerned that his career was becoming too concentrated on the commercial art scene (gallery or art fairs). This departed from his original artistic goal of making a career at non-profit spaces or museums. Jun said, “my career was getting…you know, more concentrated on commercial part. I really wanted to do more institutional shows. Shows in more non-profit spaces where I can do like…I can do work more free.” To solve this problem, he continued to apply for bigger opportunities. However, the results did not meet his expectations, so he stopped applying. He realized that his work may be too invisible to comprehend through digital images in applications, where the subtle quality of his work may not be fully communicated to jurors. Instead, he decided to focus on making opportunities through in-person networking, such as by meeting people at shows.

My work is…invisible. I don't get good images…So I stopped applying and concentrated more on making more opportunities through like actual shows….Important curators come. You know, I would talk to them. Yeah, so I would do more in person. So I think it's been a year since I stopped applying. It is a lot of energy to make an application. I was getting busy.
He also does not apply for grants anymore because he realized that it takes too much energy.

Not really, because I applied once for the residency grant in Korea. And it was hard to prepare the application. I got the money and I spent it and I had to report. It was such a pain. It was not worth the energy I put in it. My work doesn't need that much money, just the budget galleries or institution have is very enough for me.

Multiple gallery representation. Jun now has four galleries that represent his work—in New York, Madrid, Berlin, and Mexico City. All these connections happened either through Jun’s New York gallery or art fairs—where galleries often scout artists from other galleries as long as their regions do not conflict. It was as if one thing led to another. Jun started working with a German gallery that was running exchange shows with his New York gallery. In the case of his Mexican gallery, they approached Jun at an art fair where Jun was showing his work with his New York gallery. And lastly, Jun’s Spanish gallery saw his work at the art fair he was taken to by his Mexican gallery.

Part-time jobs. Making money and art separately. Over the course of his career, Jun has not worried much about the future and how to make a living as an artist. Rather, he has focused on what he likes and has tried to enjoy the practice of making art, while attempting to avoid worrying about uncontrollable concerns. In terms of making money, he has been very confident that he would be able to make money by any means. And from the beginning, he always considered his career as an artist as being separate from his jobs to make money.

Actually, I think I had no idea about how artist life would be. I had no idea about commercial parts. I think I am a person that doesn't think that much about future. I am a person who just enjoys what I am doing now. I think during the trip [backpacking], it was the same. You know, when I decided to be an artist, after
the backpacking, I thought the only thing that is clear is that I liked this. I was doing part-time jobs since the beginning of college. So at that time, OK I will make money doing whatever I can make money with. Just do whatever I like. So I think I didn't think about future at that time. About how to make a living out of it through art. Even until I graduated from SVA, a graduate school. I didn't think about that. I just thought I will do part-time jobs like art handlings….I was also doing baby-sitting. I always had it separately.

*Value of time over money.* When Jun is working at his part-time job, an artist assistantship (described below), he never works more than “three days a week.” He thinks he would choose to spend less money rather than to make more money but have less time for art.

When I do part-time jobs, I never work more than three days a week. That was the promise that I made with myself. Because otherwise, I would not have time to do my work. And then, there is no point to do that. So I did not spend that much. I would live in the studio or very far away.

Jun has never considered having “a full-time job,” no matter how much money he would be able to earn through it.

Yeah, I would consider what would be the best to do both, my work and money? So I've never applied for a full-time job. Whatever it was affecting me to, you know, in making my own work, I just didn't do it.

*Art-related jobs.* Although June has multiple galleries to work with, since his work is not steadily sold, he was working at multiple part-time jobs until recently (he now has one part-time job). Although he had experience working at a sushi restaurant and babysitting from his early period in New York, most of the part-time jobs he did in New York were art-related, such as “artist assistant” and “art handler,” which included “wood working” and “making pedestals or frames.” One of the benefits Jun gained from these art-related jobs was networking. He ended up having shows in most of the galleries he worked for as an art handler.
Actually, most of places, like if I worked for a gallery as an art handler, I got to show there. I got to do a group show or something. Yeah, somehow or not in the actual space. You know, they introduced me to somewhere….Some friends told me that I should not work in galleries because they wouldn't think of me as an artist. They would think of me as just an art handler. But, I had no choice because I have to make money. And I need it that at that time. But...yeah. I got to do also exhibitions. I think it was a good choice that I worked in galleries. Still, I know those curators. You know, I was working at Doosan as an art handler and then last year I had a group show in Korea through that curator. So it was all personal connections.

However, Jun analyzes these connections or networks he was able to form as “coincidence.”

I think it was coincidence. It was a gallery that I worked. I prepared for the show, that solo show. Then the director was, she had already like show ready. She wanted three-person show and she couldn't find the third artist. It was about space and architecture. She just asked me to show my work on the website and I showed her and she was like "this is too perfect for the show." She asked me if I can do it.

Current job-artist assistant. Jun is currently working as an artist assistant for a very famous artist, Ron Parson (pseudonym), who is represented by one of the most prestigious galleries in New York. Jun has worked for him off and on for six years.

Parson is very commercially successful, as his work has been consistently sold out and he has befriended many Hollywood stars and celebrities. Jun is very grateful to Parson because he understands Jun’s irregular schedule, and need for money, very well.

I have been working for him about six years. But on and off. And he is very generous and supportive for artists who work for him. And in my case, he understands that I have to travel a lot. So he would let me work whenever I want. He would text me sometimes if he needs me. But if I can't, he understands. And also, even when he doesn't need me, he still lets me work. So without him, probably, I would have struggle a lot because nobody would want to hire me if I just stop working when I want come back whenever.

In the beginning of their relationship, Parson offered Jun a full-time job several times.

After several refusals, Jun ended up working for him part-time.
So my studio mate, the first studio that I had after I graduated….He was the manager of Ron’s studio. He had to build a lot of walls in the studio. So when…[I] help him like for two days, Ron saw me working and he wanted to hire me. But I said no because I have never painted before. Most of his works were paintings….So the second time, he asked me…I said no again because I never wanted to work full-time. He was looking for a full-time assistant. I didn't know him actually. He is a big artist. I didn't know him and didn't know his work….So for couple of times, he just called me for some projects and at one point, “OK come two days a week” (laugh). So, then I said yes.

Jun is satisfied with his current part-time job for flexible work hours and the generosity of his employer allowing Jun to work whenever he needs money.

**Making a living from art.** Jun feels it would be “amazing” if he could live solely on his art practice because he doesn’t like doing part-time jobs. However, his priority is to have success at the “institutional” level, such as in museum or non-profit spaces. He sees the “commercial part” as secondary, and as a means for supporting his goal to make art as he wants. He sets his own principles for his art practice. Sometimes, in order to increase the rate of his sales, Jun gets suggestion from friends or galleries to do some “two-dimensional artwork,” like photography and paintings. However, he is not interested in tailoring his art to fit the tastes of collectors/buyers. He is only interested in selling his art as he created it.

**Selling his art.** When the gallery sells Jun’s artwork, there is an unusual process buyers have to understand. Since Jun’s work is site-responsive, no matter which work buyers choose, the final piece that will be installed in the buyers’ space (office or house) will be changed because each space is different.

So, if somebody sees my work and they are interested in, we tell them in the beginning that it is going to change because you have a different space and my work is site-responsive. And the artist has to go. So they [gallery] explain everything. It's not like buying a painting. If they agree, I visit their offices or homes wherever they think like it's a good space. And then, we talk a lot about the
space. We decide together for the best place that we agreed. Then, I spend some
time with installing. So, for me, it is no different from exhibition and it is not
different from my studio. You know the gallery space, the studio, and the
collector's place [space] are the same. Those are not that different for me.

Once the buyer decides on the space, Jun makes several proposals for installing
his artwork (how it will actually look and in what ways it will be customized in response
to the space). The buyer approves a proposal and dates for installation are scheduled.
Sometimes buyers have to wait for a certain period until Jun has time complete the
installation work. Due to this unusual process, not all the interest from potential
collectors of his work leads to actual sales. Jun said, “I don't know the exact number but I
feel like only 10% buy. One out of ten people would really like it and accept it [process
and condition of installing].” And Jun sees his collectors as more “liberal” and “open” to
experimental work. One of the other reasons 90% of collectors end up not buying Jun’s
work is related to the preservation of his art. Jun is always honest with this issue and
further insists he sells his “idea,” not his “materials.”

Because you know, you cannot preserve my work. I don't think my work lasts that
long. My installation would naturally get damaged in 10 or 20 years…Yeah, also,
finishing wire, fishing strings. They don't last long. But we tell them they are
buying the idea not the actual materials. Some people, they don't like that idea.
They want to buy something. A lot of people, they ask me how long they are
going to exist.

In addition, some people want to take Jun’s work home right way, which is not possible.
He said, “Sometimes they want it right now like they want to take it to home…but they
have to wait until I have time to get to go to...” However, in most cases that result in a
sale, from the other 10% of collectors who do purchase his work, buyers actually like this
unusual process because they can have a customized design to fit their own spaces, which
may feel more “personal” and “intimate.” In addition, if they move to a new place, they
get a new design. Jun has done this before. He commented, “Yeah, if they move, then it is
gonna be another piece” (laugh). According to Jun, this process of selling art and
installing customized, site-responsive pieces is “not very uncommon and new,” and in
fact a lot of collectors know about it. Other artists (mural painters, for instance) do the
same thing.

Yeah, it is not usual but I met a lot of artists who do some...like painters who have
to paint on the wall...Yeah, mural painting, painters. So they would go to a
collector's house and paint on the wall. If they move, they have to do it
again...Yeah, most of installation artists do it like that...No, I know quite many
artists who do like that. So collectors know. Like a lot of collectors know and
collect his kind of work, not a lot but they know about this. It is not very
uncommon and new.

Due to a discrepancy between the exhibited work and customized work, the
galleries make a system for pricing Jun’s artwork with ranges depending on the size of
the final installation at the collector’s space. Even if a collector picks a specific piece that
is priced at a certain amount in the show, he or she will receive a new bill based on the
characteristics of the customized design of artwork. Most of the collectors who have
bought Jun’s work are very wealthy, and so far none have objected to price increases.

But in a lot of cases, I think collectors...they don't care. Yeah (laugh), ten
thousands or twenty thousands. It is not big difference. So they just like "do
whatever you want." They just pay whatever the gallery invoices.

**Nomadic life.** After graduation from SVA, Jun had lived in various
neighborhoods in Brooklyn such as Bay Ridge, Park Slope, and Clinton Hill. Each period
lasted about a year and Jun lived with his artist friends. However, three years ago, Jun
started living a very nomadic life. Around every two or three weeks, Jun goes to a
different country. His nomadic life began because of an increase in his participation in
gallery shows and art fairs, as well as because of appointments to install art work in a collector’s space.

(laugh) I don’t know. So I move to different cities around every two or three weeks. It’s been like this...I think for three years? Or three years and a half? So I don’t live in one place...like this year, I think I will be in New York for maximum three months. And the rest is gonna be some cities like Seoul, Korea, Tokyo, Spain, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, and Canada. Yeah just, completely nomadic like living out of a suitcase...I think like 40% of them [travels] are for exhibitions and 30% are art fairs. And 30% are sales of travels. It is not exact but about like that.

All of the transportation and accommodation costs for art fairs and exhibitions are paid for by galleries.

So for the shows, it is all paid by the galleries. Also for art fairs, galleries pay. For the sales or commissions, it is paid by the collectors...Yeah, so that’s how I can survive sometimes without doing part-time jobs because I don’t spend that much money.

Even though food is not included in the contracts, in most cases, gallerists and collectors generously invite Jun to eat with them. As mentioned previously, despite his nomadic life, he thinks of himself as New York-based. This is because he stays in New York City the longest out of all of the places he visits, and he pays Federal and State taxes, not only for income earned in the U.S. but also for his international income. He also maintains a New York mailing address that is at his friend’s house.

**Suitcase.** When travelling, Jun carries a medium-sized suitcase and a small backpack at all times. He has a system for packing his suitcase and backpack, and everything always goes in the same places.

So in my suitcase, there is some plywood, and usually I tape few plexiglasses on it. So I always carry one or two pieces of plexiglass. I can get it anywhere but just in case, I always have them. Then, on top of that, I have a tripod for my laser level. It goes diagonal in my suitcase. So it divides my suitcase...So, in the lower part where it is divided, all my tools go there. I always carry a drill, a small hammer, my laser level, different kinds of strings. Those stuffs. And in the upper
part, I put, you know, my clothes, shaving machine for my hair. Yeah that's it...I have my shampoo and everything in small bottles. And in my backpack, I usually put my laptop and camera. Yeah, that's it. So I don't need a big backpack.

In terms of clothes, he carries the minimum amount he needs for social events and personal use.

So I have four t-shirts. There is no border between working clothes or clothes I wear when I sleep. So I have four t-shirts and three pants. One is my working pants. The other one is just normal pants when I have a dinner or...yeah, social events. And one is for my opening. It is more like a suit pants. And then, I have four underwear and four socks and I have two shirts for the opening. And then I have few things for the winter. How do we call this, fleece?...jacket. And goose down thick jacket. A raincoat like windbreaker...they all fit to this suitcase.

**Benefit of and sacrifice due to nomadic life.** In response to the question of whether he would like to continue his nomadic life or not, Jun answered that he enjoys it most of the time.

I actually enjoy it. I like it. I wouldn't say I enjoy the whole thing. I enjoy more... when I have to go for an exhibition in a museum, for example. I don't like to go to art fairs. Collectors' houses are much better but going to art fairs is...I think art fairs are very ugly because it is just like a market. You know, their spaces are completely white cubes.

Jun feels like he gets a new “studio” to work in whenever he moves to a new city because he must face a new space to install his work. Jun said, “so I am very excited to be in a new space…. I want to see the space as a surprise. Yeah, I enjoy it. I feel like it is always like my studio and space to work.”

However, there is a lot of sacrifice that comes with his lifestyle. It has been difficult for Jun to maintain close relationships with his wife and friends. As he sometimes can’t see his friends for long periods of time, he feels like he is losing them. Since Jun was young, he has trained himself to put low expectations on friendships. Now that he is married, it has just gotten harder.
First, I don't get much time with my wife. That's one also with friends. Friendship. If you keep moving, you don't get to see your friends for a long time. I think relationship with people are...I think I am losing it. But compared to other people, I am already free from those friendships because since I was young, I didn't expect too much on friendship.

Jun can withstand friendships falling away, but marriage is a different case. His wife currently lives in Montreal, Canada. They met when Jun was backpacking during college. She was also backpacking on her own. They had maintained their friendship until their relationship got serious as lovers a few years ago. Jun’s wife used to work as a TV producer in Korea but decided to move to Montreal. She is now doing a variety of freelancing jobs from being a cook, to a writer, to a ceramicist. She understands Jun’s unusual, irregular schedule, but she definitely wants to spend more time with her husband.

She's quite supportive and she understands but definitely, she wants to spend more time with me. You know, I would invite her to go with me but she also has something to do there. So sometimes, she comes with me but most times she has to stay on her own. You know she understands but she's not completely happy when I am gone. So I try to go back and stay there as much as I can. Yeah, it's difficult.

Jun said that their relationship has worked so far, but he has no idea how their life would work if they had a child. He said, “It works for now. I don't know if I have a kid, I think I have to sacrifice some of career. I may not be able to say yes to all the exhibition opportunities. But for now, it is ok. It is working.” They are financially “independent” from each other. When Jun stays in Montreal, he either goes to his wife’s ceramics studio with her and does some idea sketches, or goes to a library to do research and develop new concepts and ideas.
Desire for possessions. Since Jun has so few personal belongings, I asked him if he has any desire to possess any types of items or objects. Jun attributed his minimalism to his personality, and said he only collects “magnets” as souvenirs from his travels.

I didn’t have much stuffs. I think it is just my personality. But it was never like extreme minimalist like this. But I always like to keep it simple and you know in the bathroom, I always want it to be empty. So maybe there is only one shampoo and my toothbrush. I'd like it to be empty. So I think I kind of…I think I kind of enjoy that. Like emptiness for the space. But I do…I collect magnets. Where I travel, I buy magnets. So I think I do have some possession but very small possession (laugh).

Logistics for art making.

How to begin work. As previously discussed, Jun begins to be inspired to make art when he sees the space in which the work will be installed. He needs some area to “interact with.” He can’t visualize the work if he doesn’t first see the space. When he doesn’t have a show, and therefore has no space he can interact with, or when he has no pressure to produce a specific installation, he normally thinks about “how to expand the concept of space” in general in his work and about exploring possible new ideas for future work.

Use of time for installation (duration). As Jun begins his work by interacting with the space he is facing, the time it takes to install his pieces for a show varies. The longest time he has used for installation is about a month, and the shortest time is less than a week. However, the longer installation time doesn’t necessarily lead Jun to create more “successful work.” He sometimes finishes installations over three days. He doesn’t judge successes or failures in his installation based on the duration of time it takes to install them.

Even for three days, maybe I could have done it. Yeah, it is just different…if I had two months, I would have changed some lines. It really…I think there is no
success or fail. It is just the time I have is what I use. It is like space is paper and
time is the length of the pencil. So, if I have a very short pencil, you know, I can
just draw few lines. And it is done. That's what I do.

**Expense for material and transportation.** The transportation costs of his artwork
are mostly covered by galleries or institutions that offer a show. He buys material out of
his own pocket.

Most of the times, transportation is provided by the gallery or institution. And
materials, most of the time I buy them. It is easy to carry. But also, most of the
things, I can get them near wherever the show is. So, sometimes, I don't even need
to transport them and I just go and buy them. Most of the times, I do that because
I see the space first and then I start to think what material I would need and what
kind of materials I would need.

**Storing artwork.** Currently, Jun does not store his work at all. Jun said, “yeah, I
don't store my work. I just dispose everything when the show is over and I am not there
then, I ask them to destroy everything and throw it away.”

**Daily/weekly/monthly schedule.** It is extremely difficult to tell what kind of
daily/weekly/monthly routine Jun has. His life is currently very transitory, as he has been
moving to different cities for the past three years. He spends a lot of energy planning
travel. Jun briefly described his routine by explaining what he typically does once he
arrives in a city.

So, when I arrive in one place, my routine is opening my suitcase…I put
everything in my hotel or my room. And then I take some of my tools to the
gallery space. And when the show is done I pack again in the same way.
Everything has its own place. Every objects in the suitcase. So I pack again and
go to the next place and open the suitcase (laugh).

**Monthly budget.** In Jun’s case, similar to pinning down a schedule or routine, it is
difficult to determine his monthly budget in a typical way. His income is “very random”
depending on the sales of his artworks by galleries and his artist assistant job. Jun said,
“Sometimes I have almost no income. And sometimes, if the galleries get to sell some
work and if I have more time to work at the artist that I work with, then it's better.” He
does not have any savings that he sets aside and does not touch. However, by minimizing
his personal spending and getting his travel fully-sponsored, Jun frees himself from the
obligation of having extra savings, which frees him from working at his job too much.
Jun said, “I don't make that much money because I don't spend that much. So I don't need
to work too much. And you know, I travel a lot but it is all paid by galleries or
collectors.”

As he uses a very minimal amount of low cost materials, he does not spend much
in that regard. As for lodging, when he stays in New York for a longer period (more than
several weeks), he sublets a room in an apartment or stays in an inexpensive hostel. In
selecting where to stay, he looks for the lowest cost possible. When he stays in New York
for less than three weeks, he stays over at his friends’ houses.

Jun never feels that the money he has or earns is enough, because he never has
had much money. However, he values time for his art more than money.

Enough? I think I never feel that there is enough because I don't have that much
money. But when I think, I need time to concentrate or focus on my work then.
And when I don't need money urgently, I don't work.

**Basic elements for art making (space, material, time, and Jun’s additional
elements).** As with all four of the participants, I asked Jun how he viewed the three
elements of art creation identified as the focus of this study—space, material, and time.
Jun confirmed that they are central to his art practice, although he differentiated their
levels of value. In addition to these three elements, Jun suggested “audience” and
“dialogue” as other necessary elements for art making.
**Space.** Jun has worked more in spaces that have been given to him rather than spaces that he chooses himself. This is mainly due to an increase in exhibition offers and commissions for installations in different spaces. The “given” space happens very naturally, as he does not like “working in the same space.”

My work is about space, meeting spaces. And space becomes part of my work. If I am in the same space for a year, I think I will lose interest. But also, I am having enough opportunities to work in different spaces like galleries or even sales, they are all spaces for me to work. So yeah, I think it just naturally happens like that. Right, new space. In space, you have different light, different shapes, so it is always different.

Whenever he faces new space, it inspires him. And he wants new space to “surprise” him, like his nomadic travels as a backpacker.

So I am very excited to be in a new space. I don't want to...sometimes I need pictures. For example, for gallery shows, if the space is very big and I don't have much time to install, then I ask for some pictures but most of the time, I just want to see it in person. I want to see the space as a surprise.

As mentioned previously, Jun doesn’t have his own studio. Not having a studio is partially due to financial advantage.

I don't need much materials. My studio was kind of empty when I didn't work… I could save money when I have to travel for shows. You know, I didn't have to keep the studio empty. So I decided after that year I graduated, I started to rent like sublet studios.

But at the same time, not having a studio has turned out to be his preference, as he is inspired by different spaces. Again, even before he began his current nomadic life, he intentionally rented studios for short-term periods to gain different kinds of inspiration. Jun recalled, “right after I graduated, I had a studio for about a year I think. Then at that time, I needed to keep changing studios for my work.” Jun approached any spaces given to him through his gallery shows, art fairs, and collectors’ commissions as his studio. He
said, “the gallery space, the studio, and the collector's place [space] are the same. Those are not that different for me.”

**Material.** Jun’s use of simple materials is in part because they are “affordable,” but he said would keep using them even if he had “a lot of money.” His choice of materials is also based on wanting his installations to achieve a very nuanced and subtle presence within their designated spaces.

**Time.** Jun prioritized time as the most important element of his art practice. Although he thinks time and material are must-have elements to produce art, he values time the most because if he only has time, he can “imagine” and experience things that eventually become part of his work.

My priority is having time to produce, even just to think about my work. You know, if I don't have time and material, I can't produce work. I can't imagine things. If I have time, I can experience things which eventually all becomes part of my work. So I think it's like must that I have to have time?

**Audience, dialogue.** In addition to the three elements above, Jun emphasizes “audience” and dialogue as basic elements of art making. Jun loves communicating with people and values reaction and feedback from an audience. He does not even mind people “interfer[ing]” during his installation process.

I think when I make art and somebody looks at it and we talk about it. I think…it affects producing my art. Like for next piece…Also, the people we meet and talk with also are affecting in some way. Yeah, so I think for me it's important then. It's part of art making….I don't mind interfering. Sometimes museums would like to bring the public during the installation process. Yeah, I enjoy that. I'd like listen from people who are not art-related or students. It's really nice to talk to them and listen to how they see it.

**Current struggles/dream.** In regard to his current concerns, Jun said,

My biggest concern is spending time with my wife. Because for half of a year, I am gone. You know, relationship, you need to spend time together. So that's my
biggest concern. Also, if I think having family like kids, how would I manage to continue my career?

He has also started to realize that traveling has become more physically challenging, although he likes traveling a lot.

But I also have concerns about traveling too much. It is just too hard. Physically hard. Like the time difference between cities, for now, it is OK. If I get more opportunities than this, I think it's not sustainable. I think I have to say no to some projects or figure out some other way to do this…I mean, I really enjoy traveling…But I think it has to be balanced….I don't know in the future, if I became a bigger artist, I would probably say no to some projects because I cannot do it and I wouldn't be happy.”

He thinks when he becomes too old to install his work on his own, he would be able to ask for assistance with the installation only if he could be on site and give his assistant specific instructions.

I think I can do it if I am there. Like I can ask them to hang a string that point…Maybe that is more in the future. If I get too old and I cannot climb ladders…But I think about that a lot. I think if I have a good instruction, I think any handy person can do it. Yeah.

In regard to his goals and dreams, Jun said,

My dream is to keep doing my art and enjoying it because I think it is very delicate job like you can get burned and in the art world. If you don't make that much money and you are getting old, I don't know if you could still enjoy it. If I don't have any shows anymore, so my dream is trying to make situations or environment that I can enjoy doing art.

Summary of Jun

Jun’s data has elucidated key findings related to the research questions. From the beginning of his life and the early years of his artistic career, Jun understood that the life of an artist is not stable and that artists face various kinds of unpredictability over the course of their careers. Nonetheless, he found himself enjoying such unpredictability during his year and a half long backpacking trip. He chose to become an artist by
separating ideas about making art from ideas about making money in order to maintain freedom in his creative activities. In regard to the three basic elements of art practice that are the focus of the dissertation—space, material, and time—Jun focuses on the element that is more available to him and prioritizes one element over another rather than struggling to acquire all of three in equal amount. He does not take the shortage of any single element among the three as a frustration. Rather, by developing an art practice that is more flexible given his conditions, as well as by living a very minimal life, he has proactively embraced the reality of limited space, material, and time as part of his art and lifestyle. I will now sum up the key findings based on each basic element for art making.

**Space.** Jun approaches the concept of space with a great deal of flexibility, seeing it as not limited to a traditional art studio or common living space. He transforms the spaces given to him to fit his needs. When Jun was in art school, he lived in his studio while he was making art there. Currently, he does not have a permanent living space, so he has very few personal belongings. In addition, he does not have permanent studio space, but regards all the exhibition spaces, including the galleries, museums, and collectors’ houses, as his temporary studios. In the beginning, all of these unconventional approaches to space may have come from his inability to secure spaces for working and living. However, Jun transformed this inability and lack of space resources into irreplaceable opportunities that have made his art and his life unique and distinctive.

**Material.** With regard to material, Jun does not let a desire for possessions dominate him. This leads him to always consider what materials would be accessible and simple to handle in his art practice, as well as in his life. His attitude toward material in his life is similar to his consideration of materials in his art practice, as he is extremely
sensitive to the affordability of materials and to the minimum amount of materials he needs to carry out his work and living. This sensibility can be found in the following three examples: his choices of low-priced materials that are easily purchased at any local hardware store, minimum use of materials in his installation art work in order to leave the exhibition space itself as visible as possible, and carrying only a minimal amount of items for living in his medium-size suitcase when traveling and relocating, which he does frequently. Moreover, Jun saves money by not only minimizing his spending for materials and living but also getting work-related costs to be covered by others (collectors, galleries). Jun’s low income is a product of his voluntary decision not to work a day job, although he often receives job offers that come with stable income.

**Time.** In conjunction with working fewer hours at a job, among the three basic elements of art making, Jun valued time the most. As mentioned before, he separates the acts of making money and making art and he only works to meet a minimum standard of living in order to give himself more time to make art. When he decided to live in his studio in graduate school, it was partially due to lack of money. However, more than that, Jun realized he was not getting enough time for art. Thus, it was his creative solution to blend the boundary between art and life and incorporate them as one thing. As Jun repeatedly emphasized, “being in the moment” in his travel experience as well as in his life as an artist is evidence that Jun values the present time more than the past or future, and tries to focus on enjoying that. This perception of time can be connected to the ephemeral nature of his art work—as previously mentioned, he destroys his works at the end of exhibitions in which they are featured. To Jun, his artwork is the temporal result of his action in space.
Overall, it is possible to see that Jun’s life, his strategies for survival, and the nature of his art practice are very consistent in terms of his attitude towards all three. In Chapter V, these key findings will be discussed more thoroughly, along with themes that emerged from conversation and through comparative analysis with the other three participants.

**Participant #2: Angela**

**Overview**

Angela is a Korean-born Danish artist who is 41 years old. She was adopted and taken to Denmark when she was five months old. She went to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen free of charge. Although the Danish Government subsidizes students’ living expenses, Angela had to work at part-time jobs at various places, such as a hair salon and an auction house, in order to make ends meet. In fact, she had worked part-time continuously since she was twelve. After graduation, Angela took small jobs and unemployment money provided by the government, and then she started working full time as a flight attendant. Despite working full time, she never took a break from her artistic career and passionately participated in shows and residencies even if she had to use her vacation time.

Angela quit the flight attendant job when she was invited to participate in a three-month residency in Korea. It was her first time visiting Korea since she had been adopted. During her time there, she entered into a romantic relationship with a man and reconnected with her birth family. After the residency, she visited New York with her boyfriend for a previously scheduled solo show. Her boyfriend proposed, and they decided to settle down in the city. Several years later, Angela gave birth to a baby boy.
In our conversations, Angela described how her visa status had prevented her from getting a steady job throughout her time in New York. This has been stressful for her because she needs income to be able to take care of her one-year old son. She has been earning and saving money from various sources, such as small part-time jobs, grants, and an artist honorarium from the Danish Government. In so doing, Angela and her husband, who works as an artist assistant and is also an artist have been financially independent and are able to purchase materials for art making and pay apartment rent.

Like Jun, Angela’s art practice involves working in a flexible manner within given conditions. When choosing materials, she values availability and accessibility, and she frequently uses cardboard. Angela gets materials either through donations from others or by collecting them on the streets. She does not experience many constraints with work space availability, as she is very used to working without a studio. Angela produces her work on site (exhibition space) in a limited amount of time. Plus, she does not have to be concerned about storage, as most of her art works—once they are made and exhibited—are disposed of or sent to a recycling facility.

Angela works with sculpture and site-specific installation. Although she uses a variety of materials, she has been using cardboard for many years. Her choice of cardboard as a material is not only related to its accessibility, but also has expanded into an inquiry into the idea of waste in society, and the high and low value of materiality in art. Having an ethnically and culturally mixed background has stoked Angela’s interests in immigration, women, and social class, and has led her to consider the question of how these classifications of humanity cross over into different societies.
In terms of career management, Angela is very used to producing artwork and participating in exhibitions within the constraints of short periods of time for preparation. This way of working not only allowed her to continuously maintain her artistic career while she worked full time as a flight attendant, but also now makes possible her current active art practice. She has been successful at getting opportunities that she has applied for. Such outcomes are made possible through her consistent efforts to generate and organize lists of open calls for exhibitions and grants and to apply for opportunities in and beyond New York City. Also, Angela recognizes the importance of networking—she seeks out as many opportunities as possible to make connections in person with people who can help to further her career.

Before moving to the U.S., Angela had been participating in exhibitions and residency programs, not only in Denmark, but also in other countries such as Korea and Canada. In New York, Angela did several major residency/fellowship programs at such organizations as ISCP (The International Studio & Curatorial Program), AIM (Artist in the Marketplace) at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and a mentorship program for immigrant artists at NYFA (New York Foundation for the Arts). She also did a residency program at Skowhegan in Maine.

The interview with Angela was conducted in two separate sessions at her temporary studio in Brooklyn. Each interview lasted two hours.

Life History

Childhood. As previously mentioned, Angela was born in Korea, and she was adopted by Danish parents when she was five months old. She has no early memory of her birth country. In Denmark, she grew up on a small island. The island consists mostly
of countryside, and has a small village with about five hundred houses in total. She lived there until the age of eighteen. Angela remembers having a mostly happy childhood, and she recalled that she was a very “creative child.”

I played piano. I loved drawing with either crayons or pencils, watercolors….I really drew a lot when I was a child. I would do that for hours. And I would do that when I was with friends.

Family. Angela’s father was an electrician. He inherited his business from Angela’s grandfather, whom she never met because he died before Angela came to Denmark. Her mother occasionally helped her husband’s business by doing some errands and answering the phone. Angela has a younger sister who was also adopted from South Korea. Her sister is a scholar who is now completing her post-doctorate in health science, researching fertility.

Getting into art (prep school). Angela dropped out of high school in 1995 after she finished the first year. Then she traveled around Israel, India, Nepal, and the U.K. In 1996, Angela returned to Denmark. In search of more concrete direction in a “creative field,” Angela did two one-month internships, one with a ceramicist and the other with a commercial photographer. Then, instead of going back to high school, between 1996 and 1998, she attended visual art preparation schools for two years—a kind of residency where students live and study. She went to two different visual art prep schools. Such opportunity was possible through governmental funding.

One that was more like classic in the way that it was very much focused on sort of drawing after old Greek figures and you measure with a stick and all that (laugh) and also you would do very basic casting and clay works. And then, the second art preparation school that I went to was much more contemporary and it was contemporary artists coming in like teaching us and doing critiques. That was like really intense.
**Preparing for art school.** Although art schools now require digital portfolios for admission review, when Angela was preparing for her art school entrance exam, she had to submit three physical works to the school. On the day of submission, there was a long line of artists carrying big artworks. Those artworks were installed in a large warehouse for evaluation. Angela clearly remembers the trip because she had to travel a long way carrying a large box full of her portfolio work, from her small island hometown to the school’s location in Copenhagen,

A big cardboard box that had a freezer or fridge or something in it…And I carried it in windy weather. And it almost blew me away (laugh)…I got the box and I transported it on the road, walking it all the way to the art school. It was performance itself I would have to say.

**Art school.** In 1998, right after two years at art prep schools, Angela was admitted to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. She was 20 years old, which in Denmark is considered a young age for entering art school. Normally, students are older than that because they either have prepared for the school for several years or transferred from another school. Angela was the second youngest student among her classmates.

In our conversations, Angela found it difficult to define the school in comparison to the higher education system in the U.S. It was neither undergraduate nor graduate school. It was closer to a combination of both. Her program was six years long. Once a student finishes the whole six years, he or she gets a degree of Master of Fine Arts. The school does not offer a separate Bachelor’s Degree for those who would like to attend for a shorter period. The first two years of school are similar to an undergraduate program, though, while the final four years are closer to a “professional school.”
**Six years of freedom.** Angela enjoyed her school life very much. She had a great deal of freedom to pursue her own interests. She was able to try various art workshops without the obligation of taking many required classes.

It was six years of freedom, mainly because it wasn't very structured. It was very like free school and a lot of free time because there was all these amazing workshops. There was plastic, plaster, wood, metal, photography, clay, and media. There was so many possibilities of learning these different crafts. But you would only go there if you had a project that you needed it for. So it was kind of up to yourself. Like when and where, for what you go there.

The program at the Royal Academy was more student-centered, as students used project-based learning rather than taking pre-determined courses. Students chose what to learn based on skills or knowledge they needed to acquire to complete their art projects, visiting workshops where technicians offered group workshops as well as one-on-one consultation. For learning theoretical knowledge, students organized “reading groups” which anyone could join without obligation.

It was like if you wanted to work with something that you thought would be better in metal, you go to metal workshop and then you do it as a project…like adult life outside of school where you work from project to project. And reading groups…more theoretic based things…like some of the reading groups, you just had to sign up for it…it was not something you had to do.

**Free education and “student money.”** In Denmark, all education is nationally funded. Angela told me that in terms of funding for education, college art schools receive the second highest allocation from the Danish government.

It is free education…for how much they pay for each person getting through…And the first one would be like Danish version of Navy Seal like the army. Very specially trained forces. And that would be the most expensive education in Denmark and the art school was the second.
Moreover, the Danish government provides students “study money” during the period they are in school. Also, in the last two years of their university education, students can take out very low-interest loans from the government.

All students in Denmark get study money for...I don't know the rules anymore but at that point, I think you can study for seven years while you get a monthly allowance and then the special rules if you have a child, you can get doubled amount. And in last two years, you can actually also take loan that is doubled amount and then you can pay them back with very low interest. And I actually did that. Borrowed money for the last two years. And then I saved them and traveled.

According to Angela, the amount of study money provided by the government was not “a lot,” so she always had to work at part-time jobs. Students could make ends meet, but barely.

If you would eat pasta every day, maybe (laugh). It is not a very big amount. Especially not...You have to pay your materials. You have to pay just like normal living expenses. So it would be like at the end of month, me and my friends would always be like no one had money. Everyone was hustling...everyone was broke at the end of month. But I did throughout all my years, I actually had jobs on the side. Several jobs.

**Part-time/full-time jobs in Denmark.**

**Auction house.** Angela’s first job during art school was working at an auction house.

I had that job throughout my all years in school. I would be helping with preparations before, during, and after the auction. Just with managing all the items and auction. Being like a guide during preview and organizing items before the auction and showing them during the auction.

The auction house dealt with various items, including some artworks. Although there was no contemporary artwork, Angela was able to gain some knowledge about modern-period Danish painters she did not know.

Primarily for antique. Like old furniture, candle light stuffs like that. But also like old ceramics and old paintings. Then they would be like in one room, there would be more like modern art. It was not really contemporary minded. Actually, a lot of
Danish painters that I didn't know about...because we didn't really have that kind of art history. I learned through that job. Big Danish painters.

From the age of twelve, Angela had many different jobs, including washing hair at a salon. She considers most of them “all kind of shitty jobs.” However, she expressed particular satisfaction with the auction house job due to its friendly atmosphere.

I mean the auction was really nice. There were really nice people. A lot of them I am still in contact with…they became friends…a sort of family cause it was a small auction house also.

Angela did not feel comfortable with the job in the beginning. She said that her different background (such as origin of region, class, and use of a country dialect) made her feel distant from her coworkers. Yet, she later realized that anyone can get close despite different backgrounds.

Because I am from working class. When I started that job, I think I was little bit afraid of it because a lot of people working there felt like…the way they spoke well-mannered…I am from the countryside. So when I was a child, I had very strong dialects. Like people from Copenhagen wouldn't understand what I was saying. And that changed over the course of my teenage years. But these people, like upper class. You can hear in the way that they were talking and you can see that manners. And the way of thinking of solve things...you would like "oh, just go buy that." I don't know. I think I was afraid of a lot of them. Afraid is the wrong word but I felt shy in being with them and then I think at some point, I also realized that they are just humans. They grew up on other circumstances. But they still just like all the same…

*Flight attendant.* After graduation, Angela made a living through various sources of income, such as small part-time jobs, “unemployment money,” and an “artist honorarium.”

Also, I remember the year in between airline job and art school. I had various…jobs. Also in Denmark, you can get unemployed money, I did that for as many years as I could. As long as stretched it could. I had very mixed economy...like my financial situation was always like...mix of small part time jobs here and there and unemployment money and you would maybe get a fee from exhibition, artist honorarium.
Similar to Jun, Angela said that her ideal goal has always been prioritizing her art practice by minimizing the time she spends making money, unless she is in dire need of funds. This attitude is reflected in the ways she made a living before getting a full-time job.

Yeah, I mean, the goal is always to like have as much time to do art as possible. But like on a practical basis, you had to have jobs here and there to make more money. So, it was sort of base of mix of incomes up until the airline job.

After exploring different job options, including a job as a “disabled person’s helper,” she ended up getting a job as a flight attendant, which she kept for about six years.

I had another job as a flight attendant. I think I interviewed for different jobs. I basically when you are artist, you don't have a lot of things in CV necessarily. On what you can do. So I think in my mind, possibilities that I had was I could become like a disabled person's helper or I could teach or I could become a stewardess… I interviewed for different positions with disabled people and didn't get them. I never thought about teaching. I don't think I ever saw myself as a teacher. And I applied to different airline companies and… got a job.

One of Angela’s friends, who was already working as a flight attendant, emphasized the benefits of being a flight attendant, such as “wearing nice clothes” and being able to go to “exotic places.” Yet, the main reason Angela kept this job as long as she did was for the money. She made an amount that she cannot imagine she will ever again. However, it was a challenging “service job” that involved dealing with different people’s demands. Angela recalled that she was the “worst airline host.”

Part of me thought “Oh, that's kind of nice way to travel.” At the same time, I had a friend who had been flying as a flight attendant for some years. I think she sold the idea to me in a very romanticized version (laugh). So she was like “oh you get this like nice clothes and lots of great and exotic places. And it is pretty good money.” And I agreed. It was the reason I stayed for so long in the job. I had it for five to six years….It was really good money. And I don't think I will ever be able to get a job that I can earn that much money again. But I was also, at the same time, hating the job like a service job. You have to deal with all kinds of people. It
is the worst. I think I was also probably the worst airline host you can meet. I was like grumpy and tired not in the mood to take people's crap. So I was rude and I was hostile. I was terrible (laugh).

Although the flight attendant job does not require one to be at work all day Monday through Friday, it did not give Angela much time for art making, mainly because the schedule was very irregular and she was only able to know her hours a month ahead of time. Therefore, making plans for art was very challenging. Despite that, she kept maintaining her studio and participating in residencies by using vacation time.

No, because in a way, it felt like juggling two full-time jobs. And I would only know my flight schedule one month to the future. So making any plans or meetings further beyond that was impossible. So it was also like planning was hassle in terms of when to prepare for shows, when to go to studio, when to go to vacation for residencies. I spent my vacation time for going to artist residencies. Making sort of fits. Sort of two separate lives would come together in a very tight schedule.

While she was working full-time, Angela kept steadily making and showing art. She was so active, one hardly notices a gap in her exhibition record from when she had the full-time job. Angela said, “If you see my production and exhibitions, you can't really tell where in my career I had this job. Cause I maintained the level of exhibitions.” For a while, she had been looking for a good excuse to leave the job. Finally, she quit when she had a chance to attend a three-month residency in Korea.

It’s a kind of coincidence...happened at the same time as I went to Korea for the residency there. I actually quit the job because of that. Because I couldn't get time off to do that. I decided "Ok, now is the time. I want to quit." I had been wanting to quit for three years. And then, finally had a really good reason to do so. So I went to Korea in 2014. That's why I quit the job.

**Residency in Korea.** Angela got an opportunity to participate in a three-month residency in Korea that was run by The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary
Art, Korea. She did not have any previous knowledge of the residency and it was her first time being in Korea since she was adopted.

It came to me… I was traveling in Thailand and actually purely vacation…and then I got an email from Danish art foundation that had been contacted by the Korean representative from the program. And they were looking to find one or two Danish artists for residency…The Danish Art Council picked some amount of artists to apply and then Korean residency decided amongst those 10 people.

In the beginning, despite being in her birth country for the first time since her adoption as an infant, Angela took the opportunity just as another residency. She took the residency as “a big opportunity” for her career because it was run by a national museum in Korea. However, now, looking back, Angela values her time in Korea in ways she did not realize at the time. In Korea, she got to meet her future husband, an American artist there, reconnected with her birth family, and got to know a Korean gallery where she had a solo show, years after her residency.

I thought it as another residency. But of course, also an amazing opportunity because it was through Museum of Modern Art in Seoul. That to me was a big opportunity. Like it would have been no matter what country it was…And then, I think only later on…it became important on so many levels like I met my husband and I reconnected to my birth family. I had my first solo exhibition in Korea, a couple of years ago.

The residency subsidized all expenses, such as airfare, accommodations, and studio. The program also provided her a stipend of one million won ($1,200) per month.

Yeah, everything…I don’t know it was a lot to me. And you got one million won [$1,200] a month. That’s…with the prices of a meal. You can go pretty far. It was nice…Exactly, yeah. Like all your expenses are paid, like your living. You only had to buy food and materials.

Moving to New York. After Korea, Angela briefly stayed in Denmark and then headed to New York because she had a solo show there. She was also drawn to New York because she wanted to stay with her boyfriend who she met in Korea. They had just
started dating at that time, and Angela did not have any plans to settle down in New York, or get married to her boyfriend.

I already had a solo exhibition in New York. So I had to go to New York….I did a residency in New York in 2013 [before going to Korea]. And met a curator of a gallery who invited me to a show….It was perfect fit in terms of like continuing seeing my now husband. Because he lives in New York. So it was an opportunity not only to do a show but also to stay in touch with him. And then basically I stayed here after that.

Angela and her boyfriend got married a year later. According to Angela, they loved each other, but one of the reasons they got married unexpectedly had to do with Angela’s immigration status. As she tried to decide whether to apply for an artist visa or Green Card, her husband proposed.

I mean it was romantic because it was love but it was also very much for the reason of me not having to go back and forth. And in terms of visa, I had a meeting with a lawyer. And the amount of work and the price was the same no matter if...it was for O-1 [artist] visa or…Green Card through marriage. So we were just like "let's just get married." It wasn't my idea. It was actually…My husband's idea.

**Changed perception of New York.** Angela had visited New York City twice before she settled there. The first time she went was for a field trip during art school, and the second was for a residency at the International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP). As both visits were temporary and on a short-term basis, Angela had a more “romanticized” view of New York during those times. Long-term living in New York City was a harsher reality. Unlike the previous visit for her residency, which was completely funded, she had to deal with economic hardship in New York that was challenging enough to remind her of her life as a poor student in Denmark.

In 2013, I was here on full scholarship from Danish art foundation. That means everything was paid. Like my housing was paid and the residency was paid. I think you only need extra money for cereal. So, New York is an amazing city but even more amazing when everything was paid for like when you were here in a
privileged way. And it is a very different city to live in when you are not loaded
with money. And I think that realization kind of...for a lot, big part like your
experience of the city changes a lot when everything becomes real. Down to the
penny. I had less money here than I had during my time as a student. Almost at
some point, points in my life in New York, I felt as if I had little money when I
was student. Like having nothing. Really like hustling to be able to support.

Angela has lived with her husband since she moved to New York. They lived a
nomadic existence for their first two years together, which neither of them desired.

I definitely found myself in situations that I never thought I would be in as an
adult. Like so my husband and I kept staying together. Like even before we got
married....Basically, the first two years, we lived in 10 to 15 different places. We
moved around all the time.

She sometimes even felt like she was “homeless.”

We didn't have much like...we had few bags of stuffs. That's it. And we didn't
have a bed. And we slept in back rooms of like shops and in studios. Like
seriously. Felt like homeless person sometimes.

During this period, she had to pursue a very minimal life by selling any unnecessary
things both for financial reasons and to allow ease of movement. Angela called her life in
this period an “ascetic way of living.”

I sold a lot of my stuffs mostly through like second hand clothing shops. But also
things on Craiglist. Just we sold anything that I did not use. So as to not own
anything that wasn't needed. So almost like very...I don't know if it's called ascetic
way of living. You just live with a rug almost.

Angela also drastically curtailed her spending. She recalled that she was down to
spending $12 a week at one point.

You learn your ways like instead of buying the expensive hipster coffee, you go
to a deli and buy a dollar coffee. Like we just learned ways to not spend that much
money. Actually, for a year, I kept a diary of my spending....I was down to like
spending $12 a week at some point...Like days where I wouldn't spend anything
because I had leftovers from the day before or I wouldn't buy any coffee at all. I
wouldn't go over subway to not spend money on subway or I would get someone
to let me in through subway.

She also ate very cheaply.
Eat? I would eat like eggs sandwich or I would boil pasta and just with a little bit of ketchup (laugh). That’s what I am referring to being like when I was a student. Like it almost felt like cheap living. Like student cheap living. You know, like we cooked at home and we would buy cheap things on sale. Like grocery.

As she used to have a full-time job with stable income, Angela described the beginning of her New York life as “…going from one extreme to another.” And she described New York as “the toughest city” she has ever lived in. She also could not legally work due to her visa status. This made her “think creatively about how to survive.”

I think New York is maybe the toughest city I've ever lived in. But also because of personal situation like...before I was accepted for Green Card, I was not allowed to work in New York. So I couldn't apply for jobs because a lot of places, they want...work visa. Also, you are here as a person, not as an artist necessarily but as a human being. You are here on different terms than like local, New York as people…that is just different rules that applies to you. Which means you have to think creatively about how to survive.

In response to a question about whether she saw some promise or expected her situation to be better because she got a Green Card through her marriage, Angela spoke about her “acceptance of not really knowing and being able to see the future.” This acceptance of unpredictability still applies to her current life in New York.

No, I think it is sort of acceptance of not really knowing, of being able to see the future. Just almost living like month...I don't want to say day to day. But month to month, like I still don't have stable income…I don't have a steady job still. I did have a job for a while before having a baby. I did a sort of steady job as an assistant for writer. But otherwise, it's been like small jobs here and there. So, I don't think that there's any promise and still like if I think about future, I am still like, “Oh, my god! How am I gonna do it?”

Angela feels that her home country, Denmark, has one of the best social security systems in the world. In response to the question of why she chose to live in New York,
abandoning possible benefits in Denmark, Angela had a few reasons. Out of those, she stressed her personal tendency to be “adventurous” and face challenges:

Choose to go to a place where you have to struggle this much?...I mean partly because like my husband is American. And partly because I always dreamed of going to New York and stay for a while. In that way, I have always been adventurous and wanting to get out. First like away from my parents’ home and from the island, and then from Copenhagen. So feels like also matter of like just needing to be in a place where there is a little bit higher to the ceiling...but at the same time, you also take the struggles that comes with it. So, yeah. I was thinking of Denmark as very convenient because you have some sort of security. You never like starve to death. That you can easily do in New York (laugh), without anyone noticing.

In addition, Angela considers the New York art scene as a reason for wanting to move to the city, revealing her desire to be a better artist through being challenged by other artists.

Plus, she finds her work a better fit for the New York art scene in comparison to that in Copenhagen.

I was talking with my husband about this the other day. Like if you want to get really good at something, if you want to be good at tennis, you kind of have to play with people who are better than yourself. Like chess. Because otherwise, you wouldn't be improved. And this is not to say that really great artists aren’t coming out of Copenhagen, Denmark. But in a way, maybe also, it is big challenge for me to be here. And I think also in a way that conversation around my work fits the U.S. better than Denmark. Like you don't talk a lot about identity politics in art. It’s much formal matters. So I think I also never found that my work fits Danish audience.

On the other hand, Angela is concerned about her family’s future in New York, especially because she and her husband have a son now. She said she cannot picture herself “staying here and growing old in the city” unless “a miracle” happens.

Constantly we are debating whether we want to stay in New York. If it's worse with struggle. Especially now we have a son. We even consider more what is our opportunities and what else should we do and could we do. And how to do that...I definitely don't see myself staying here and growing old in the city. That is I think, impossible unless you all of sudden like I don't know...a miracle happens and one of us getting into a good gallery, all of sudden start selling stuffs. Or when one of us gets a really well-paid job. But otherwise, I don't see us
here…five years? Like I think I would go…out of here like within next couple of years.

Art Practice

**Overall nature of Angela’s art.** Angela works with sculpture and site-specific installation. She also works with video and photography. She has been using cardboard for many years. Her approach to cardboard has evolved from making sculptures with cardboard pieces to using cardboard boxes as objects themselves, without shape alteration. When she was making sculptures with cardboard, Angela used various methods with the material, from cutting it into pieces, to drawing images on the pieces, to attaching the pieces together. The cardboard sculptures varied from figurative to abstract.

Recently, Angela’s use of cardboard boxes in her artwork has become more conceptual and minimal, as she does not change their shape—so that anyone can recognize the origin of form. However, even though she does not alter the shapes of her boxes Angela has been coloring their surfaces with graphite or paint, and covering them with glittering aluminum foil. In so doing, viewers may feel as if they are looking at strange material, whereas they can still recognize the shape of a cardboard box. Thus, Angela, is now focused on transforming viewers’ perceptions of materiality.

In the first four years of her career, Angela only worked with “used cardboard” because it is regarded as “waste material” and has a “lower value.” Angela believed that by using waste material as the main medium for her artwork she could inspire dialogue about “immigration, women, and social class.” In particular, she believed that she could trigger a discussion with regard to stratification of human beings in society by transforming status of “waste” given to under-valued material into high value as art.
Recently, she also has been “combining cardboards with other material such as ceramics and candles.”

Angela defines her art as “a little bit of mix” and “a little bit of everything.”

…in my work I guess I am aiming to show that things that's less or how least conventional ways of like...that's why I don't think you can narrow them, work down to being just a painting or just a video or it is just performance or it's just a sculpture. It's always a little bit of mix. I think that makes it somewhat problematic to talk about.

She finds this mixed nature of her art to be emblematic of her own atypical background.

Some of my own background being a person of color and new immigrant in the U.S. But also being adopted to a Scandinavian country where everyone else around me is white. Even like my parents are white. I didn't have a genetic mirror when I grew up. So those I think situations of being not totally the rest...also not being white but being Asian in Denmark. Not knowing Korean language and tradition but looking Korean. And being like living in the U.S. but also still have only alien status makes me like half of everything.

**Three major art works.** As with the other participants, in the interest of adding another facet to an understanding of each artist’s work, I asked Angela to select three most representative art works. Angela was not sure which artworks would best represent her art practice. She ended up picking three works she feels “happy about” instead.

*Artwork #1 - Dirty Laundry.* This piece was made in 2015 when Angela returned from Korea. She created an “imaginary flag” with cardboard by painting three colors representing three countries related to her. Angela feels happy about this work because it contains her “three backgrounds” of culture, nationality, and race.

I made this work with a use of cardboards that I assembled on the ground. That idea of flattening of cardboard and using the boxes like that was sort of new to me. and then a big assembled piece on the floor, I painted it with three different colors….And I made this imaginary flag that was painted with blue color from American flag and white color from Danish Flag and light blue color from Korean flag. And in that way, it sort of became this representation of me, my three backgrounds but at the same time also representing that half belonging of
connection to these three countries by leaving out red color from all the flag. Partly because it represents...red is blood and also big part of those flags.

Once the pieces of cardboard were all painted, she took the flag apart and hung the pieces on a clothes line. She wrote her personal stories related to the three countries.

And after the flag was painted or it was done, I disassembled the flag, and hung each piece of cardboard on a clothing line as if it was laundry. And on the flip side of each piece of cardboard, I wrote anecdotes that was related to either the U.S., Korea or Denmark. And it was very personal notes and very like when you confess almost things like dark secrets. So, I called the piece Dirty Laundry… and from one side, it would look like formal, almost color studies and then on the flipped side, there were only texts.

Once the work was finished, Angela “returned” all the pieces to “recycling facilities.”

Such action is very common in her practice. Sometimes, she just throws her work away, and it has simultaneously been a “relief” and “sad” to do so.

And after the display, I folded up the cardboard. And then the piece was returned to like recycling facilities…Due to having moved around a lot, not having like a lot of money, it has not been possible for me to pay for storage and shipping of all my work. So a lot of times, I have chosen to return the work to recycling. And in a few situations that has been either someone who wanted to swap a work or someone who wanted to buy the work but…like maximum five times. All of the rest times I have actually returned work…Sometimes just throw it away…Sometimes it is relief and sometimes it's little bit sad to do.

Artwork #2 - Baleen 52 HZ. In 2013, Angela had a solo show in Winnipeg, Canada while she was working full-time as a flight attendant. In the show, she made gigantic, site-specific installations using cardboard, mirror foil, and glass mirror pieces. These works symbolically illustrated the mix of the trade history of early Canadian indigenous people with European immigrants, Scandinavian traditions kept by local people in the town, and whale hunting history. She researched these three subjects during and after an artist residency that took place two years before the exhibition, in the same
location. After the residency, she came back to the town for a solo show and made an installation based on her research.

I am really happy about this piece because it was such tremendous, big amount of work to make the exhibition... And first of all, there was a lot of planning going into the work because I was working full-time at that time. It was like two different years. I went there for residency and then during that residency I met the director of the place, one of the directors. And that's how the exhibition came about like one and a half year later.

She only had fourteen days to install the exhibition and she made most of the pieces on site by preparing minor parts in advance.

I had 14 days to prepare the exhibition.... The room, the space was a long, rectangular space... with cardboard, I built a body of a whale that was sort of going into the wall. So it didn't have a face. Then there was a tail, sort of standing on its own in the room. And then covering the body of the whale was small hand-cut scales in mirror foil that I glued on one by one until it's totally covered. And then at the end of the room where the body was sort of like touching the wall, that was mirror foil almost like had been perfectly real mirror. It would basically be a body with two tails, because a body was reflected. But the mirror foil was not like perfectly slick.... So it would be like skewed reflection.... And then I lowered light so there was only few spots with green light and white light. So it's like this stack womb of weird monster in the room almost like this weird body of whales. Over human-size.

Angela felt particularly “happy about” this piece for two reasons. One was that she did her research “connected to the location that exhibition took place.” The other is that for the first time, she worked with other people to complete the piece.

I really feel that I have done my research and connected to the location that exhibition took place. And the way I tap into the history of the place and solve it in the piece itself. I am still really happy with it. And besides that, for the first time... I had to ask for help to finish installation because all the scales that was hand-cut... that was something between 10,000 and 12,000 of these scales. I actually had to make them before I left Copenhagen. So I had friends and family coming in to help cut these scales. And being in Winnipeg, I had help from other artists that helped cut and also glue these scales on. And that whole experience of reaching out and being with, not necessarily other artists but just that social act of being together and being visible hands just really like great experience.
**Artwork #3 - Kahler 1:1.** For the last of the three works, Angela chose the piece she feels is “totally different from other pieces.” In this work, she appropriated a cat painting by Carl Kahler, who was commissioned to paint a wealthy woman’s forty pet cats. Angela evaluated the Kahler painting as “kitsch,” and she recreated this painting in the same size as the original by printing images on cheap photocopy paper. In the original painting, the cats are depicted in various colors—from white, brown, or black, to spotted. Angela painted over each cat, making it white. She was interested in the psychology of a woman who could collect that many live animals. The fact that the Kahler painting was actually sold for millions of dollars also intrigued her. By using cheap materials to recreate an expensive painting, Angela tried to use her piece to talk about “value in relation to art.”

I grew up with cats and I always had great love for cats and I am definitely a cat person. Not a dog person. And then I came across this picture of the most expensive cat painting that has ever been sold on auction….And I printed it out…on just like cheap photo copy paper. And hung it on the wall. And then I painted all the cats white…And especially just these cats being white not being white. The original title of the painting was actually coined by this rich lady's husband. And the title was *My Wife's Lovers*, which I think was hilarious (laugh). I named it [the piece] Carl after the artist and one to one like ratio. And the reason why I am still happy about it is also that it has this playfulness to it. And at the same time…talking about privilege in terms of having money and being collecting not just toothbrushes or stickers but you actually collecting cats that you are buying from different places. And they are like moving lives. You can say either like taking care of these cats but also ownership. Owning them and then, the act of making something so valuable, I actually don't remember how much it was sold for but it was like a lot of million dollars and making it into cheap photocopies and also talking about value and relation to art…

**Key aspects of Angela’s art.** Angela approaches her use of cardboard in multifaceted ways, by incorporating formalist, economic, and conceptual considerations.
*Cardboard.* Cardboard is the most frequently used material in Angela’s art practice. She loves the “tactility” of cardboard. More importantly, she started using cardboard because it was “available” for her and “free.”

I was very attracted to the tactility of it. And also…when I went to the art school where I transported the box all the way across the island. It was because it was something that was available, that was free. And I didn't have any money at that time. Not that I do now either (laugh)…and it was easy to work with and to transform it as well. Into something else.

Angela has collected cardboard boxes from various stores.

In the beginning, I would go to places like shops and ask for them. And to some extent, I actually still do that because sometimes I want specific measurement and specific kind of boxes. I would have to go to different stores where they would have them.

*Waste.* Conceptually, Angela references diverse ideas and terms in her use of cardboard as material. Angela said she was influenced by the maintenance art of Mierle Laderman Ukeles³. She attended a lecture by Ukeles and heard about how badly the city maintenance workers are treated. Angela connects this lower social class and people of color to cardboard, and wants to talk about these cultural issues by using cardboard as a material for art.

Some of them are even embarrassed to tell friends or family that they did the work as a garbage man…I heard it at the talk of Mierle Laderman Ukeles…she asked this whole group….”What is the worst thing that people call you when you are out on your rounds?” And then one of the workers came…he said that…maybe 5 o'clock in the morning, you were up doing a dirty job, removing people's waste that is stinky and it's cold outside. You have to get up in the middle of night. So he was emptying a trash and then he sits down to take a rest on a door step. And a woman opened a window and she yelled at him, “Get away from my porch, dirty garbage man something.” That story has stuck with me for many years.

How I think a reality of real life and real people's stories often…people don’t have a voice….I think what I am hoping to do with my work is also…I know I am not

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³ Mierle Laderman Ukeles is an artist who is well-known for her feminist and service-oriented artwork, which relates the idea of process in conceptual art to domestic and civic maintenance. (Finkelpearl, 2013).
giving voice to a specific group of people necessarily but at least I am trying to
open up for like how women are treated, how people of color are treated, how
people of lower social class are treated through the work of cardboards.

Angela finds that cardboard can portray transnational identity. Also, to her, cardboard has
“no limits,” it can cross any borders and is used by different classes and groups of people.

Definitely, I also see it in the cardboard…you would see the boxes that on the
street are…and it will say it's made in Thailand or it's made in China. It's made
somewhere else. So that's this whole exoticism about the cardboard as well. It's
actually coming from another country, and it's been shipped across the water
either by plane or by boat. It's been on a journey. And that's cardboard that has no
limits. It kind of crosses borders all the time. And it is used by everyone. It is used
by people with low income where they sleep on the cardboard at night as a home
or they build a home with it. And it is used by middle class because all the things
you can consume, we carry things and order things on Amazon. And rich people
use cardboard whether they are aware or not. Even when they’re not touching it.
They are still part of...adding to the pile of cardboard, right? In terms of their
Prada shoes coming in cardboard boxes from somewhere.

Career History

In this section, various aspects of Angela’s artistic career are described—from her
own career path in the U.S, to her perspective on the idea of living off of her art, to her
logistics for art making.

Artistic career in the U.S. As mentioned previously, Angela has participated in
several major residency/fellowship programs in New York, such as the ISCP
(International Studio and Curatorial Program), AIM (Artist in the Marketplace) at The
Bronx Museum of the Arts, and a mentorship program for immigrant artists at NYFA
(New York Foundation for the Arts). She also participated in a residency program at
Skowhegan. In the case of the NYFA mentorship program, it was beneficial for Angela to
meet other artists who have the same “immigrant” status.

NYFA program is aimed for people with immigrant backgrounds. And I think it
was interesting to both admit you are part of that group or…to talk with other
artists in same situation. Because that is a big difference between being actually American in New York and being foreigner in New York…pluses and minuses.

In the case of the AIM program, Angela found the experience “extremely helpful” because she was able to gain diverse knowledge that helped her to “professionalize” her artist image and to promote herself. More importantly, Angela was able to form new relationships with other artists in New York, which had not been easy for her up to that point. This was also significant because Angela did not have any affiliation with the artist community in New York through school alumni, work, or friends.

The AIM program at Bronx was really helpful in the way that it is really dedicated to introducing artists to ways of becoming more independent and turning weakness to strengths professionally…work on artist statement and PR and art and law, professionalizing your, like, image…it was closely related to PR, inviting, public relations but also more like based on social media and presentation of yourself…having those new relations and conversations and I mean a lot of people I am still in contact with. That is I think a key because…New York is tough…it's social relation is a tough city…if you have gone to school here or if you are an American or if you have other friends living here or if you have a job here, if you have co-workers or if you teach, maybe. If you don't have any of the above, it is different, I think. You have to create those connections in other ways.

**Making a living from art.** When I asked Angela whether she believes in the idea of being able to live off making art, she answered she believes in it and does not deny its possibility. However, she also talked about the necessity of side jobs, even for artists who sell their art—unless they work with “big blue chip galleries.” She called the possibility of working with such galleries “winning the lottery.”

I know some people do. So, I know it is a reality that is possible…even people who sell like do not necessarily earn enough to live on it. So they have a teaching job. They have other kind of jobs. So I do believe in it. But it is like a top one percent of artists who get to do that. They are all with big blue chip galleries. And to be picked for one of those, it is more like winning the lottery. So the chances are slim.
In response to a question about what she would do if some commercial galleries approached her to request that she make work that would be sellable, she said she would consider it, “depending on what kind of work.” Making work for sale is a plausible option for Angela as long as the income from that job would give her more “free time to do other stuff.”

I would definitely consider it depending on what kind of work it was…I realize if you find a way, that can make you great income. I almost say I would take the opportunity and I would find ways around to give myself time to do other things. Maybe I would have assistants to do the other kind of job.

Angela talked about the case of the Swiss band Fever Ray, who sold their song for a TV commercial. The money that they earned from having their song in the commercial was enough to enable them to solely concentrate on music for two years.

They sold one of the songs to Samsung to use for a Bravia commercial…flat screens. And they said like “the amount of money we [Fever Ray] got from just selling a song made us be able to not have other jobs for two years.” And I think that's a way of thinking about...if someone comes in and says “we would like to sell your ceramics and we only want that kind of ceramics, can you please make those? Because we can sell them.” I would say “sure thing.” And then I would find a way to mass produce or have someone produce for me. So I could earn money and I would be free with time to do other stuffs.

In weighing the potential of making work specifically for sales, Angela also considered the possibility that working with a very commercially minded gallery could jeopardize her image as an artist. Angela said she would check the reputation of the gallery and the types of work they might want from her. Even if it sold well, she would not make an artwork she could not accept as part of her art practice, because she cares about artistic “integrity and reputation.” On the other hand, she found it “difficult to say exactly where the limit is.” Angela also finds herself to be “softer” about compromising than when she was younger, and simultaneously, she feels that the distinction between “what you want to do” and “what you don’t want to do” is clearer.
And also, in terms of like integrity and reputation, of course, I care about that…When I was younger, I would be like "no" (laugh)….You got little softer with years. And at the same time, you also toughen up in terms of what you want to do and what you don't want to do.

**Logistics for art making.**

**Inspiration-how to begin art.** In terms of ways to begin art making, Angela gets inspiration from the places where she exhibits or stays for artist residencies, and their histories, along with stories that interest her. She also finds ideas in the physical spaces where she exhibits. Often, she revisits her old works, finding previous ideas that did not quite come to fruition, and continues working on those.

Sometimes, it comes from location like in the show in Winnipeg. Specific experience being in that city and history of that city…and then it can be the physical space of the exhibition space. Like how does it look like? Does it have something that is interesting to play up against? Or explore? And sometimes it can be the material and do I sort of want to use this material?….Sometimes, it's like a story that I am interested in. Like the story of that painting. And sometimes…I often revisit my own works…throughout my making, what I have done previously…”huh, I forgot that I also wanted to do this with the material.” So, sometimes, inspiration actually comes from my own works.

**Minimum conditions for art making.** Although at the time of the interviews Angela had a studio provided by her three-month residency, she sees herself as “very adaptable.” She is willing to take any kind of condition as “a challenge to make it work.”

I haven't had a studio for a long time. So I made my work at home or I would make it on the spot. Like in the gallery, on location. Artists are very adaptable. At least I am. So in that way, I think, you can give me a condition and I will take it upon me as a challenge to make it work.

However, such a challenge has to allow her to expand her artistic experimentation. For Angela, a “condition” would be good if it:

…is something I see some kind of benefit in the way it makes work possible that I have been thinking about doing. Or it is interesting because it's something that allows me to do something I haven't tried before…or because it is a place that is
something new that I see as a great stepping stone or something that adds to my CV.

When asked where her comfort zone is in terms of making art, Angela could not answer definitively because she sees the concept of a comfort zone as a “fictional proposition.” The minimum conditions for art making is vague to her. Angela is willing to try things she hasn’t done before as long as it makes sense with her concept of art practice, or interests her and benefits her career, or allows her to associate with important art professionals.

I don't know exactly how I can answer that….Because it's like fictional proposition. And I don't know what I would say yes or no to unless I know the conditions. Like minimum, what would be the minimum? Like can you stand on the street and do something?….I would do it if it makes sense one way or the other. Yeah, I can give you an example. If I had an idea that I have been wanting to do for a long time, and someone ask me, “will you make this into performance for the exhibition?” I would be…even though it has to take place in dump yard and a lot of people would come see it, but if I could realize that idea as part of exhibition…I would say yes. If someone says, one of the big galleries, let's say Marian Goodman that we talked about previously. If she asks me, “will you stay on the street and do this?” I would say yes because I'd like to be associated with that gallery. If some airport or church, like places that I haven't work with before, and they ask me to do something, I would be interested, too, because I have been interested in working in a space that I haven't connected to before. And see what that challenges. I would take that challenge. Yeah.

**Work on site as installation artist.** As mentioned previously and like Jun, as an installation artist Angela has in many cases had to produce her artwork and installations on site. And sometimes, due to lack of time and access to the space before a show, she has to figure out how she will install her work in advance, relying on photos or sketches of the space.

I think I have a good sense of thinking of space. And putting myself almost in the space and imagining what would work and what would not work in terms of colors, lights and sizes and shapes….a lot of times, yes, I haven't necessarily been in the space or had possibility of having frequent access to a space before showing
work there. And but I do my research and I will either have images or at least measures of the space.

Angela is confident in her ability and sense of imagining space, but she also admitted that unexpected things always happen and she has to deal with adjustments during the process. She tries to be “adaptable” and “open-minded” to embrace such unexpected elements as “strengths,” rather than “trouble.”

I think as an artist, installation artist also, you have to be open throughout the whole process from the beginning to the end because you can have one plan and all of sudden like there is bump on the wall and there is another color of floor or something unexpected or the light switches sitting differently from what you thought...I can't tell for all artists, but at least I feel like I am very good at adjusting to space and working with what is there. Hopefully trying to transform into like something...becomes strengths instead of something that is just trouble...you just have to be very adaptable. And also, I think that's maybe part of why artists are considered more open-minded sometimes.

*Changes in style of art.* Angela acknowledged that since she started living in the U.S., her work has changed. She has used cardboard more due to its “availability” and “accessibility.”

I mean I think my moving to the U.S. like really sort of set up like more like third country. Activated like my life being an immigrant...And also my focus on use of cardboard came stronger because it was available material that like it was accessible in the streets.

Angela sees some other changes in her art practice as well. While her older pieces were more “detailed” or “massive,” using a variety of materials, in the past few years her work has been more “minimal.” She identifies two reasons for this change. One is financial hardship that does not allow her enough space for large work, limits her budget to buy materials, and cuts short her time for collecting materials. The other reason for the change in her work is the difficulty of doing the labor-intensive work she used to do, as it has become more physically challenging.
It has gone from very detailed and very either massive or holding a lot of different materials and components to become more minimal… it's related to location and life in the way that like a lot of different materials, you need a lot of space or you need a lot of money or you need a lot of time to collect it. Like all of that. And that's not situation that has been currently in my life… I move around a lot… my finances have been very low… It has not been practical to do things in the way that I was working with before. And also, some of my previous pieces… it's been very tough physically to make them, to my body… I had to go to physical therapist or chiropractor to loosen up shoulders that was stuck because I have been sitting in a same position for long… I have to reconsider how I spend my time and my body…

**Professional opportunities and administrative effort.** In regard to identifying career opportunities, Angela systematically looks for exhibitions, grants and residencies and applies for them. She has “lists and files of deadlines” on her computer that are organized “month by month.” As long as an opportunity seems feasible, Angela applies for it, even if it is not in New York.

I would see it as a part of my job to send out applications for either open calls, grants, residencies… I mean I would do that frequently. If I had any time, I would sort of be in the computer and I have lists and files of deadlines and month by month almost… not only New York.

As mentioned previously, Angela emphasized networking and personal connections as being important to finding opportunities in her career. For some opportunities, the first step is “asking.”

Some of the opportunities have come through almost coincidence. Being in a right place and right time or also sometimes just like ask. If you don't ask, nothing happens. Like if you ask, the worst thing that can happen is you get “No.” But sometimes people do say “Yes.”

At one point, Angela got a show opportunity by building a relationship over a period of time. Despite getting no immediate benefit from the relationship, she kept in contact with staff members at Field Project, a gallery located in Chelsea. Years later, she asked them if
they were interested in a proposal she had submitted, and Angela ended up curating a
show there.

…I got in contact with various people. One of the places was Field Project. And
nothing happened at that time. But then…When I was here for a residency and
then I contacted them again and asked, “Hey, is it possible to do something?” And
yeah…it was. And I think a lot of the opportunities have come…more like personal
connections that I've already established and then it is me…like asking more
directly, “Could I do something here? Do you want to do something?”…in like
contacting. Nurturing people that you met maybe, years later, you keep in contact
and you started conversation like something can come…from that.

Depending on the “circumstances,” Angela has put different amounts of effort into art
making and administrative work for her artistic career.

I mean I kind of have to say. It goes a little bit up and down depending on
circumstances. Like right now I have a studio so I am spending more time making
and doing things in the studio. Whereas like when I don't have a studio, well then,
most of my time goes to administrative side. So I would say that in those periods,
it is like 80%, 85% writing, Emails, correspondences, applications. And yeah,
15% is maybe art making if there is a show that I have to do something for.

*Expenses for art making, artist fees, and exhibition fees.* Angela has been
“fortunate” to get outside funding to realize her projects. Moreover, she is adaptable; she
takes a given amount of money and finds ways to make the budget work. In addition, she
always tries to save the “artist fee” for herself, no matter how small the whole production
budget is.

A lot of times, I have been fortunate to get funding or partial funding in terms of
budget I had in mind. And depending on money that I have to spend, I adapt to
that. And adapt the work to like how much I have to spend, how much is possible.
And within that budget, I always try to work with having artist fee also. So no
matter how small, there is always like part of…the money. I take out as a fee for
me.

Angela compared the situation of artist fees in three different cities where she has
resided: New York, Denmark, and Seoul. She considers Denmark the best for artist fees
and New York the worst.
I think New York is probably the worst. And then Denmark is pretty…good. And it is expected. That has been a lot of push from artists also that artist work should be considered work [labor]. I don't know exactly about Korea, but my experience in Korea was actually OK. At least once the gallery that I have been working with has been really good at taking it into consideration.

Angela elaborated about artist fees in Denmark.

Artist fee? Yeah, in Denmark, when you are applying for funding, you can take out, in the amount of money that you applied for, you can take out certain amount for artist fee, actually. It is expected to put it into your budget.

The actual amount of funding is always smaller than what she applies for, and even if she leaves an artist fee for herself, it usually goes into the production costs, as oftentimes the project requires extra money.

…most time you don't get as much as you applied for, so you have to adjust your own numbers. And then the one that most often gets lower quickly is your own artist fee because you want so much to realize the project that you would rather buy the materials, and make it, have it realized in a specific way than having extra money for yourself.

Angela also talked about an “exhibition fee” which is given to artists in Denmark who exhibit at nonprofit institutions. Depending on the price of work, artists receive around one to two percent of that price as an exhibition fee. This is not the case in commercial galleries, though. In the case of New York, Angela hasn’t received any artist or exhibition fees.

I mean I haven't had a lot of experience with galleries per se. A lot of places they don't give you anything but space. You either have to pay for everything like transportation, production, materials, your time. There is no artist fee. There is no exhibition fee. Like basically, there is nothing. And you have to pick it up for yourself. You have to install it yourself. I think New York is probably the worst because people are so eager to get to show. There is always another great artist they can ask.

*Monthly spending.* With regard to monthly spending, Angela was not sure about the exact amount of her expenses. As primary caregiver of her one-year-old son, she
currently does not have a full-time job. As she does not have a steady source of income, her husband, who works at Lego Artist Studio as a part-time employee, often covers more of their monthly living expenses. However, Angela has tried to pay her half of their expenses whenever she has some money that either comes from savings or other sources. In terms of art making, she has been able to independently manage her art practice by lowering the cost of materials and receiving grants, and via an artist honorarium that is given to her when she has shows in Denmark.

I don't know the percentage... Greg has paid more of rent for periods of time and but also for a lot of time, I have paid for the most part I want to say half of our expenses. Either through savings or through other incomes... not big amount goes to my practice because also part of my job is to apply for funding for different exhibitions and living grants. Not only production but also grants. I have been lucky to get a lot of those, which also has allowed me to do these exhibitions that I do. Out of that money, I have also been able to take fees for myself... But also I keep the expenses somewhat down because I work with materials... not the most expensive materials to work with.

Angela has tried to earn money through personal means and by using a loophole in the Danish governmental support system.

I don't earn money... I got Christmas present from my mother-in-law, which was money. And then that money would cover different things or I sold a couple of pieces through small places in Denmark. And that covers something else. I actually also have been lucky to get child support, maternity support from Denmark... They don't know I am here (laugh). Don't want to get caught... I guess I am sort of like ghost in some way, finding my ways.

Angela was participating in an artist residency at the Nars Foundation in Brooklyn while two of our interview sessions were conducted. The cost of the residency was fully covered through a grant from the Danish Art Council. In conjunction with that, Angela acknowledged how the support from the Danish government has played a “key” role in helping her art practice, as well as in supporting her life in New York.
No it [residency] is not subsidized. I don't know. [I am] one of the few artists actually paying full price of it. And it's only because I got funding from Danish Art Council. So in many ways...I wouldn't have been able to arrive New York without Danish government (laugh)...they had funded my projects, my residencies...a key to where I am now. And also key to my survival.

**Daily/weekly schedule.** Angela had a show in Denmark at the end of 2017, which required an unusually large block of time for art making, and she is now in the middle of a three-month residency in Brooklyn. In addition, since her baby was born, she has not had a schedule that can be called “routine.” Angela discussed her daily and weekly schedule that has been in place since the beginning of 2018. She now has “two full days” in the studio and spends “three hours” at a ceramic studio “once or twice a week.” Sometimes, when her husband comes home from work, she goes out to “socialize,” attending gallery openings. Angela attributed time for herself to her husband’s generosity.

And Greg is working more...full-time. He is really generous with his time and working around my schedule. So we managed to do it in a way so I have two full days here in the studio. I have Thursdays and Saturdays that I go to the studio where I can work without the baby...like 10 to 7 or 8, usually. And then every once or twice a week, I get to go to ceramic place to do ceramics for three hours every time. And then for the rest of time I would be with the baby...And then increasingly, since I am breastfeeding less...when Greg comes from work sometimes I head out to either like opening or to socialize to see someone or to do grocery shopping like do things without baby.

Regardless of her location, Angela works on things related to her art.

I also work on a computer. I do like work on applications or answering emails. Or administrative tasks. Basically, yeah, I do work all the time.

For both Angela and her husband, the best time to work is at night when their son has gone to sleep. However, this habit has caused “sleep deprivation.”

Yeah, we have a problem of like trying to do as much as possible and I think for the both of us, we work best at night unfortunately...We really have hard time getting to bed before 12. So, usually, we sit up to one or two o’clock and working
which is not very good for sleep. So I think both of us has sleep deprivation for like 10 months now (laugh).

Although Angela has to take care of her son during the day, she tries to make those hours more efficient by doing things related to art, such as visiting museum and gallery shows with her son. Angela sometimes takes her son to her studio, especially when studio visits from curators and gallery representatives are scheduled on days other than her “full two days” without the baby. So far, having studio visits with her son has not caused any problems, as visitors understand her situation very well, and her son tends to be “calm” and “not…very loud.” However, when it comes to making art while her son is around, it is “not possible to make a lot of work.”

But in terms of getting stuff done, no. I almost want to say, it's not possible to make a lot of work when he is around. If I get him to nap, I maybe have like a window of half an hour, 45 minutes where I can do something. And it can't be noisy. It can't be smelly. It can't be something that is too much on the floor because he will get into it. So there’s definitely limits when he is around.

Nonetheless, Angela doesn’t see her time with her son in the studio as unproductive because at least she can think about “ideas” and “possibilities” related to her work and that is “helpful.”

…just like being surrounded by your work…you can think about possibilities and that connects to the work. Just like looking at it. And you think "oh I can do this." I have definitely like gotten so many ideas of things that I would like to do. While being here. So I think even being here without doing much is helpful.

Being a mother while also being an artist affects Angela psychologically and practically. Also, in terms of the logistics of her art making, Angela has become more sensitive to time and pre-planning to make sure things can be done in the limited hours that she has.

I think also on a practical level, it forces you to...be very focused about what you can do and what's not possible in that amount of time you have. And also, you prepare…you have to think “ok, I am going to studio next Thursday...do I have materials to work with?” So some of the time in between, I order materials online.
So I make sure that is there when I get there. Just like you are adding another level of planning to your life.

**Basic elements for art making (space/material/time) and Angela’s additional elements.** When I asked Angela how she viewed the three elements of art creation that are the focus of this study—space, material, and time—she acknowledged that they are necessary for art making, but she thinks of herself as “free” from the constraints of those factors. In addition to these three elements, Angela, like Jun, cited “dialogue” as another necessary element for art making.

**Space.** Angela has gotten very used to working without a permanent studio space. As she applies for residencies or finds ways to create work in someone else’s space or in an exhibition site, Angela has made do with the resources at her disposal in any given circumstance.

And in term of space? I don't necessarily need a space. I mean for a long time, I haven't had a studio. I work around it. I applied for residency. I planned an exhibition based on preparing either some of them from home or I can do it on the spot.

**Material.** Angela is very familiar with working with “found materials,” such as free materials like cardboard. When it comes to typical art materials such as paint, she tries to minimize spending her own money by getting donations from other artists or from organizations such as Materials for the Arts⁴.

**Time.** With current family demands, Angela hasn’t had much time for art, but she thinks such limitations lead her to freedom with time, as she is challenged to find creative ways to work with limited hours.

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⁴ Materials for the Arts is a recycling center where companies and individuals can donate unnecessary supplies to nonprofit organizations and public schools. It is located in Long Island City, NY.
Those are important. But in a way, I've also set myself a little bit free from that. To the extent that I am working, I can work the materials...without it necessarily cost me that much, if I choose to. And I mean cardboard is free. I can work with found materials...But the time was...I just didn't have as much time for art. But it did allow me some freedom in terms of time.

Angela’s time-management has been very strict. She recalled the period during which she had the full-time flight attendant job as “two full-time jobs.” Even when she was off from her airline job, she was busy with art making.

No, you are just very busy. You have two full-time jobs… Uh-huh. I had my money job that was full-time and I had my art work that was full-time. So, I just work all the time. I didn't see any friends (laugh). That was a choice.

**Dialogue.** In addition to the elements of space, material, and time, Angela added “dialogue” as an important element for making art.

I actually think to me, I really need dialogue. I think that's one of the reasons I like residencies, because through the conversations you have either with the other residents or with studio visitors. A lot of thought process around your work is challenged to go to new places you didn't think of. So I think actually dialogue about your work is very important in terms of developing your work, not so much making it but developing it…like no man is an island.

Since her husband is an artist as well, Angela also finds herself dependent on him to help her through issues related to her art, and to talk to her about her art practice.

I think lately like past few years, like my husband has helped me more and more. And I sort of depend on his assistance. I count on his opinions a lot of times, in terms of talking with him about the work or making decisions and what to do and I mean in the end, I do make decision myself but I really enjoy that we can have a conversation about it in the process.

**Current concern and struggles.** Angela identified “time management” and financial instability as her current concerns. One of her main sources of income—her maternity leave from the Danish Government—will soon end. Yet she always plans ahead and she has savings from previous part-time jobs and exhibition fees. More
importantly, she fully comprehends that a financial issue is “always present.” In this light, time management becomes a larger concern.

My biggest struggle right now is time management in terms of having a baby and making art. And then, parallel to that, I would say...money situation is also coming up because my maternity leave has come to an end. So I don't have any income anymore. A source of income. But then...I had illustration job that paid really well. I saved that money for later. I have had funding from different exhibitions where I also saved some of money. So I always thinking of few steps ahead. So, right now. I think money and finances are always present. But they are not urgent right now. I really like working on the time to trying to make most out of every minute.

**Summary of Angela**

There are several key findings from Angela’s data that relate to the research questions. Angela is originally from Denmark, which is famous for its very strong social welfare system. Indeed, the Danish government has given a considerable amount of support to Angela, both in her life and in her art practice. However, a governmental subsidy was not enough for her to make a decent living, or to have a sufficient quality of life. Therefore, she had to work at various jobs from very young age. She was very passionate about art and consistently made work. She did not cease her artistic career even when she had a full-time job as a flight attendant. She has received various grants and fellowships that require administrative efforts for the application process. These two experiences manifest Angela’s skills in time-management and administration. Since she moved to the U.S., although she has faced extremely poor conditions of living, she has steadily maintained her career by being able to work flexibly in any given condition.

Further, Angela’s case shows several key findings related to the three basic elements for art making that are the focus of the dissertation’s research question.
**Space.** Angela approaches the concept of space without restriction. Although she enjoys having a studio space whenever she is awarded fellowships, her artistic attitude does not involve an obsession with having permanent studio space. Rather, since she is adaptable to conditions she cannot control, she just makes artwork she can create in given environments, which include her home. In some cases, she works on the site of an exhibition, and in so doing, she has been able to create massive artworks and installations, even without a permanent studio. In terms of living space, right after she moved to New York, Angela involuntarily lived a nomadic lifestyle—currently, she lives in a rented apartment in Long Island City, New York.

**Material.** With regard to material, Angela values the accessibility of the material first, but beyond the idea of availability, she analyzes the context and social meaning of the material in order to make use of its conceptual qualities. Angela has put a lot of effort into applying for artist grants, which is sometimes her main job at home. She has received many grants that she has been able to use for the production of her artwork, including purchasing materials to make the work.

**Time.** Angela values time even more since she became a mother. However, as previously mentioned, she has been an efficient manager of time ever since she had a full-time job. Currently, although she goes to her studio for only two full days a week, she is able to utilize extra days for studio visits by taking her son with her.

Other than our discussion of those three elements, Angela made many interesting points about the characteristics of the lives of artists. She spoke about the dualistic mind of the artist, which must split focus between integrity and commercial success. She also referred to the “acceptance of not really knowing and being able to see the future.” As
these points are similarly found in the data of other participants, more in-depth discussion of them will be conducted in the Chapter V, in a comparison of the four participants’ points of view.

Participant # 3: Greg

Overview

Greg is 39 years old. He was born in Los Alamos, New Mexico. He is married to Angela, who is also a participant in the dissertation study. As mentioned previously, Greg and Angela have a one-year-old son.

Greg grew up with, in his words, a “poor” single mother. He moved frequently while growing up as his mother pursued work opportunities to support the family. His first exposure to the art world was at gallery openings in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where his mother took Greg and his siblings to have “fancy food” for free. Greg went to the University of California, Long Beach for his undergraduate studies. When he was about to graduate with a degree in Spanish, his teenage brother committed suicide, which deeply affected Greg’s perspective on the meaning of life. As a result, he chose to switch majors in college to study art, a pursuit he had enjoyed from his early childhood but had never considered seriously as an academic degree or career. Greg stayed at UC Long Beach for another four years in order to receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. He then applied to MFA programs and although he put a lot of effort into his applications to prestigious art schools—even touring all the schools he dreamed of—he was not accepted to any of them and ended up going to a three-year MFA program at the University of Massachusetts. This was beneficial to him in terms of the longer duration of the program (three years instead of the more typical two years for an MFA degree), the low cost of
tuition, and teaching opportunities. However, his school was not helpful for networking to build a career in the art world.

Right after graduation, Greg moved to New York City, driving a car there filled with all of his belongings. Greg recalls that his early period in New York was very “tough” and unpleasant—although he was fortunate to secure a studio workspace, he lived in the backseat of his friend’s van for a few months due to financial constraints. He then lived in his studio for a while. However, Greg was eventually evicted since living in the studio was against the landlord’s rules. Since he has been in New York City, he has always kept a studio even when he did not have a place to sleep.

To make a living, Greg has worked at several low-paying, part-time jobs such as being a busboy at a restaurant, working at a scene shop, and working as an assistant for, according to Greg, an “exploitive” artist who was very reluctant to reward his assistants’ labor. With the artist assistant job, Greg voluntarily offered to work for the artist for an hourly wage of five dollars with the expectation of learning more about the field and gaining networking opportunities. At the time, Greg had little confidence in his ability to get grants, exhibitions, and jobs through the official application process. Therefore, he tried to gain these professional opportunities through connections with other artists.

Greg was eventually hired for an undergraduate teaching job at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and taught there for four semesters. However, due to a change of school employment policy, he was fired while he was in Korea for an exchange teaching job for which he had volunteered. He currently works as a production designer for a Lego sculpture artist.
In his art practice, Greg works with diverse media such as painting, sculpture and installation. He is very interested in exploring and experimenting with different materials, which often leads him to create new bodies of work. Most of his works are very small, and easy to carry. They are often gathered together to make a larger installation in a modular system. From his early life, Greg became used to packing and unpacking his things as his family moved from place to place. As a result, he is very sensitive about the sizes of objects he works with. He has been represented by one gallery and his artwork sold out at a pop-up gallery. However, both of these opportunities did not last long and he never got to the point where he could solely support himself through the sales of his artwork.

The interview took place over four different sessions at Greg’s apartment. Each session took from an hour and a half to two hours.

Life History

Childhood. Growing up in New Mexico, Greg spent a lot of time making art, although he did not consider it to be a “safe bet” as a possible career. Greg thinks his parents were quite supportive, as they thought he “should do whatever he feels like doing.” And they were happy as long as what Greg was doing did not, in Greg’s word, “annoy” them. Drawing is one such activity. However, as Greg remembers, they “didn’t really know anything about it.”

Greg’s parents got divorced when he was in second grade. His father “made decent money,” but Greg was living with his mother who “grew up very poor.” Therefore, Greg was raised experiencing a “tremendous amount of anxiety about money.” He recalls that his family was always wearing old clothes and often didn’t have
any food in the refrigerator. His mother was especially “nervous about being able to pay bills.”

His family lived in Los Alamos, New Mexico, where there was a heavy Latino population; Greg’s impression was that “there was an incredible amount of racism” in the town. Greg’s mother was an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher who was originally a history teacher. According to Greg, his mother dealt with students who “didn’t know how to speak English”—many were recent arrivals from Mexico. Although she was “a very smart woman” with a master’s degree, in her workplace she wasn’t good at “doing things politically” so she did not advance much in her job position. Greg’s father was a “physicist” and a sort of elite, who went to prestigious schools such as Cal Tech, Princeton, and Stanford for his bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees. Greg has an older stepsister who is half Mexican. His sister was born during his mother’s first marriage to a son of the governor of the Yucatan in Mexico. Greg had a younger brother who shared the same biological parents. As mentioned previously, his brother committed suicide when Greg was in college.

**College.** At the University of California, Long Beach, Greg took several basic art classes but, as he puts it, “ended up majoring in Spanish partially because it allowed me to travel.” According to Greg, he wasn’t fully sure what he “was gonna do with” his degree in Spanish “but it seemed like [it would be] useful.” The suicide of Greg’s brother, a few months before Greg was to complete his bachelor’s degree, raised a lot of questions for Greg about the meaning of life, and he decided, “if [he] was on this earth for one time, I need to do something more interesting to me than Spanish.” So he stayed in school for another four years to get an art degree.
**First encounter with the art world.** Greg’s first experience of the art world came in Sante Fe. He attributes his early interest in art to the influence of his mother, as they frequently attended openings at galleries together. However, Greg said, “it was funny cause one of the reasons we went was galleries served free meals at the openings.” It was a way for Greg’s family to “get fat.” In Santa Fe, as Greg recalls, it seemed like there were “four hundred galleries in that small town.” The galleries prepared “fancy food,” such as shrimp, for the gallery goers. His mother didn’t know much about art, but she was interested in culture and history and loved to go to places where she could learn something new. In fact, Greg’s mother tried to give her children various learning experiences, as she took them to watch foreign films, to science museums, and to ranches. When Greg decided to major in art in undergraduate school, he approached the idea of becoming an artist in terms of what type of human being he wanted to be, and how he could spend time more meaningfully. He didn’t give much serious consideration to how he could make a living as an artist.

**Graduate school.** After college, Greg moved to upstate New York and started living with his girlfriend at that time. During this time, he was putting a lot of effort into his applications for graduate schools, and visiting his top schools in person. Greg said he was a bit “cocky,” as he thought he could get into all of these schools. However, he “didn’t get into pretty much any of them,” and this was a “little disappointing” to him. He ended up studying studio art in an MFA program at the University of Massachusetts (UMass), which “turned out to be great” for him “because it was three-year program.” He was still processing his brother’s death, so he liked the fact that the MFA at UMass was three years instead of two. Plus, tuition was very cheap, as low as $1,500 per semester,
and even that amount was covered by a stipend he was able to get though his teaching job at the school. UMass also allowed grad students to teach “foundation” courses (introductory art courses) to undergraduates. So he taught printmaking and drawing courses.

**Moving to New York.** Greg moved to New York right after he graduated. He had a friend from college who had completed the MFA program at Yale University and had moved to New York before Greg, and had a studio there. Greg recalled the time he relocated to New York as the following:

I was so sure I was gonna make it work…So I came down here with a car filled with all of my stuff. That was a rainy night. I remember being just terrified coming to the city. Because totally overwhelming…all the things that I had to deal with. But I came over and stayed with a friend. He had a minivan and we took out the back seats. And that was my home. I lived in this guy's minivan for a couple of months during summer until one day, I was parked at McCarren Park in Williamsburg. And I actually had a girl I was dating and staying with me (laugh) in the van. And it was the summer time and fucking hot. It was miserable. But we were laid in the back and in my fucking underwear cause I was sweating. And this dude came up looking into the window, that was tinted…Puerto Rican looking guy and a couple of other guys go literally two cars down and looking into a car and bust out the window and take out a radio while we were sitting there. So that kind of freaked me out a little bit. It is funny. Now I don't know if I would be as freaked out...but at that time, I was like terrified. Oh, my god. So close to being murdered [or] something.

After that, Greg rented a partitioned studio space, similar to one used by his friend in the same location. Although the space did not allow live-in artists, Greg stayed there. His space was in a passageway, which another tenant, a film producer, needed to pass through in order to get into his own studio space. Greg built an eight-foot long table with three floor-length wooden sides so that he could sleep underneath it without other tenant artists noticing. Greg called this table “my house.” Since he was “not a morning person,” he sometimes slept until the film producer came. In that case, Greg “quietly got out.” He
opened the door and shut it, pretending he had just arrived, and walked in saying, “ah, good morning.” Greg assumed the film producer might have known about his illegal inhabitance, but he kept maintaining “that whole fakeness.” However, in the end, the owner found out and evicted Greg.

**Art-related and other jobs.** Greg chose to live and work as an artist in New York City mainly based on his friend’s assurance that there were many available jobs. However, not all of them were what Greg considered “quality” jobs. As Greg recalls, “And my friend Shane said that you can always find work in New York that might be shitty. He was definitely right about that” (laugh). Greg’s first job in New York was as “a busboy at a Turkish restaurant.” According to Greg, among other busboys in the restaurant he was the only non-Hispanic, “legal person.”

Clean the tables. So, yeah, I thought maybe I can kind of work up to a waiter cause waiters kind of make decent money but all the waiters were Turkish and they really didn't have any intention of moving other people up. So I think [I was] the only busboy that wasn't Hispanic and I was the only legal person there. Everybody was like amazed that I was an actual citizen. "What the fuck are you doing here?" It was like the financial crisis hit. It was a rough time. I had a friend just graduated law school and he was like, "I can't find any work at all.”

While he was working at the restaurant, Greg started a job at a scene shop in New Jersey, which required a long commute from Brooklyn. It wasn’t easy for him to manage both jobs.

I went down and I worked there cause they start early and end early. But since it was just starting, I had rent to pay. I couldn't quit the Turkish job. I didn't feel comfortable just quitting the other job right away. I also didn't know if they would totally keep me. So one night, early on, I had already been signed up for the stupid shift on Sunday night and they didn't let me out until two or three in the morning. And I had to wake up at five to go to New Jersey and work with power tools like cutting wood. And I was so tired that I was literally like falling asleep. So the guy saw me cause I was doing push-ups—"Why are you doing push-ups?" I am just like, "I am really tired and I am just trying to keep blood flowing." And
then when I went home that night they were just like "don't come in tomorrow." So that killed that job.

Greg initially wanted to get some part-time jobs teaching art. So he applied for teaching jobs and even some “unpaid afterschool program to just get an experience.” However, he didn’t get any of these positions and thus had low confidence in his job application skills. Therefore, he decided to find opportunities through networking connections with people. He believed that he could show his true ability and competency to others on site rather than through a resume or application.

I thought I would be going into teaching. My mom was a teacher and I like teaching. So I applied for some teaching jobs, even some of these like unpaid afterschool program things to just get experience. To tell the truth, with applications, I had terrible luck so…I haven't gotten pretty much of anything in my life through applications. So you know, I started working and trying to meet people… There was a gallery nearby and an artist was working there and I offered to work for him for $5 an hour….I got a job in a carpentry place cause they saw how hard I was working. I worked there for a little while.

**Artist assistant job.** As briefly mentioned, Greg volunteered to work for an artist who was working at a gallery in his neighborhood when Greg first met him. Greg recalls, “I offered to work for him for cheap to just kind of get some experience and a foot in the door somewhere. I remember I agreed to work for him for five bucks an hour.” Their relationship lasted quite a long time, but it was not pleasant. The artist hired Greg whenever he had some projects needing assistance. The artist eventually raised Greg’s wages to an acceptable rate of $18 an hour. However, later on Greg found out that among all of the assistants, he was the only one who was being paid. According to Greg, the other assistants were recent college graduates and were a bit naïve about the realities of the art world. The other assistants were under the impression that Greg was also doing a non-paid assistantship. It was the strategy of the artist to use the free labor of young artists. Since Greg had a slightly more advanced career than the other interns, the artist
kept Greg as a model for the younger ones so that they thought that an unpaid assistantship was normal.

It was like brutal. Hard work. He was a sculptor….He yelled at me a lot….He just like yelled at people. Very nice to women. Just yelled at men. But I did it anyway. That got me some other jobs, like carpentry and stuff like that…

He contacted me later and wanted me to work and he was willing to pay me like a more normal rate. But it turned out that he had gotten other people to work for him….He would get all these students to do stuff for free….And so that time, I was working for him being paid not a lot but definitely better than five dollars. I think it was like $18 or something.

…I think it was Socrates [sculpture park] and we had to do a giant install thing. He got a couple of other people to help, particularly, this one guy, Eric, who was a really nice guy and worked super hard. And the thing is he [the artist] used me sort of to get other people to work harder. Cause he told them that we were all working there for free. So these other people were working for free. And they saw me who had been there for a little bit longer and a little bit older. At that time, I was also teaching a little bit here and there. So they were like “oh, this guy is the next step where I want to go. What is he doing? He is working for this guy for free.” I wasn’t working for that guy for free. But he had just lied to them.

**Teaching jobs.** Eventually, Greg got an undergraduate teaching job at MICA in Baltimore. As with other jobs he was offered to that point, the way he got the job was also far from open call and application.

I had much better luck if people see what I am doing in person. So in that case, I think I had been working other places. I basically got in through knowing the head of the painting department. And he was just like, “hey, there is an opening. Would you be interested in coming down?” I was like, “of course.”

So Greg worked at MICA for four semesters. He taught a senior critique course all day on Mondays, as the course was a two-unit class. At that time, he was living in Princeton, New Jersey, teaching at a boarding school there during the rest of the week. So Greg had to commute to Baltimore mostly by bus, which was the cheapest option for transportation. As MICA provided temporary housing for teachers who commuted from other cities, Greg traveled to Baltimore on Sunday nights and slept over for Monday class
that began early the next morning. During this time, Greg had a studio in Long Island City, as well. He commuted there on weekends to make art. In the meantime, MICA was looking for someone who would be interested in an exchange teaching program at Korea National University of Arts in Seoul, South Korea. He volunteered for it, thinking he would be able to come back to MICA after the exchange program ended.

When I left, that school, they fired everybody. Every single person at that school. And they brought in new people. So I just somehow missed like that whole slaughter and then, at the same time, MICA, they voted to unionize. Basically they made it easier for people to stay there longer. Which is great because it was just gig-based. You didn't know if you would be there for next semester or anything. It was very insecure. So the thing is while I was gone somebody was filling that job. So that person had much better reason to stay there.

**Travel to Korea.** In Korea, Greg’s exchange teaching placement was originally planned to be three months long, but when he met Angela there, he extended it to six months. Although he was not paid much through his teaching job, he was able to save money because they gave him “a free place to stay.” Also, he “didn’t spend much money on food,” as he ate at a school cafeteria or a street vendor, both of which served inexpensive food. And when he went out with other colleagues, he rarely had to pay.

Cause it was just like periodically you have to go out and eat dinner with people then. Teachers were very generous and they would pay for things. I paid maybe one or two dinners. But it was really hard to pay. You know, you fight with somebody about paying—“No, no I will pay.”

Throughout his time in Korea, Greg was able to save a lot of money.

I remember that I came back from that trip with...I think the most you can carry on an international flight was $10,000. I had $9,999....I managed to save that much from that semester. I had done these other jobs, too. Had done some lecture work at some other places and made a little bit of money but you know, I didn't go out that much.

**Return to New York.** In Korea, Greg and Angela had started dating. Although they didn’t think about their relationship too seriously at that time, they reunited when
Greg got back to New York and Angela had a solo show in a Lower East Side gallery. It was the winter of 2014 and they were having a very hard time finding a place to live.

We looked at all these places. First of all, I can't afford many places. Many places just don't want artists. And then you finally find something. I think we found a place. So we were staying at all these like random places. Stayed with my boss for a week. Slept in the place I rent for a studio. We moved like 11 times I think that year…It was just like a really tiring and frustrating year.

Greg’s teaching experience in the United States and in Korea also made him think that he “wanted to teach again.”

So I put out applications to a couple of places. And In New York, there are so many people applying for things. So many qualified people. So you didn't really get anything unless you knew somebody somewhere. So I didn't get any response even though I had all this experience. I thought I was a qualified, perfect person for a lot of things….Later on, I ended up working again in another school, doing a drawing class. Just because I had met the person through showing with her. But those personal connections, they really kind of run everything.

Greg talked about the counter-discrimination he faces as a white male painter when he applies to jobs.

I am also just a white guy. I have been told by various people that just like unfortunately, right now, they want diversified programs. They want more women in the programs. They want more people of color. Cause there are like 90% white men, you know do painting. I am like, “I am a painter. I am a white guy. I am applying. What am I gonna add to your program?”

Greg also talked about the irony associated with colleges that only hire art faculty who hold “Ivy League diplomas.” One of his friends found out that some non-Ivy League art schools only hire artists with an Ivy League degree. Greg felt that practice to be contradictory because it shows that those schools do not see their own graduates—the students the school itself has prepared—as qualified, potential candidates for teaching positions there.
Art Practice

**Overall nature of Greg’s art.** Greg’s work mainly deals with, in his words, “how we understand the world.” He is interested in very diverse cultural and historical references and applying them to each of his artworks, so it was not easy for him to explain the overall themes or provide succinct descriptions encompassing his entire art practice. Nonetheless, he explained that he is interested in many questions related to the “human condition” and in trying to “figure out the world” and asking: “What is your role in it?” Greg thinks many people pose these questions “through other means” such as “religion.” But instead, he raises these questions through art. With regards to materials, he works with various media including painting, sculpture, and installation. Greg is very interested in experimenting with new media whenever he finds materials that he has not used before—one example is his interest in Hanji (Korean traditional paper) that he first encountered in Korea and incorporated into his installation pieces.

**Three major art works.** When I asked Greg to select three most representative art works, rather than making clear distinctions between specific pieces, he (like Jun) chose three different series instead. Greg decided to do this because he goes through phases where he produces multiple art pieces in similar styles. The three series are discussed chronologically below.

**Artwork #1 - modular, multi-paneled paintings.** For this series, Greg made square, box-shaped oil paintings that measure 5½” long by 5½” wide by 1½” deep. The series began with his curiosity about visual perception and questioning the definition of painting. Although Greg claims each painting to be an “individual” entity, he gathers multiple panels and arranges them into a bigger installation. He calls this process
“modular” and considers each painting a “cell.” Greg said, “Each one of these are individual, little things… And each one of those became sort of modular of things that sort of like combine together into larger entities. So thinking about them as cells, units and larger things.” Greg acknowledges the existence of other artists who work with similar types of multi-paneled painting installations. He differentiates himself from them based primarily on his “consistent,” analytical approach to arranging small paintings into certain shapes, exploring numerous possibilities for arrangements. In his view, other artists tend to create certain shapes at the beginning of the project simply by making one-time plans based on designs, and then changing them afterwards.

I was trying to explore this question of modular, multi-panel painting in a way that I hadn't seen other people do. So I mean I have seen lots of people sort of put things together, put different paintings but I hadn't seen somebody do this sort of very rigid consistent sort of like cell thing in a way…some people sort of address it in a more design-y aspect…a plan-based thing…

In this series, small panels are not small parts of a big image. Greg does not plan in advance what kind of whole image to create with the congregation of these small paintings. He enjoys the uncertainty of “the end picture” more, comparing this process to a “puzzle.”

I felt like it was important to not do sketching, like “this is what I want to make and these are all the parts of it.” But instead to make little parts of it, and then it took a tremendous amount of time, almost like a puzzle you did not know what the end picture was. And you just start putting things together and start thinking about how they might group into something larger that had logic, that had seemed to make sense for some reason.

To Greg, the arrangement of each panel embraces flexibility and openness. He frequently works on rearranging the panels even when he shows the series in multiple exhibitions. He approaches each new arrangement of the piece with “different eyes.” He
sees his process as more “intuitive” than “intellectual.” He compares this system to “life” and to “DNA,” as it is more organic than fixed.

I was thinking very much as this analogy to life…So almost like DNA where you have certain elements and then you combine them together….And as you are working and become more intuitive [with] things as opposed to intellectual…every time I went back to it because you could reassemble them, I would go through the whole process again. And like reassess it and that became a huge time-drain…I would look at it with different eyes.

Greg has been trying to develop “another level of organization” and “arrangement” of these small panels. He compared his intention and process with the act of composing a sentence.

…trying to figure out the other question of like how to maybe arrange them at other levels of organization. So I stepped back and thinking about the groupings of them or arrangements. So you know, I was doing these things that is almost like a sentence…Pieces that could kind of be put together and overlapped…Yeah, I mean, cause sentences are made up of these sort of little units of meaning, and each unit of meaning is made up of these letters which represent different sounds. And different languages and different ways of breaking those apart.

To open more possibilities for arrangement, each painting can rotate in any direction. Greg said this strategy gives him “more flexibility in terms of later doing things,” and that once the work seems set in a “certain direction, it often is a little bit more boring visually, because there is no variation.” In regard to content or imagery depicted in each small painting, Greg uses “recognizable images” ranging from geometric shapes to newspaper imagery, deconstructing the images in order to deal with recognition, perception, and the viewer’s thought process. This process of deconstructing “recognizable images” proceeds down to units of “dots.”

So I was doing this body of abstraction where I was taking imagery and breaking up and layering it and creating these patterns that were very much influenced by Moorish patterning. I was sort of taking a painting and then I was using bubble wrap to make a print of it. That was just the dots and I could layer those prints and sort of have this like molecular feel of things, interacting with each other. If you
squint at it, it is clearly a circle but as you look closer, that circle, sort of edge breaks apart...So I mean, it kind of naturally went into that certain degree of abstraction...And this process of seeing something and understanding it, the process of perception.

**Artwork #2 - cast objects.** In the cast objects series, Greg casts small objects including organic items, such as food. He does not remember why he started it, but he talked about the food sculpture project of artist Tom Friedman. One of Friedman’s reference materials interested Greg in terms of the idea of small pieces of art that look like relics.

...in grad school... Tom Friedman lives in the area... my roommate at that time... ended up... working for him as a studio assistant. So one of the years he [Friedman] was doing these like large food items out of... he takes blue foam, carves like hyper-real things, so he was carving a giant pizza and stuff like that. He carved Twinkies and they had a Twinkie that they used as a reference material, basically. So somebody takes a bite out of it and it had been sitting in their studio for a long time. And it got really kind of hard. You know, dried out. But my friend just mailed it to me as like a joke, “here is our reference Twinkie for this project.” And I thought it was really kind of cool cause it was like a little piece of this artist’s work and what was happening. Little art, relic... Even though it was pretty hard, it seemed to be fine, like I had it on a shelf for long time. It was organic... I can't remember why... I was doing something else with plaster. But I decided to make a cast of it.

Before this series, Greg regarded himself more as a painter and focused on multi-panel paintings. He was using plaster to create different surfaces for his paintings. Greg said, “What was I doing... I might have been using plaster like trying to find different surfaces for the paintings. To make them more sort of like dimensional.” While casting his “piece of food,” he was interested in how the original gets destroyed in the process and in the way that an impermanent object becomes permanent.

I had a little plaster piece of this piece of food... that sort of took the place of the original which got destroyed in the process... food items are usually impermanent. But then putting it in plaster makes it a permanent object. This funny little relic thing.
Similar to the interest he had with the painting series where the familiarity of certain images and objects becomes obscure and challenges the viewers’ perceptions, Greg was also interested in how casting objects with plaster makes them less recognizable.

So I started casting other objects. Like I cast little donuts…And then also little cultural items, like I had a couple of Muppets, key chains…Cause they also, like the food, had this familiarity to it…when they got converted into plaster, that was whiter. It was lacking some of the things that made it kind of immediately recognizable. You know like the donut shape, oh it's a donut shape but also it’s something not quite donut-y. Like is it a donut? Or is it something else? So kind of playing upon that. Sort of sense of recognition a little bit but also like trying to figure out what it is.

To Greg, this series also has personal meaning and purpose. Due to their size, the cast objects are often given out to his friends as “presents.”

So I was making some just kind of for myself….But also they became objects that I used as like gifts basically. Like giving them to people as like, as presents. But also thinking about the present moment but also in the way that they were sort of memories of past moments. Sort of like encapsulating a moment.

Artwork #3 - Hanji (Korean paper) installation. This series is a paper installation for a window, using Korean traditional paper, Hanji. Before this series, Greg was working with watercolor on paper, creating abstract images.

I was doing these watercolors…But it was abstract and it was about this like layering process. So, that took big rolls of that cotton watercolor paper and doing it on that. And that process of layering kind of things that were more accidental…with precision like drawing lines and painting things in.

In the beginning, Greg approached Hanji similar to the way he dealt with cotton watercolor paper. However, the Hanji did not work as Greg expected it would, in the same way as the cotton paper, so there was some trial and error in using it. This sort of failure led Greg to new possibilities, and soon he changed the direction of his project. Instead of painting on the paper, Greg made abstract “patterns” by using a “tie dye” process. Greg explained that his old process
…just didn't work on this paper because the way that the fiber sucked the ink. So it just immediately led to different type of work where you know, trying to use pattern and accident, stuff like that. And then like how to use that paper. I was trying all sorts of ways of making patterns on it…and like folding it…it became kind of like tie dye, it is actually a process that has a name in Japanese art.

He ended up attaching Hanji sheets on windows and letting light come through them. In fact, Hanji sheets were originally placed in the windows of traditional Korean houses, as their translucency allows light come through.

Instead of developing, like I worked on them little bit…my attention and the time went into sort of learning about this whole new material and the way it worked with light and space. I think, at the same time, you know I saw the Korean palace where they were using the paper as windows.

By using the translucent Hanji paper with the light coming through it, Greg was able to make the largest installation he has ever made. He described the transition from casting small objects to making the larger series as a switch from “microphotography” to “massive.”

I realize like the paper was something that you could sort of transform...I mean the installation was the largest thing I have ever made. Like a hundred feet long depending on the space you were given and transforming that whole space by means of the light coming through. So, it did go from working this little scale like this and microphotography to doing something that was massive. But it was different material and this material sort of made more sense to do that…with a bag of material you can transform a whole space.

**Key aspects of Greg’s art.** There are two main concepts that can be distilled from Greg’s articulation of his three selected series of artworks. Both of them are related to his notion of the size of his artwork, specifically the small scale that characterizes most of his works.

*Portable and affordable art work.* In regard to the small size of his paintings and the flexible ways to arrange them into a larger installation via a modular system, Greg talked about creating paintings that buyers can move from one location to another,
conflicting with the art market, and making art accessible to more buyers by pricing his
work so that more people might be able to afford it.

I knew I was going to New York. I knew that I wasn't able to afford a huge studio. I was going to the galleries and I was seeing a bunch of these paintings that seem grotesque to me… the wealth of buying a giant painting that you can only fit in special buildings. And it disconnected from the everyday, normal from my own experience. So how do you make a painting for people that are moving their apartments every couple of months or living in hotel rooms, traveling? So this was the sort of thing that could theoretically fit in your suitcase if you wanted to like travel with a painting. Customize your home and this vagabond life style. But that's the other thing. Will you conflict against the market? The art market is really driven by ostentatious displays of wealth. So if you are going that direction and trying to do something accessible, people can find artistic things that are accessible at a much cheaper rate.

**Small-scale art work.** Similar to his multi-paneled paintings, Greg’s cast objects are small—no bigger than a donut and as small as a keychain. This choice of size provided Greg several benefits in terms of saving space, portability, and having more time to make other work. He once considered making bigger pieces, as he witnessed the discrepancy between people’s excitement about the photo documentation of his work (submitted to galleries) and their disappointment about the actual size of his objects. However, he decided not to make larger scale work.

Definitely, there was a practical nature to where just like the small things are easy to deal with in New York [where] spaces are such a premium. My studio is already filled up with so many things for storage. If you are making a big, giant sculptural thing, immediately you are out of space. But when I went to Korea, some of the pictures I took, people assumed that they were large objects. And they were like “oh, man, that's so amazing. I can't wait to see it.” And then when they saw it, “oh, it's small.” So I did consider like making something big like that…. It's like you have to put so much energy and time to be able to make this one thing whereas with that same amount of time, I can sort of make a lot of things….And when you make some of these bigger choices, then I feel like sometimes you can get stuck in something that you might not necessarily want to do. And have that flexibility. So anyway, I didn't end up making a giant one…and just kept it small.
Career History

In this section, aspects of Greg’s career and his views on his life as an artist are discussed.

Career path.

*Gallery representation in upstate New York.* During graduate school, Greg was given the opportunity to have a solo show at a gallery in upstate New York, and this led to his first gallery representation. He said, “it was sort of the most real gallery representation I had. Like where it is a traditional gallery that had a space and I was on the website. I had piece(s) in their file.” Greg had three shows with the gallery, but the relationship did not last long due to differences in Greg’s and the gallerist’s perspectives on art.

The gallerist…his role is to sort of sell these things…I wasn't good at selling and he didn't do anything about selling….But he really never like…to find out what they [the artwork] were….So, we never really had conversation and then I think he was bummed that I couldn't present it to him in a way that was simple…Yeah, I mean he was a super nice guy but he very much seemed to like want it to be simple. You take the painting and you put it on the wall and the painting can be taken off the wall and put into a collector's house. Simple. Anything more than that, he just like stressed that he didn't want to deal with it. It made it harder to sell things.

Greg’s gallerist preferred art that could be handled more simply and did not understand or value the installation aspect of Greg’s artwork. As Greg describes it, the relationship eventually ended because of these conflicts.

One of the big door-sized ones, 70 inch. “Oh I really like this. I'd love to get this.” And they were like, “Do I have to put in 36 nails into my wall?” I was like, “Yeah.” “No, I don't want to deal with that.”…And at that time, I was like well, clearly they are not that serious about it.
**Pop-up gallery in New York City.** At the end of his relationship with the gallery in upstate New York, Greg was having small shows that he was curating himself in New York. Meanwhile, his studio mate helped him get another gallery show in New York. And I was doing little shows. A lot of like pop-up shows. Organizing shows myself. The next most successful step was through a studio mate…Somebody came to do a studio visit with somebody else. And they came by and I ended up talking to that person. They recommended me to these two guys that were doing basically a start-up gallery in New York. So, right as that show kind of happened, I stopped working with the gallery in upstate New York…So he (the gallerist in upstate New York) was like, “I am gonna not have you on the website anymore.” And I was like, “That’s fine cause I start working with this other gallery.”

Although Greg acted as if he was not worried about his new gallery when he was speaking to his ex-gallerist, he was not sure about his new business partners. However, an unexpected outcome came from having shows with this new gallery. He recalled that period as a “high point.”

I was nervous about it. I never got to know how galleries work, who gets the sale. It seemed like a good thing at the time not to have to worry about that. So I start working with these guys (new gallerist) in the city. Basically their idea was that they would rent temporary spaces and have a big opening and have sort of online presence. And the first opening was kind of fucking incredible. We had this like giant space down in Soho. The youngest, prestigious crowd I have ever seen. Cause they were all like classmates from Harvard, whatever. Financial district people. Money, young money. So it was a three-person show. I sold most of that work. So it was like probably the high point. I was like ‘Oh, this is amazing.’

Greg had two more shows at the new gallery following the first exhibition. However, that relationship did not last long either because the gallerists closed the business two years later. Greg recalls, “That gallery ended up deciding…there wasn't enough money in it for them. Or they were losing too much money or whatever. They decided to get other jobs. So they sort of quit.” After this relationship ended, Greg fell into deep pessimism about his “networking” efforts. Even though he had tried his best to help the gallerists advertise
their shows, and invited a collector he was acquainted with to see the work at the gallery, Greg did not feel that the gallerists “cared” about him.

…It was a weird thing too because in that show, I sold some of the plaster pieces to a collector that I have known for a while….So, I basically sold some work for the gallery. And they had another show a little bit later…they never contacted me. And yet, they contacted the other guy, my friend that didn't sell anything…But I felt...I don't know. I didn't know what to do. I had a show with them. I sold work. I helped them sell work. I made them money. And they didn't even like...seem to care. So after that, I really kind of like lost a lot of energy towards like doing that. I am doing all this work for you guys. I am making the work. I am fucking advertising it. Artists have to do everything. Fucking selling it myself. Of course, it wouldn't sell without the space. That is a key part of it…It seems so prestigious to be there. But I don't know. What does it take? So after that, I stopped doing a lot of the things I used to do in terms of networking and really trying to do things commercially.

Making a living from art. During our conversations, Greg did not clearly express his views about making a living from his art when asked directly about it. However, he did address the topic in his responses to other questions. Even if he did not entirely believe living off of his art was feasible all of the time, he did call the first show with the pop-up gallery and the sold out exhibition of his artwork a “high point.” He was clearly excited about the idea itself. However, additional major artwork sales or other career support opportunities have not yet come to Greg. He knows of other successful cases, including Tom Friedman mentioned earlier, where artists are able to making a living from their art, but he did not mention any possibilities that he would be able to reach such commercial success and achieve financial stability only through his art practice.
Logistics for art making.

Minimum conditions for art making. For Greg, the minimum condition for art making is time, because he can approach other elements such as space and material more flexibly by utilizing given sets of conditions.

Time is most important...because I think you always kind of have at least some space around you. And there’s been time when I have been traveling, you know you are sketching in the sketching in the sketchbook or you are just doing little projects...same with materials. If I don’t have anything around me, I would work with leaves.

Networking through day jobs with time flexibility. After Greg came back from Korea, he went to work for an artist who makes commercial or commissioned sculptures with Lego bricks. Greg had worked with this artist before he traveled to Korea as well. He referred to the job as “the nicest job I have ever had.” He is satisfied with this current job because it is “easy and creative.” One of the benefits of working for the Lego artist is time flexibility. Although Greg’s boss ideally wants Greg to work five days a week, he accommodates changes in Greg’s work schedule. Utilizing this time flexibility, Greg has also taken on an art-handling job to get closer to the art scene.

I intentionally chose to do other jobs, just so I could...It was one of few ways to network with people to work with them. Cause, after work, I didn't have energy to go to do stuff, but if I could do install at a gallery or something like that. That was a way to sort of meet people...I even had called in sick to Sean [the Lego artist], “I can't work today.” And then worked the other job...Usually, something like a short-term gig. Most of those jobs are...when I am calling in sick, was exactly an art handling job that was in a nice gallery. I really just wanted to meet those people.

Despite his effort to network by doing art-handling jobs and getting close to the art scene, there has been no major difference in his art career outcomes.

I mean, yes. It was definitely better than nothing. But there was also the sort of like, some people were very cool and very open and other people were very like “that's not my level, I don't want to deal with these people.” So some of the
people that ended up kind of moving up, they were very friendly, but a lot of people that are already at the top, they didn't spend any time talking with you.

Greg wonders how his career would be if he had gone to a school with “better networking opportunities.” In conjunction with the efficacy of school and the value of networking, he jokes:

You know, I often wonder about the school I went to in Massachusetts, if I'd actually chosen to do a school with better networking opportunities. That didn't seem important at the time. It seemed like oh, this one is cheaper…so many said once in...if you took the money you spent on grad school, and you just like threw some crazy parties in the city and just got to know all the people, would that be better for you?

Constant moving and size of artwork. Throughout his life—as he frequently moved to new residences with his family during childhood and later as an adult continued to move—Greg has been aware of the logistics of transporting things. This habit of moving has affected the size of his artworks, which, as previously mentioned, are mostly small. Moving frequently has also impacted his choice of domestic objects, such as furniture, which he prefers to be lightweight.

I grew up in a divorced family where I was bouncing back and forth and then I went to school in California but I was living in New Mexico. And then I spent a year in Spain. So I have been traveling and changing where I live pretty often since high school. And the thing about every time you move, you realize like what a pain in the ass that is. So I think that was like...I was very much thinking about the small paintings. In terms of being like what are paintings for people that are traveling all the time. Like giant paintings, too, they are for people that have giant houses. It is like a certain class thing as well. The wealth I can afford…Heavy things in my life... I look at furniture in a very specific way. If it is heavy furniture, I just don't want to deal with it.

Greg referenced nomad culture, in which possessions must be transportable in order for people to easily move from place to place.

There is also conversation about what's called...nomad, right?…like world that people moving around. So I felt like work for that type of people would be small. You know, you think back on art history and the tradition of cultures that were
traveling a lot….They would often make their art as like brooches or something that you would wear or carry. You know, it wasn't so much temples.

**Monthly spending.** Greg spends 40% of his monthly income for his half of the rent for the apartment that he shares with his wife and son. He spends 15% of his income for studio rent. He also spends around 40% of his income for the cost of materials. 

The studio space I am at now, I have the lease… I am subletting most of that space, I am paying between $400 and $500 per month for the space depending on what the electricity is….My biggest expense actually…these materials. But the nice thing about that is…it's business cost, so basically everything I spend on materials gets subtracted from taxes at the end of the year. So that's been an okay thing…about 35% to 40%, it's like half. Half of my income goes to materials…I don't make that much.

In addition to monthly rent costs, Greg and his wife share expenses for groceries and they try “keeping that price low.”

**Daily schedule.** Greg’s day begins with taking care of his son. He works at the Lego artist’s studio in the daytime, and he does “life stuff” after his son goes to sleep in the evening. As Greg describes below, he gets to bed so late that he has sleep deprivation.

My son wakes up, and he has been very early lately, like 5….So when he wakes up…[I] make him breakfast and clean up stuff and trying to get him to nap and I get to work. Anywhere between 10 and 11 or 12. Some days as early as 9 but it really depends on how fast I can get him to sleep and how dedicated I am getting out the door…Then I work there until…if I have to leave early, I leave at 5 but otherwise, I am there until 7 or 8. And one night a week, I go to the studio and work there until 2 or 3 in the morning. And the rest of the nights I come home, sort of like help with, dealing with my son….After we get him to sleep around 7 or 8, I am trying to do a couple of hours of life stuff, writing some emails or do taxes, something like that. And then I get to bed. For whatever reason, even though it's a couple of hours, I always go to bed way too late. And then by the end of week, I am kind of a mess. So sleeping has been a big problem in the city. I never get enough sleep. It kind of like affects my mood and everything.

**Weekly schedule.** Greg works five days a week and he has one or two studio days but lately, he has one full day for studio, which is Sunday.
It's [work] been five days a week. It started out being just part-time and then I had to have a day in the studio...Often 10 to around midnight. Sometimes I leave at 10. Sometimes I leave at 3. So it depends on how into it I am.

As with Angela, Greg finds benefits in being married to an artist in terms of the logistics for his art making—like his wife, he values the critical and helpful dialogue about personal artwork that comes from a trusted partner’s aesthetic perspective.

I mean, one of the benefits of having another artist is...you do have another person to sort of talk about certain things. So, I try to get her opinion on some of these aesthetics of things...I think a lot of this work has been kind of influenced by her in terms of some of the simplicity of it whereas if it was just me, by myself, it would probably be a lot more...just like craziness.

**Basic elements for art making (space, material, and time) and Greg’s additional elements.**

**Space - a room for contemplation.** Reflecting on the element of space in his art practice, Greg considers the display of his artwork in exhibitions as “one of the weaker aspects” of his art practice. He attributed this deficit to lack of space for contemplation.

I would say some of the display is probably, unfortunately, one of the weaker aspects...And then you are doing installation which always takes, you know, a good amount of time. But I haven't had same...because of my studio was always like this mess of shit coming together, that same time just sort of to develop the experience, like that visual experience of somebody coming in and looking at what they are seeing and how they are interacting with it.

He talked about the artist Tom Friedman who has a separate, empty room, other than a production studio, which is only for looking at his work in a space.

So the interesting thing about Tom Friedman, at his studio he literally had a space outside of the work floor that was just a white cube...And they would hang their works there. I think partially it was for photography. Like get a picture of it. But also, he could sit there and over time look at the piece and think about how it was gonna be perceived. You know like, “oh, OK, this is taking up that space.” And it is not just a one-day or maybe two-day thing under pressure. He has time to really think about it and decide what are the most effective choices in that.
Space - studio for storage and experimentation. Throughout his career so far, Greg has maintained his studio. As pointed out earlier, even when he had no living space, he kept his studio. Greg recalled, “I prioritize studio in some way… I mean I had a studio even when I haven’t had an apartment when we were moving around. We were renting a space temporarily. We slept on a studio floor.” He has kept his studio for all that time because it provides storage space for all of his work, and also gives him a space to experiment with different materials.

It [his artwork] is in the studio, right now… Everything in that studio is becoming more and more of a mess cause I have materials for all sorts of stuff like painting, watercolor, sculpture, electric plating, all these crazy things. And then boxes of old paintings, wood paintings, roll paintings. And to me… most scary about losing the studio is like I have set it up… I basically have all sorts of things like if I have an idea, I can go “oh, what if I use beeswax on this thing to see how these two things interact… in the studio?” … I have all these materials. And that has taken a while to build up… sort of exploration materials…

Space - sharing studio and subletting apartment. In terms of space for both art making and living, sharing has always been a part of Greg’s life in New York. He has had studios in different areas, including Williamsburg, Bushwick, Long Island City, and Greenpoint. The price of monthly rent he has paid has been as low as $300 and as high as $1000. When Greg shared a studio for $300 a month, there was an “interesting system” which allowed both of the artists to use a larger space than they were supposed to use.

I shared with three other artists. So my corner of that space wasn't actually bad space at all. It was $300. So that was like a fucking great deal. But I took, you know, I spent two months building up the space. I put in a wall, putting up dividing spaces. And we had an interesting system where… we basically, me and other artists, had two sort of permanent walls and a temporary wall. Cause we would often be there at different times so when she [one studio mate] came in, she can move it [temporary wall] towards my space and when I came in, I can move it towards her space… I thought that was kind of a good use of that space and worked out pretty well.
In terms of living space, Greg always had roommates. When he was a lease holder, in order to lower his living expenses he voluntarily chose the cheapest room in the apartment. Greg recalls, “I remember that apartment in Williamsburg. I was paying $700 for my room. And it was the cheapest one in the apartment… No windows. Hot as hell. It was so unpleasant.” When he was in a relationship, he and his girlfriend leased a whole apartment, but they rented out a room to someone else. Currently, Greg lives in a two-bedroom apartment in Long Island City with his wife and son. They still rent out one room to travelers through AirBnB, despite the risk of eviction.

**Material.** Greg is very interested in trying various new materials, as he sees such processes as a way to “understand thinking.”

My practice, I have probably, at some point in my life, bought every single art material like I could have ever seen (laugh). Just to try it… I mean, I guess I use the materials as sort of lenses or sort of grounds to try to understand thinking… So because I am always interested in that and trying to understand the thinking or be aware of it. That is an important part in my process.

**Time.** Greg selected “time” as the most important element of his art practice. When asked directly about the elements of space, material, and time as necessities, he stated:

I think those are all important. But for me, I think time is most important. Because I think you always kind of have at least some space around you. And there's been time when I have been traveling, you know you are sketching in the sketchbook or you are just doing little projects.

Elements of time, and Greg’s perception of them, can be seen below as he describes significant challenges he currently faces in his work.

**Current struggle.**

**No time to network.** One of Greg’s current struggles is time management. While he has time for art making, he does not have time for networking. He said, “I still make
work…and then I just, in order to make work, I don't have time to network. So I don't go to the shows as I used to. I haven't had studio visits really for a long time.”

**Wasting time for applications.** As mentioned previously, Greg has very low confidence in his application abilities. He confessed that stress from applying for opportunities was part of his depression. As he does not get the expected outcome from submitting applications for exhibitions and grants—especially compared to the amount of time and effort he invests in the process—he sees it as “a waste.” As a result, the number of applications he submits has lessened every year.

I mean I am still applying for things… I had an issue with depression. I was dealing with personal issues but also, I remember talking to therapists about applications. Just how much they just upset me. Cause it just seemed like huge waste of time. You know, you spend all this time, putting stuff together. And you throw it out there. And getting nothing in return. And it's just like you keep doing it over, and over again. It seemed like such a waste. But I mean, I would. I would do, maybe...you know it kind of diminished, but it was like maybe 15 applications one year and next year was 10 and next year was 5.

**How to balance life and work opportunity.** Greg expressed hardship in balancing between making a living at his job and taking art career opportunities. Putting aside very prestigious opportunities for artists that are financially supported but extremely competitive, he feels it is even hard to figure out ways to participate in less competitive opportunities outside New York. Such opportunities often require artists to pay fees out of their own pockets or to suspend their daily lives in New York. Greg feels that taking these less competitive opportunities outside of New York “conflicts with trying to make a life here.”

There are tons of opportunities out there…some are amazing in terms of their prestige they actually financially help you…all these things set up. Those are super-competitive. Everyone wants those. But there are other ones that are less competitive but maybe you are paying to do it or maybe you can't work for certain amount of time…while you are trying to establish yourself in a city like New
York where it is crazy expensive, do you go away to somewhere else, not work for a month...hoping that might help you? But at the same time, you are not paying rent, you are not working. There are always things about those opportunities that conflict with trying to make a life here.

**Summary of Greg**

I was able to draw several key findings related to the research questions from my conversations with Greg. From the beginning to the present, Greg’s description of his life in New York City exemplifies a harsh reality of an artist’s life. It shows how artists can be vulnerable in many ways. Even though he describes himself as “depressed,” Greg has maintained a trusting attitude during his time in New York. Rather than calculating his benefit and loss from a personal relationship, he listens to, trusts, and helps others. This attitude has often led to struggles—such as being exploited, losing jobs, and missing opportunities. However, Greg has consistently gotten career opportunities through people, rather than relying on official application processes. He expressed more career frustrations than any of the other three participants, but he never mentioned giving up his artistic career. Rather, his frustration comes along with his ceaseless effort to find better ways to make art, rather than from a sense of failure to have a better standard of living. I will now sum up the key findings based on each basic element for art making.

**Space.** Greg deeply values having a permanent studio space. To him, the studio is a space for experimenting with diverse materials as well as a storage space for his entire body of artwork. Even when he has not had a sustainable residential space to live and sleep in, he has never given up his studio. Although he does value having a solo studio space, rather than being obsessive with the specific conditions of his working area and in order to meet his budget he has used a variety of shared spaces. Currently, by coming up
with a creative idea to section off a larger shared space with movable partitions, he has increased the size of those shared studios and made them more workable for everyone.

**Material.** In terms of his artworks, Greg has consistently emphasized materials that lend themselves to the creation of objects that accommodate mobility and portability. Rather than creating single large artworks, he has chosen a modular system, which involves the arrangement of multiple small paintings or cast objects through which he can create a larger installation. As he usually begins art making through experiments with new components, he has invested a large portion of his monthly spending on a variety of materials.

**Time.** Greg’s time-management is based on certain routines and schedules—dividing time for work (money-making), time for art, and time for family (child care). He mentioned that there has been a shortage of time for art making, especially after becoming a father. He has tried to find more time for his art practice, which has resulted in less sleep.

Overall, Greg’s case is one of a typical struggling artist in New York. Even if he has yet to find an ideal solution to alleviate his struggle and frustration, his description of his life provides rich material related to the research questions and the three basic elements of space, material, and time. In Chapter V, these key findings will be discussed more thoroughly, along with other themes that emerged in the interviews with the other three participants.
**Participant #4: Luiza**

**Overview**

Luiza was born in Sao Paolo, Brazil in 1980. She lived there until she was 25. In Sao Paolo, she simultaneously attended two colleges, majoring in architecture at one, and in fine arts at the other. Afterwards, due to her husband’s job, she moved to Lisbon, Portugal and lived there for four years. She moved again, in 2009, this time to Chicago, due to her husband’s MBA study. There, she went to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago to earn an MFA degree. After graduation, she settled down in New York where she has maintained an artistic career for eight years.

After four years in New York, Luiza was invited to participate in the Greater New York exhibit at MoMA PS1, a show that introduces emerging artists working in New York every five years. This major museum show gave her a sense of accomplishment and heightened self-esteem. The reactions of other artists, and especially from family members who had previously ignored Luiza’s practice, also increased her confidence. However, in contrast to her expectations, the museum show experience did not lead to fundamental advancements in her career or give her financial sustainability for her art practice. In addition, as she was not able to sell her artwork through commercial gallery exhibitions, despite her effort, she decided to focus more on teaching as a source of income. She also sought to liberate her artwork from the level of a product for sale to a form of socially engaged art, a practice through which she now enjoys a great deal of success.

Mold making is the most commonly used technique in Luiza’s art practice. She uses diverse mediums, from latex and plaster to clay. She also often uses ready-made
objects as artwork, which was the case in the show at MoMA PS1, where she exhibited a collection of mass-produced city miniatures. As she majored in architecture, she is also interested in urban environments. This focus has led her to create a number of site-specific installations. So far, she has stored most of her artwork and materials in her studio. However, she is realizing more and more the difficulty of accumulation, and trying to consider more portable materials and ephemeral types of art making.

The interview with Luiza was conducted in three separate sessions at her apartment in Queens. The duration of each interview ranged from an hour and a half to two hours.

Life History

Childhood/family/first experience of art. According to Luiza, she was not a child whose artistic talent was immediately appreciated by others. However, she always “enjoyed making things” with her hands “in the art classes.” When she was seven years old, she won the first prize in an art contest she did not expect to win at all. It was the first time she thought, “oh, it is possible to do drawings and…win a contest.”

No one in her family was an artist. Luiza’s mother was a schoolteacher and her father was a banker. However, her mother provided Luiza with experiences in art. Luiza recalls that her mother took her to see theater and exhibitions during her childhood. When Luiza was between 12 and 15 years old, her mother took her to see the Sao Paolo Bienniale. Luiza’s mother always “enjoyed seeing art.”

Since Luiza had always enjoyed watching plays performed in theaters, she decided when she was sixteen to pursue a career in set design. Reading a book by
Brazilian set designer/architect Flávio Império also inspired her. She started to look for ways to become a set designer.

**Preparation for college.** Since there was no school specifically for set design in Brazil, Luiza decided to follow the educational path of Flávio Império, who studied architecture at a public college that had a more artistic focus than the engineering-centered architecture school, which also would have been an option. Luiza thought she could “be able to get the idea of space” by studying architecture, and found such knowledge necessary to become a set designer who also deals with space. However, she could not get into her school of choice because it was very competitive, being one of the few public schools in Sao Paolo that are free of charge. So she decided to study for one more year and try again. Luiza did not get into that school even in the following year. However, she said about her year of study and preparation, “that year ended up being really important to me” because it was a time that she was able to take humanities classes. In high school, she had to take physics and mathematics for preparing to go to architecture school, and missed out on humanities courses, which she regretted. However, with her year of preparing her application for architecture school, she was able to study the subjects she had missed, and met “a group of people that were really into arts” and who are still her friends today.

**College – two undergraduate degrees.** Luiza ended up attending her second option for architecture school, McKenzie University in Sao Paolo. As this school was more engineering-oriented, with little artistic atmosphere, Luiza applied to “another school, for fine arts.” This is how she ended up attending two different colleges and pursuing two undergraduate degrees simultaneously. She recalls her college life:
It was crazy. I would go to one school in the morning and run to other school in the afternoon. When I had a lot of homework and projects and things to do, that was really like tough four years. Cause Bachelor in Fine Arts in four years and architecture five years. So the first four years, it was really tough. So I did not have time to hang out with friends (laugh). Yeah, that was little crazy.

Even though Luiza went to school for fine arts, her attention and interests were still more centered around set design; thus, she tried to gain as much field experience in set design as possible. On the other hand, Luiza felt some frustration when studying architecture, especially when many subjects and tasks were computerized.

But then, architecture was such a pain. Cause I got transitioning in architecture school where half of it we were doing everything by hand. All the drawings by hand. And then there was a kind of transition to auto cads, doing everything in computer. And I hated computer. I had really hard time in the last two years of school to be like in front of computer… Also, seeing like some friends graduating in architecture to just be in an office for the whole day in front of computer… So that was like, “that's not what I want for me at all.”

**Undergraduate thesis exhibition in fine art.** To Luiza, it was her thesis project for the fine arts degree that made her realize the joy of art making and organizing exhibitions.

My last year in art school, I had to do my thesis project…my research was site-specific work…I think that was the first time, when I presented my thesis show in undergrad. That was like “oh, this is something I'd like to do.” And also, the last year was really important. I helped organize an exhibition with all the students in my class… And that was really exciting to organize a show, and we printed all the folders and catalogues and everything.

Due to the public exposure of her work through her thesis exhibition, Luiza was invited to have a show outside of school. The response was so encouraging that she began to consider becoming an artist as a career option. However, at that time, Luiza’s primary goal was still to be a set designer.

So it was my first site-specific work….That was really fun and a couple of other contacts happened… And it ended up being shown outside. So that was like “oh, that is an option, too.” …So I think that year was the “oh, this is something I
really enjoyed doing.” But I was still focused on the “I wanted to be a set
designer.”

As a researcher, I was naturally inclined to ask Luiza why she was so driven to being a
set designer at that time, since she is now a considerably successful visual artist.

Maybe I was not so open to become an artist…I always think about working as
collaborators. Cause theaters, there are always these groups, I was always doing
things in a group….I think that was like “OK, it's just work with actors, writers,
directors.” So I think it was something really thinking about collective that I was
interested in.

**Moving to Portugal.** When Luiza finished both undergraduate degrees and began
to look for a set design job, she faced an unexpected life transition. Her then boyfriend
(who is now her husband), an employee at a Brazilian bank who she had been dating
since high school, had to leave the country for a new job in Lisbon, Portugal. Forced to
make the decision to split up or get married, they decided to get married. He and Luiza
thought they would be able to come back to Brazil after six months. However, things
changed and they ended up staying in Lisbon for three and a half years. In the beginning,
Luiza tried to get a job related to set design, but the theater scene in Lisbon was very
small and she could not even “find any internship.” She did not have many other options,
as she “couldn’t work legally because of visa issues.” Her inability to work for a living
spontaneously led her to “focus on studying more art.”

**“Art as a job.”** Luiza took printmaking and drawing courses at an art school in
Lisbon. She did not pursue a degree from the school, but she ended up taking the
advanced courses that other students usually take during their final two years. The fine art
college she graduated from in Brazil had been more theory-oriented, and in Lisbon Luiza
was now able to work with professors who were active artists. Throughout her time in
Portugal, by working closely with professional artists, her self-identification as an artist
became clearer. Luiza learned how artists treat their art practice and develop routines.

That led her to see “art as [a] job.”

So that was a really interesting experience because I met two professors that were artists as well...in my undergrad in Brazil, it was not much the case. The class would be an extension of their studios. Something that I never had before. And they would really kind of instigate us to find our voices and find our way of thinking through art… So that was really important to me to narrow down and to find what I want to do. So, not only that but also one of the professors, after that year, invited me to work as an assistant in his studio… I never imagined being an artist. How it is being a professional artist. For making things at the time…it was really important for me to see art as job. I was like ok...how he was treating his art in terms of studio, like routine. Like the everyday business hours he would do it.

During her time in Portugal, she was able to “build [a] body of work” and she started to actively participate in many art events in Lisbon.

For two years, I could build body of work that I was like “OK, this is my art.” And I ended up going to... I did a lot of exhibitions. So my last year in Lisbon was really productive with shows... I sold a lot of pieces. Something I never imagined before...two galleries were like, “OK, we want your work. How are you gonna do it?”

Moving to Chicago and MFA program. When Luiza’s husband began an MBA program at the University of Chicago that was funded by the bank he was working for, Luiza moved with him. Once again, she faced an unexpected life transition, but this time, she figured out what she was going to do sooner than she had in Lisbon. Luiza recalls, “OK, I would do master in the U.S. because they have MFA. Now I know more what I want. I'd like to be an artist.” Luiza ended up going to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), where she majored in Fiber Material Studies. There was an issue with tuition, as she had not known how expensive it would be, and she did not get the full merit scholarship the department awarded to one student per year. She almost decided not to attend. But in the end, with her husband’s help, she was able to matriculate.
Because he [her husband] was like, “No, you should do it. That's your chance. We never know when we are gonna be in the U.S. again. I have a scholarship.” So he was getting paid for our living and his study. So he was like, “we are not spending money now, so you should do it.”

At the beginning of her MFA program, Luiza struggled with different languages and an unfamiliar educational system. However, she soon started accepting such challenges as a chance to think of her art practice in alternative ways.

All the readings and something that was really different from what I believed…the difficulty of speaking up and talking about, a lot about being critiqued and having to defend yourself and to explain your work and everything. So that was really tough to do that in another language (laugh). So that was kind of traumatic, actually. Yeah….I think the first semester was traumatic, really hard to understand how the school works…the education system in the U.S...yeah, being able to think about your practice in different ways.

**Coming to New York.** After graduate school, Luiza moved to New York, where her husband had already started a new job. She applied to a number of open calls for artist residencies and accepted two of them, and was therefore able to have a relatively smooth transition to New York.

So I was applying for residencies and things, trying to think what I would do here. Cause I didn't know almost anybody in New York. So then luckily, before I came, I got one residency. So I knew I would have a studio space. And that was the Nars Foundation. And then also, when I arrived, I got another residency that was Artists Alliance in the Lower East Side. So then I knew, that was really good, such a relief to know that I would have a studio space in both of those residencies.

In addition to having a space to make art, participating in residency programs in a new city offered Luiza a chance to show her work, and the event deadlines allowed her to push herself to be productive.

I never had a show in New York at that time. I didn't know people, as I mentioned. So also, each of the residencies would offer a group exhibition, like residents' exhibition, by the end. So then those were my first shows in Brooklyn, in New York City. So then it was really productive to have dates. OK, you have six months to prepare to do your show, to do your work in the studio. So they are giving the space, also like one studio visit per month.
As Luiza tells it, the residencies enabled her to meet people, including curators. However, opportunities did not come right away.

Yeah, I guess nothing was right away. Like in terms of being invited for a show… So for example, the open studio of Artists Alliance was good. I ended up meeting a curator, Shreen Dre [pseudonym]. And she ended up inviting me to do a show like a year after. So everything kind of came after long periods of time.

**Art Practice**

**Overall nature of Luiza’s art.** Conceptually, Luiza is interested in “the relationship between humans and big environment.” She finds correlations in “history, memories, and personal connection.” This includes “our connection to where we live [and] how we build our own history [by] collectively [connecting] through spaces.” Such spaces include “cities, houses, or social spaces where people can encounter,” or meet.

Luiza describes the “materiality of the work” as involving different media, depending on her concept. In her art practice, “the concepts come first,” and then she “looks for what material and what technique would be the best to convey that idea.” As mentioned previously, one of the techniques she most commonly uses is mold making, and in relation to that, she is interested in “materials that would change [their] shape.” In making molds, she enjoys the way materials “take another shape” over time. In this light, she frequently uses materials such as “cement, plaster, silicone and liquid plastics.” More recently, she has begun to appropriate “some mass produced objects [ready-mades] as a part of some pieces.” Not only does she make molds using objects in her studio, but she also makes molds from small architectural elements.

**Three major art works.** Three works Luiza selected as representative of her art practice are described below.
Artwork #1 - latex installation. During her time in Portugal, Luiza created an installation by using latex to make casts of various architectural elements of the building where she participated in a group show. Instead of placing an art object within the gallery space, she made a site-specific installation that was exhibited on the exterior of the building. She applied liquid latex on some of the building’s exterior window railings and balconies, and peeled it off when it had dried. These latex replicas of the windows and balconies were hung directly underneath the original structures, like mirror images.

I used the building as my mold…instead of doing inside of the show space, I proposed this facade…It looked more as intervention or site-specific because it was really responding to that architecture, typology and also a little bit of Portuguese history. So I was there for a month. I asked permission to use the building's windows and balconies. Like the railings of the building…brushing latex onto those actual windows and balconies. And then peeling it off and hanging on the building in itself…the railing is like iron works and I did using latex pigment in white. Basically, taking the shape but in a different material so it was flexible material with latex, like rubber.

The choice of latex for the piece partially came from her comfort with the material, but mainly originated from her interest in architecture and her desire to transform its commonly used “rigid, solid, big” materials into a material that would be closer to “our skin.”

That was the time where I was focusing on this material, latex. As my main material…that material I was knowing pretty well and being comfortable with…And also, to contrast… an idea of fragility of the architecture or how to transform these rigid, solid, big materials into something that is more applicable, more related to our skin, to our clothes. Something that would feel more connected.

Luiza spent a month on site to create the components of the installation (as latex requires a long process of brushing and drying), making latex molds from parts of the building’s exterior structure. During this time, she was able to interact with passersby outside who were curious about what she was doing.
When I was brushing on the latex, because it was really long process of...seven times of ...layers of latex... While I was there, I was outside. People were seeing me working through the balconies...was interesting...responses from the people walking on the street. Sometimes talking to me when I was installing. I think for the first time I had that conversation...I guess it was the first feeling of like public art that I had. I really enjoyed how you get all of exhibition space...to be out there for other people to encounter the piece.

The piece was installed outside where natural elements could affect the condition of the latex. In a way, Luiza enjoyed how natural effects like wind and sunlight could change her installation over time. However, when it came to issues of preservation, she struggled with keeping the piece pristine, as it began to become damaged by direct sunlight.

So also, it was interesting to see how the piece aged over the month of the show. Also how sun and wind interfered with the piece. Because latex is really sensitive material. Yeah the part...was heated by the end. The piece was cracked...I was really enjoying seeing how the piece was in movement. Something that I didn't predict that much. I know the work had some flexibility...the movement and wind was just added to the piece... But I think I struggled more because at that time I was thinking to keep the pieces. I was struggling more with the idea of being temporal in opposing to a piece that will last for a long time... And I couldn't keep the piece. I had to throw it away after.

After completing this work, she decided not to use latex again because it was a toxic material and she wanted to “diversify.” Also, Luiza wanted concepts to come first in her art practice, and for the choice of materials to come second.

That was my last piece I made in Lisbon. So it was also like ending cycle, I guess because I was working for two years with same material, latex. And I was getting really comfortable with it. I started to question myself. Like the material was dictating...my choices, in opposing the concepts to be first... And I also was...worried because latex is pretty toxic....So that was those two things that made me rethink about material-wise. Why was I using latex? Why was I only using that? And that was also the time I moved to U.S... I wanted to be able to diversify choices of materials. I wanted the concept to be the first one and then kind of figure out what's the best material instead of saying, “OK, what can I do with latex?” So I feel that was good wrapping of a phase.
**Artwork #2 - City Souvenirs.** This series began during graduate school as a collaboration project with Luiza’s classmate. They were taking a class about “walking as an art practice.” And they started to carry clay and imprint in the clay textures of architectural elements in Chicago.

The other work is an ongoing project that I started when I was in my grad school in Chicago. It started as a collaborative project called City Souvenirs…It was me and Niki [pseudonym]. So we started that in our first semester in school. We had a class together about walking as an art practice. So then we proposed to work together where we go to the streets and carrying clay, taking impressions of texture of the city. So that started as just both of us as a way of mapping and collecting like the city of Chicago.

In the beginning, the activity was shared between Luiza and Niki, but when they began to engage with people they met on the street, it expanded into a participatory project. Luiza highly valued the interaction with the public, seeing this project as “a great bridge” between her art practice and art education practice. She thinks the project was more developed than her previous experience with the public from her latex installation in Portugal.

But then we started to see the potential to become like social practice…people…the streets and asking what we were doing. And we started, “oh, let's let them do it.” And that was a kind of shift of not being our mapping but our interaction and seeing how other people look at city and …experienced that space. So it is not one work specifically but it is one project that is having multiple iterations. But because it is long-term, now it has been almost 10 years…it is also another way that I do that interaction. Cause sometimes being in the studio by myself is really struggle. And I feel that work is a great bridge between my art education practice and my studio practice. Because basically, bringing one of my process to the streets. And then kind of sharing that. But also encounter with people that I am necessarily expecting to talk about art or to see some art. So I guess the public aspect from other piece that I have a glimpse of interaction with people asking me. “Oh, what are you doing up there on the balcony?” So I feel…emphasized that interaction more.

Luiza sees this project as being very relevant to her overall studio practice. Its format consists mainly of making an imprint of the city landscape and participants on a block of
clay. In the block of clay, the texture of the architecture is imprinted on the one side, whereas the fingerprints of the participants remain on the other side.

But also object making is still important. So I guess that how it comes to my sculpture, studio background in terms of object in itself… And I guess by the time we end our collaboration, we had around 600 porcelain pieces. We were focusing only on working with porcelain clay. And with blocks, a block that fit in your hand. So the block…becomes this space between big environment with hand. Inside of someone’s hand…but also you have imprint like finger print on one side. And the architecture on the other side.

Luiza and her collaborator had considerable success with the project. They were invited to participate in several museum shows in Chicago and a dual solo show at a gallery in New York. She attributed such success to having “more time with a project,” which allowed her to work on “many levels.”

We ended up showing in a couple of museums in Chicago and surrounding areas. We ended up having a dual show with this project in Cuchifritos Gallery in New York in 2015. Yeah, so I feel like when you have more time with a project, you are able to work in many levels. And that's why I am really enjoying to kind of figure out as not something that is done but something in flux, keeps happening and keeps changing.

Although the original idea of the project was focused on mobility—that people can make an imprint of the city landscape with a hand-size block of clay—as the project expanded and they started traveling further, there were some issues with mobility because clay is a heavy material and needs to be stored in a way that retains its moisture, to be workable. The artists got a mobile cart with storage bins, which helped, but then with the continued success and reach of the project they began to run out of materials.

Having enough clay started to become a problem…we were carrying the cart up on the stairs and in the train. Taking the train, going to different neighborhoods…So then we came up with [a] cart [that] fit it in suitcase. So we can travel… But then on a certain level, it was not mobile enough, like after, because then you have the clay we would carry. But then you have the pieces, blocks of clay. They are pretty heavy.
Another challenge with the project was the after-process. They used solid blocks of clay, which have to dry very slowly (otherwise they could crack), before being fired in a kiln. Luiza and her collaborator needed a space where they could store the collection of clay and let it dry, and they could not resolve this issue. Their collaboration ended after Luiza moved to New York. Now each of them does the same project independently, “taking different directions.”

We figured out that was not working anymore because I was in New York and she was living in Chicago. And it was hard to collaborate in a distance. So she said she wants to continue and I want to continue, too. But she would like to take her own way. And I was like, “OK I am going to continue it in my own way, too.” So I thought that would probably be weird because it is like from the same thing. But I guess we are taking different directions… another transition from being collaborative to being my work.

The initial collaboration was structured so that it used the individual skills and strengths particular to each artist. So the breakup of the collaboration was not easy.

She [Niki] is mostly working with clay and ephemeral work. Working with nature. So the main interest of both of us, she brought the materiality of clay and her knowledge of all the ceramic field and I brought my interest in the city and big environment…also her interest in participation…it was really great ground for both of us bringing our interests to be together.

Luiza characterized the end of the collaboration as a “divorce.”

I call it more like a break-up because it was really traumatic… We don't talk to each other anymore… And I said marriage because it felt like we had a child together we have to figure out splitting. We had 600 pieces together—“OK, let's cut this in a half. You take half, I will take half.” And we did….So it was really breaking up… Collaboration, creating a piece with someone else. But also implication of that, how it could be difficult, the negotiation. Different interests and different perspective. In the beginning it worked pretty well, but then later became a problem in terms of how each one wants to take the project.

**Artwork #3 - Recollection (2000–2015).** Luiza’s third artwork is the piece that was selected for the Greater New York exhibit at MoMA PS 1. This piece is an installation comprising about 90 architectural miniatures—small-scale versions of larger
objects—meant to be “souvenir” objects depicting different world cities on a wood base.

Luiza arranged them in a grid so that it looks like a city similar to New York.

So I think it was around 90 or 95 miniatures that I arranged…in blocks. Almost thinking also about living in New York, this grid. So I arranged them as blocks and streets…in a more geometric way…like grid. It is the same amount of space in between the rows and the columns. Hard to organize that…remaining as planned city. So then I showed that directly on the wood base.

Luiza interpreted the piece as a different approach from her usual art practice. For the first time, she directly “appropriated” existing objects she purchased to be part of her work instead of making objects.

It is really different… Because that's the appropriation work in opposing to making…first time that I used objects that exist as the work…a way of collecting, almost like curating that selection to become a work, in opposing to making it. Conceptually, Luiza found that these miniatures created an inverse dynamic, as the size of buildings and human beings were switched—she found it interesting because she majored in architecture in college where buildings are the giant things rather than small objects to be observed. Beyond the reversal of size relationships, she was also interested in how people extract their personal memories or experiences from these mass-produced souvenirs.

It is the piece that comes from mass-produced or craftsman souvenirs that I have been collecting on travels. So they are mostly souvenirs that are sold in souvenir stores. Most of them are made in China. And my choice of them are the scale that fits in your hand…it started as this fascination by miniature but also to think about inversion of the power because usually architecture is bigger than your body to shelter you. Here in New York, there is overwhelming skyscraper that you are so small in relation to it. So I think the miniature that have that inversion is really interesting to me… Also that idea…how an object can be so embedded with experience because even if it were mass-produced, the fact of them being souvenir, how or why we buy souvenirs… So I was also interested in that. How one tiny object can bring you back to experience that you had.
**Key aspects of Luiza’s art.** There were two concepts that Luiza repeatedly referenced while explaining the three representative art works. Those ideas can help explain her art practice as well as her interests as an artist.

**Humans in “big” environment.** From the beginning of her career, Luiza has constantly been interested in architecture. More specifically, she has been interested in how relationships between humans and the urban environment have been built. Luiza approaches such relationships in multi-faceted ways, from historical to personal—She explored various urban historic architecture in *City Souvenir* whereas she was more focused on her personal miniature collection of cities she traveled in *Recollection*. Her interests in relationships between people and spaces are also diverse, ranging from private spaces to public spaces.

In my work, I am interested in the relationship between humans and big environment. I looked to the history, the memories, but also the personal connection to it…where we live, personal experience and how we build our own history but also how we collectively connect to each other through those spaces…like cities, home, or social spaces or places where people can encounter.

**Objects with memory.** As can be seen in the discussion of Luiza’s previous two artworks: *City Souvenirs* and *Recollection*, Luiza embraces objects in two different ways related to the concept of memory. First, she either creates an object or invites participants to create by imprinting various architectural surfaces onto clay. Second, she uses ready-made objects, such as architectural miniatures depicting cities she visited. Luiza approaches these two kinds of objects with the concept of “souvenir” in mind. According to her, a souvenir is an object that “holds memory from an experience.”
Career History

Career path.

First solo exhibition in New York. While Luiza was participating in her third residency in New York, she met the owner of a gallery on the Lower East Side. Although nothing happened immediately, their relationship built up over time. Luiza guessed that gallerists want to see the consistency of an artist’s practice over a longer period of time.

So then the third residency I did was LMCC [Lower Manhattan Cultural Council]. That is really well known. So that was good to have open studio there. I met the owner of the gallery. Also it started the relationship like he is following my work. I went to see openings in the gallery and say “hi, OK, I am still here!” And like having a studio visit. It kind of took two years after I met him until I had my solo show. Everything kind of...they want to make sure what you are doing and they want to follow you. They want to see if your work keeps consistency, so I feel like everything was building up for that.

Luiza ended up having a solo show at the gallery, which happened simultaneously with exhibiting her work in a MoMA PS1 group exhibition, described below.

Museum exhibition: Greater New York at MoMA PS1. As previously mentioned, in 2015, the fourth year of her career in New York, Luiza was invited to participate in a group show, Greater New York, at MoMA PS1. This show happens every five years and its purpose is to introduce under-represented artists working in the New York area. Leading up to this time, Luiza was “doing more shows” and “applying for exhibitions and being more connected to people.” Luiza “got an email from Mary Lynn [pseudonym], the curator.” Luiza later learned that Mary Lynn “was working for Greater New York.” That first email was simply about a studio visit, and Mary Lynn was one of the high profile, young curators in New York (later, in 2017, she co-curated a major exhibition of contemporary art at a prominent New York City museum). Luiza found out who Mary Lynn was through a Google search. She asked one of her friends who had
done an internship at the museum what the goal of the studio visit might be. Her friend hinted that Mary Lynn was searching for artists for upcoming Greater New York MoMA PS1 show. However, when Mary Lynn came to Luiza’s studio, she did not mention her purpose.

She sent me an email with just one line like “I’d like to come for studio visit.” And I was surprised, cause I didn't know her at that time. I Googled her—“oh, she works for PS1.” No one told me like “oh, I am recommending your work” or anything. So it was really out of the blue. So then, she came for the studio visit and at that time, I was curious because… I had a friend. She was [previously] interning there [PS1], but she moved back to Europe. So I emailed her and said “oh, Mary Lynn said that she will have a show. Do you know what they are planning right now? What maybe she is coming for anything?’ …And then she [friend] said “oh they are planning Greater New York with young artists. Maybe she is still looking for some artists.” So I was like, “oh, cool!” It is good to know what it is, but the curator [Mary Lynn], she never mentioned anything. When she came to the studio, it was always like without saying. One of the things Luiza was curious about was how Mary Lynn got to know her work. But Mary Lynn was not very transparent about her intentions, or about how she found Luiza’s work.

One of the questions was… “How did you get to know my work?” I was curious… And she said, “oh, I think you were in the open studio.”…And I was wondering because a lot of information she gave me was not matching much…that's why it was little weird. What I think it would happen is I think she saw my work in Hyperallergic. They do…Bushwick open studio. They do 10 artists to watch. And I was featured on that. I think maybe she saw my work on that website….So it was little…like mystery (laugh). She was just like “oh, I want to see more of your work.” She didn't mention anything about what she was looking for…she didn't say anything… So I showed my work. It was great studio visit. She was really interested in asking a lot of questions about some works.

A week after the studio visit, Mary Lynn told Luiza what the studio visit was actually for.

She wrote and then she explained “I am doing this show.” She explained about Greater New York. “And I saw your work and I think that would be a really good fit to be in. We are almost done with selection”…it was three months before. So it was pretty soon. So she was like, “I know there is no time for new work.” And then she suggested, “I'd like to show this work.” That was recollection work with miniatures. The one that I showed before my solo show. So she kind of selected
[the] piece already. OK, if this is available or not. So it was like really unexpected. Really nice surprise.

To participate in the show, Luiza had to complete some paperwork for the contract. This included providing diverse details about the piece to be included, such as instructions for installation, specifications for packaging the piece, gallery representation, value of the piece for insurance purposes, and so on. The contract did not provide for a stipend for participating artists. Luiza did not have to install her piece in the museum space, but due to the “delicate” nature of her work, the curator wanted her to come check on the installation process.

Again, being invited to participate in a major museum show initially heightened Luiza’s sense of self-esteem. She felt like she had finally been recognized and that “everything pays off.”

I felt it was really nice moment because that was like 10 years of my career….It felt like really stimulating to have recognition to be in that show. As recognition like “oh, OK, everything that I have been doing so far, all the hard work, all the small shows, everything pays off because I could show at major museum.” When I moved to New York, I knew my goal would be like, “OK, I want to do a solo show, I want to be in a museum show.” That one [museum show] I knew would be a little harder. That was like my whole goal…dream came true.

On the other hand, participation in the show also came with disappointment. Luiza said that her expectations were “really high.” Through the MoMA PS1 show, she was eventually contacted by other curators to schedule studio visits. One of those visits involved curators from the New Museum. But nothing ever came from these visits.

Everybody was like, “oh, after the show, you would expect things to come more.”...I think my expectation was really high. Waiting for things to happen…only concrete thing that I had from that was a studio visit from curators from New Museum. That was like a big thing. But they were doing the Triennial…I think I had a couple of other studio visits with the gallerists in Brazil. A couple of other studio visits. But nothing came out like concrete after that.
At the opening of the Greater New York show, Luiza did not network with other artists. There were sixty artists from the exhibition there, however, Luiza did not get to know any of them. The curator, Mary Lynn, was the only person Luiza knew who was associated with the exhibition, but Mary Lynn did not introduce her to anyone. Luiza ended up only talking to her friends.

There was a big opening night but you know, it's a lot of artists…like 60 artists…I am not that social, like meeting people without knowing anything… So I was like talking to my friends… I could invite my gallerist and my husband. But then it is hard to socialize. You know, when you don't know anybody, I didn't know any artists in the show. I only knew her, the curator… I felt that's something that I was not expecting. Cause all other shows I have been participating, we always have exchange. You know the curator introduces you because it is like smaller, maybe maximum 10 artists or something. People get to know each other.

After the Greater New York show, Luiza had no further contact with the curator.

I tried to get her to see my solo show. She didn't come. And right after, she ended up starting to work for [a well-known New York City museum]. And then she changed her email but she didn't give me her new email. So I only have her old email. It's hard to keep in touch. So I never met her again after the show.

Along with the unexpected lack of success following the museum show, low records of sales from her first solo show at the Lower East Side gallery (that happened simultaneously with the MoMA PS1 show) frustrated Luiza even more.

So it seems like the goal is never-ending. You are always like, “OK, now I am in the museum. That's great. Recognition.” But then what is next? “OK, now I am more professional.” So, I guess there is a big frustration. “OK I am here. Great. I am in the museum but I don't get paid for that. How can I still pay my bills? How can I still do this?” So I think that was expectation of me financially like, “OK, how can I keep this financially?” …And then, I started to think about what is success. What success means. What it could be. Which level we have that. um...so, yeah, I guess it was a little bit of frustration of like, “OK, I got all of this but nothing changed in terms of financially.” You know, an artist has to have solo show, have a gallery, to have a museum show. So that's the way to do it. And then when I got it, I was like, “Wait! Is this what everybody is talking about? Is that it?” You know but nothing changed. All kind of similar. I ended up being...I had to take a break after that.
**Making a living from art.** After the MoMA PS1 show, Luiza felt deeply frustrated and disoriented. It was difficult to find ways to pursue her career and survive solely on income from her art practice. However, through a conversation with her graduate school mentor, she was able to overcome her dissatisfaction. Accepting the fact that she could not live off the proceeds from her art, she started to focus on teaching—thereby freeing her art practice from the burden of money making.

When I went back to one of my shows in Chicago, I had a conversation with one of my mentors, Anne Wilson. She is a professor and she was my advisor, being really supportive. And I was telling her the frustration of being in the major show—all the goals but not being able to survive from the work. And she was like, “yeah, that happens.” She was telling about her own experience, too. Having the teaching job as a way of keeping her life going, not having to compromise her work to sell. I always remember the question, she was like, “are you doing colorful paintings?” And I am like, “no, I do everything but not colorful paintings.” And then she was like, “yeah, colorful painting is what is sold most. Are you compromising your work to sell?” And I am like, “no, of course not.”…So she made me think a lot about that. Because I did everything I could…to sell the work. The way I believe my work in the way I want to do it. And commercially it was not as I was expecting… So I had to re-think…that through. And say “OK, I don't feel that way.” Every time I do a show [I] was like, “oh, is it gonna be sold? Is it not?” So then, I decided to focus on my teaching. I was teaching at the time already but I decided to look for more jobs and have like this kind of academia that is where I have my income. And then I can do whatever I want for my art without being that frustration.

Based on her own experiences and her observations of the cases of fellow artists, Luiza more firmly realized that being a full-time artist who makes a living solely from income from art is the exception. She questioned the meaning of the term “emerging,” because despite the level of her career history and level of achievement, she still feels that she is “emerging.”

The percentage of artists that could do that is so low. I feel like that is exception. It is not for everybody…I guess some are able to do really well….I feel like there is a big gap in terms of emerging…what is considered emerging? I have been working for 12 to 13 years now. I am still the emerging but I cannot survive from
my work after having all that recognition of the work. And then I see most of my fellows. Everybody has other jobs. You know, so, I think it is a big gap between the artists that can do that and be full-time artists, opposing to emerging.

Even though Luiza felt frustrated by the fact her artwork was not selling as she had hoped, she is very firmly against the idea of compromising her artwork to be more sellable; she does not want to create a “product.” Rather, she wants to expand into more community-based art, reaching out to more diverse groups as she attempts to form a larger audience.

Nope (laugh). I don't want to do just selling…after MoMA show and all of that. I also look into my work… It is more important for me to reach out more community level instead of being a product, like instead of my work being in someone's home, hanging on a wall or pedestal. So that is also being liberating from that expectation that I had before and try to see OK, where is the right place for work to be? Who is my audience? …I feel like my practice needs to be out, being a site-specific piece or being in different context from white cube…I do more like social practice, interacting with people. I am more and more interested in that. And be able to reach out to audience that has no access to art spaces.

**Teaching job.** Luiza currently teaches undergraduate courses at Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia, as an adjunct faculty member. Acting on the suggestion of her graduate school professor, Luiza expressed her interest in teaching to the chair of the department, who was an alumna of same program Luiza attended at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

I tried to understand how it works for adjunct. So a lot of adjunct jobs are not posted. And it is all about letting people know that you are looking for jobs. So my professor in Chicago, she said, “oh, this student.” I know her because I was overlapped a year with her. “She is the Chair of Fiber Material Studies Department in Philadelphia. Why don't you send your CV to her and tell that you are interested?” So it was kind of her recommendation to look for her…I sent, OK I would be interested in coming to Philly and teach. So let me know. You know, sending the CV and everything. And then I was really lucky because she said, “oh, now we are full. We have a schedule already. But I will keep you in mind.” And suddenly like a month after I sent my things, she was like, "oh, the professor kind of gave up. She quit a month before the semester started. So would you take the class?” And I was like, “yeah, of course!”
As Luiza lives in Queens, she commutes by bus to Philadelphia twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sometimes she stays in Philadelphia, renting an AirBnB, but she usually returns the same day, especially when she needs to work in her studio.

It takes me three hours door to door to get there. Two times a week. Cause they split the class. All the classes over there are two times a week. So two hours and a half on Tuesdays and two hours and a half on Thursdays. So my first semester was commuting...I spent more time on commuting than teaching... But then next semester, she offered two classes and then OK, now is good because at least I have doubled payment.

**Balance between teaching and art making.** Although Luiza enjoys her teaching job and finds benefits beyond the monetary—such as an influence from students on her art making—she expressed the fact that the job drained her energy and created hardship in the balance between teaching and art making.

I really enjoy teaching in university but it consumes you so much. That doesn't let you have energy to think of your own practice. So basically, in the two years that I have been teaching, I have been focused on teaching and having just summer time, a couple of months to focus on my work... Learning and that sharing with students are helping a lot with my practice but I feel like I would, you know... maybe teaching one class instead of teaching four or five classes. So far, Luiza has not applied for a full-time teaching job. She feels she needs more time for her art practice. Plus, she wants to stay in New York, even if she may not be able to get a full-time teaching job here.

I mean I have been thinking about it, but I haven't applied. I don't know, I might want to do that in the future... I just feel like I need a little break to come back to my practice, cause I have been teaching so much... I think that is always the goal, to have a balance between teaching, the work, the physical...personal life, like the health life. I know a full-time job in New York is really hard [to get]. Because most of the schools are doing just adjuncts. For now, I am still thinking to be in New York. I don't want to move to other states or other places to have a full-time job.
Logistics for art making.

Minimum conditions for art making. Luiza specified sketchbooks as her minimum condition for making art. For her, they are the most basic way to record creative ideas, even when she cannot directly visualize those ideas in terms of physical work.

The minimum condition for me would be my sketchbook….I cannot be without making or thinking creatively….I need to put my ideas, record my ideas somewhere….I always keep all of them. But I always feel like when they are there, I still can, even if I don't have all of the elements, I can come back there. And then I could, you know…if I have time, but I don't have a studio, what work I can do? What ideas…can come and push through if I don't have all of that?

Storage/transportation. As a sculptor who uses diverse materials, storage always has been an issue for Luiza. Her struggles with finding space have even made her want to re-conceptualize her art practice.

Yeah, that's a big problem, when you do sculpture. As I mentioned, I had porcelain pieces. Ten boxes just for that work. So that started to become a problem in New York as space being so expensive. My previous studio was mix between my storage and my studio. I didn't want to pay extra rent for storage. So I ended up having a…place where I was working, just piling up, building shelves. Since I moved to the studio here [her apartment] in the basement, luckily we do have a garage. So the garage is full with my work and material besides the work I have in my studio. So it is pretty crazy. When I moved everything here, I was like OK, wait, I need to rethink…a little bit of my practice… Since I mentioned that I am not selling that much, so I am accumulating…a lot.

Previously, she had done some ephemeral artwork. From the beginning, Luiza knew that she wouldn’t be able to keep those pieces. This has made her realize the hardship of finding space to store things.

I did some installations that were ephemeral. I was using salt and just pouring salt into a certain shape. I did another installation where I was using debris and earth to make a drawing on the floor like a mandala thing… And that is something that I am coming back to now. Every time I have to move, I realize how much stuff I have and how much sculptures and things I am accumulating. And I start to
rethink about that longevity and how things can become more portable and ephemeral.

Luiza’s choice and use of material also affects transportation, as she describes below.

In Korea, I brought my luggage to my solo show. I only selected the works that were not heavy….Like works that are compact or things I can roll. So, after that show… I was thinking about that, the difficulty of my work, having to depend on transportation. Like heaviness as opposed to other artists like those who work with video, their works are more portable, and you can just send the work without needing…a budget for transportation or an art handler. Yeah, I am becoming more interested in seeing that mobility…. When I had to bring three hundred pieces from Chicago, paying for the transport myself, it just became unsustainable. You know, we always hope one day, museums and galleries will pay for that. But that is not happening.

Now when she gets an offer to exhibit her work, she becomes more selective by determining whether the gallery has a sufficient budget, so that she doesn’t have to pay out of her own pocket for transportation. In her recent show, the gallery offered her a choice between airline tickets or a shipping fee, Luiza chose the flight tickets to travel there with her artwork.

After having enough shows in my CV, then I am like, “OK, I don’t need to kill myself or pay from my pocket to work.” I am being more conscious and aware of, “OK, do you have a budget for the show?” …Like the show I had in Miami, they asked me, “oh, we want your sculpture.” I was like, “OK, how are we gonna do transportation? Because it is heavy…..” And they were like, “do you want to bring [it] in your luggage? Then we will pay your flight and you come, or do you want to ship that and not come?” And I was like, “no, I want to come.” It was my choice of bringing [the work in] the luggage.

**Applying for opportunities.** Although she has major museum show experience, Luiza is still applying for opportunities. She is now more selective in applying for these, researching beforehand what kinds of supports are provided.

Oh, yeah, I feel like it is endless…application in life (laugh). I am still applying for shows, funding, teaching jobs… I think I apply for two or three things per month. So that means it would be around 30 applications per year? Maybe I would get two or three? …But I am being more selective. I am like “OK, now I
am applying for things that…have money…they have conditions.” Before I was like, “oh no, I just need a show. I just need to show my work.” I guess now when hunting for opportunities [I am] looking…for better opportunities.

**Daily routine/weekly schedule.** At the time of our conversations, Luiza was teaching three days a week and had two full weekdays for herself, but she spent those two days for teaching preparation. On weekends, Luiza tries to have “one day off” in order to have a personal life, but with the demands of teaching and her art practice that has not been possible. On the other weekend day, Luiza does administrative catch-up work.

So I am teaching in this semester three times a week… And I feel like my two days that I am not teaching. I am preparing for those classes (laugh). So you know, getting the reading and scanning things, preparing assignments. So I feel like it is really hard to focus on the work because of that…then on weekends, I am trying to get one day off. But that has been unlikely for past three months. So I tried to manage personal life, taking care of home. Maybe that would be one day a week. And then other day, I would do emails and following up something.

Luiza expressed how difficult it was to find studio time while teaching. She said, “during the school semester while I am teaching, I am not making much work. And then I have summer-time where I am able to create new work and being in the studio with making.”

Luiza is currently preparing for an upcoming group show. Despite the lack of time, she tries to challenge herself by proposing new work.

I got the show, prepare for the show but…I am doing mostly like you know, sending photograph, negotiating which work I am gonna show in the show but I still want to propose new piece cause I am excited to show my new work… I am like, “oh my god, how I am gonna [find] that time to make this work?” (laugh). But…trying to challenge myself. And just like, “OK, forget your days off and forget your personal life and just make the work.”

**Making a living.** Luiza was not able to work in New York until four years ago, due to the visa issue. Last year, she earned the most money she has ever made in her life.

The last year was the year I had the highest income…because I was teaching in university for…the year. So I think that was the only year I have positive…in terms of not spending more than I gain. But…I did less work, like my art practice. So, weird situation. Making more money whereas less art practice. Before that…I
didn't have a Green Card. I couldn't work. So I was mostly focused on my art practice but without any income or selling… So, when I got my Green Card, it is when I started to teach and started to have income.

In the beginning of her career in New York, Luiza did not have to pay for studio rent, as she had been accepted for residency programs that provided studio space free of charge. But when she started to earn income on her own through a teaching job, she started renting a studio. However, until recent years, she had not been able to cover the cost of materials with her own income.

And then… I decided to rent a studio because I was tired of residencies, of moving every 6 months. Always depending on applications and spaces, and start to accumulate a lot of things. Studio-wise, like the sculptures and materials and everything. So I decided to rent a studio space. So then my teaching was covering my rent [studio] but not my material. So I was still like paying to work. So, I guess that happened for a couple of years. And then it started to be… kind of even.

Her husband’s full-time job covers all of the home expenses. Luiza admitted that she would have had to give up her career a long time ago without his support. Since her income increased through teaching, she began to take care of the expenses for art making on her own.

If it was not my husband, I couldn't make a living. So he is the one doing the home expenses with his full-time job… This year and the past year is different but before that… what I was spending in studio rent, materials, and everything, I was doing like zero. If it was not [for] my husband, I would give up to be an artist like a long time ago because I couldn't make it.

One of the ways to sustain her art practice, even with her husband’s support, was lowering her expenses. In order to do that, Luiza recently stopped renting a studio space and moved her workspace to the basement of her home in Queens. There, she has “more space” and is “relieved” because she is “spending much less money.” However, it’s a compromise for Luiza and her husband because before relocating her studio, “we used to have more living space.”
**Basic elements for art making (space, material, time) and Luiza’s additional elements.** In response to direct questions about the three basic elements for artmaking that are the focus of the dissertation, Luiza talked only about time in a direct way. However, from an analysis of her practice, it is possible to see how she thinks about space and material as well.

**Space.** As she mentioned about her issue with storage, Luiza thinks about space as being necessary for creating her work as well as for storage of artwork and materials. Although studio space constraints have prompted her to come up with new ideas and approaches in her work, like portability, she sees her work as requiring a dedicated space.

**Material.** Luiza uses a variety of materials ranging from typical sculpting material (clay, latex, plaster) to ephemeral materials such as sand and salt. She did not show any concern with the cost of materials. Rather, she showed more concern with storage and transportation fees for materials.

**Time.** As mentioned above, Luiza talked mostly about time as being necessary to her art practice, and she delineated the meaning of its different purposes—this included, among many other components, time for networking.

I guess time is implicit. The making. Time for application, time for research. So I guess the time is all included in that. And if you include time to network, cause I feel like if you just having time in your studio, it is not enough. So I don't know if you would include that kind of social network, out of that time… I feel like it is completely different effort, like being in your studio when making the work or managing bureaucracies that I have to deal with, financial and everything. With time, then you need to do network…you know it is different effort. Going to friends' openings and meeting people…saying OK, I am still here, saying what you are working on. So I felt like I don't like to do that part but I feel like it is necessary.
Summary of Luiza

I was able to draw the following key findings related to the research questions from my analysis of Luiza’s responses. Luiza was the only artist among the four study participants who had the experience of taking part in a show at a major contemporary art museum in New York City. This experience not only impacted Luiza’s idea of the sustainability of the life of an artist, but also can be connected to a question for this research: Where we can draw a line between boundaries of established and under-established artists? As Luiza’s case clearly touches upon this fundamental question about a career path in the fine arts, as well as the status of an artist, this will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5, along with the other three participants’ cases.

In regard to the basic three elements for art making—and specifically space and material in Luiza’s case—they are discussed together below, due to their connections.

**Space and material.** Luiza has not experienced being without a studio or living a nomadic existence in temporary spaces. Many parts of her artwork embrace the mobility, portability and sometimes ephemerality of materials. In addition, her interests in social practice (also known as socially engaged art) and her perception of space—especially for exhibiting art—has expanded outside of traditional gallery spaces. On the other hand, she has experienced an increasing lack of storage space. Despite the mobility and portability of some of her pieces, Luiza tends to keep all of her artwork and materials, even if they are heavy, like plaster and clay. This has led to difficulties with transporting her work, and has recently made her rethink the future direction of her art practice.

**Time.** In regard to time, Luiza is experiencing difficulty with time-management, especially during school semesters, as her teaching load has been increased. Thus, her
strategy is more inclined toward investing more time for production of art during summer breaks, while using the semesters when she teaches to develop new ideas related to her artistic career, while also working on administrative tasks.

Summary of Chapter IV

In this chapter, the interview data of all four participants (Jun, Angela, Greg, and Luiza) was presented in a narrative form, including direct quotes from interviews. The chapter examined each artist’s strategies for and struggles in art making, their perceptions of the elements of space, material, and time in their art practice, and elements of their personal lives, art practice, and career histories before and after coming to New York.

To briefly summarize the findings here, the participants have maintained their artistic careers in different circumstances and situations. However, it is possible to identify some commonalities across the group, as well as partial similarities in groupings of two or three. Basically, all four artists proactively deal with the realities they face, creatively dealing with frustration within and beyond their art practices in their own ways. Some of them embrace their given conditions as part of the concept of their art—Jun’s space-responsive artwork and Angela’s discarding of her artwork after documenting it with photography or video—whereas some build new ideas by disengaging with such frustration—Greg’s moving wall. Although an in-depth comparative analysis will be conducted in Chapter V, in what follows I summarize key findings among the participants. This data is based on the three basic elements of space, material, and time, and themes emerging from those concepts.

In terms of space, Jun and Angela’s approaches were rather non-traditional compared to Greg and Luiza’s. Both Jun and Angela did not feel constrained by not
having a permanent studio space, whereas studio space is a non-negotiable condition for Greg and Luiza. In regards to residential spaces, while all four artists did not express serious concerns, in the cases of Jun, Angela, and Greg it was more of an issue, as they all had experiences of nomadic living. And while Luiza did not have any such experience with constantly changing residences, she did indicate that studio space for art making and storage was critical to her practice. In the case of exhibition spaces, all four artists had the experience of working on site to some degree. While Jun and Angela are very familiar with discarding their artwork after exhibitions, Greg and Luiza tend to keep much of their work, including artwork and materials.

When it comes to materials, all four artists are to some degree concerned with issues of mobility and portability of these items. Jun and Angela also care about the accessibility of materials. By lowering the cost of what they use, as well as by including materials they can easily obtain, they can make art on any budget and anywhere. On the other hand, Greg and Luiza are interested in making small objects and paintings, which in some cases are arranged all together to create a larger size installation.

Lastly, with regard to time, all of the artists identified time as the most important basic element for art making. Compared to the other three artists, Jun showed the least constraints with time. Angela, Greg, and Luiza have certain types of daily and weekly routines—parenting, part-time jobs, or teaching. Jun is the only one who does not have these commitments. This is partially due to an increase of exhibition opportunities from different parts of the world, but at the same time, it is also his choice to maximize his time for making art. In the cases of Angela, Greg, and Luiza, they similarly invest more time for art making during certain periods, especially when they are preparing for a show,
whereas they spend more time on administrative efforts at other times, keeping a daily/weekly routine.

In addition to findings based on the three basic elements for art making, some additional themes that were not necessarily anticipated ahead of the interviews naturally emerged in the data analysis. Some of these recurring ideas—such as creative constraints, acceptance of not knowing the future, and a dualistic mindset between artistic integrity and commercial success—were expressed by some or all of the participants. Moreover, all four artists, although they used different terms to explain the ideas, suggested additional elements related to art making. These additional elements are dialogue, audience, a sense of community, and networking. These elements have something in common, in that artists want to feel connected with others. Finally, as this research focuses on the lives of artists in New York City and all participants expressed their positions on issues with gentrification, urban life in New York will be discussed in Chapter V as well.

Chapter V will expand on the findings and themes mentioned above through further thematic, comparative analysis of the participants’ responses. This discussion of the data analysis will also be linked to related literature, much of which was presented in Chapter II.
Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

According to Charles Batteux, who was the first to use the term “fine arts” in publication in 1746, the fine arts are different from other types of arts because they pursue “pleasure for their end” (cited in Kristeller, 1951, p. 21). This distinction still holds in some scholars’ more recent writing about contemporary art—according to Harrington (2004), fine arts may be considered as “all [becoming] capable of realization and contemplation for their own sake, without regard to practical purpose or utility” (p. 13).

However, while the fine arts may be seen as objects, events or activities produced with the goal of providing pleasure, or for their own sake and not some instrumental purpose, the real life of the fine artist is not accordingly associated with “pleasure for [its own] end” (Batteaux, 1746, in Kristeller, 1951, p. 21), nor does it completely disregard “practical purpose or utility” (Harrington, 2004, p. 13). While artists’ works do not necessarily originate from a utilitarian mindset, when exploring the life of an artist, complex and multi-level analysis is necessary for understanding the type of preparation necessary for the artist to begin a practice that might produce artworks that seek “pleasure for their end” (p. 21). The cases of the four artists who participated in this study vividly reflect the complex and individual universe of art making. This chapter discusses how they use a practical mindset in order to realize their non-utilitarian art work, and how they put an equal amount of effort into such preparation as they put into art making (most of
them actually embrace the preparatory and managerial process as a significant part of their artistic career).

The discussion in this chapter pertains to the two main research questions for the dissertation, which are as follows:

Artists often find it difficult to live on their art practices, and this necessitates locating other sources of income. This also challenges the sustainability of their artistic careers due to the inability to secure studio space, have a satisfactory budget for materials, and make sufficient time to concentrate on their art production. Therefore, what kind of strategies do low-income, under-established artists in New York build, especially with regard to space, material, and time, in order to sustain their art practice? And how do these strategies affect the nature of their art?

Based on the research questions and key concepts from the related literature, this analysis of the findings given in Chapter IV, is presented according to six themes to be discussed in this chapter. The six themes are as follows:

1. Boundary-less space
2. Attachment to and detachment from material
3. Multi-purposeful time
4. Creative constraints
5. Artist’s learning through experience
6. Artist’s integrity related to support systems

Among the six themes listed above, the first three themes are directly linked to the research questions, with their focus on space, material, and time as the basic elements for
art making. I developed and rephrased all three of these elements and designated them as themes to be discussed based on the commonalities and differences between the four artists related to these themes.

The first theme, *boundary-less space*, mainly deals with how the four artists approach the concept of space. This includes all kinds of space they use and encounter, such as the studio, living space, and exhibition space. After exploring the commonalities and uniqueness of each artist’s tactical use of space, their stories are discussed along with literature detailing various concepts of space in art history, as well as in contemporary art—from the traditional notion of artist’s space (Jones, 1996), such as the *studiolo* and *bottega* in the Renaissance Period (Wallace, 2014), to more contemporary examples like “post-studio”\(^1\).

The second theme is *attachment to and detachment from material*. This theme elucidates two different attitudes toward materials that are found among the four participants. Although they are similarly involved in diverse media and open-minded about widening the boundaries of their art practices, rather than putting themselves into closed forms, media and styles, when it comes to the issue of whether to keep their work after exhibition, the artists showed different tendencies and preferences, especially toward materials. In this light, it is apparent that even after their initial purchase, art making materials generate different types of costs. Therefore, analysis of the cost of materials should be multi-leveled and sub-categorized, including the costs of buying, keeping, and transporting those materials. On the other hand, attitudes toward materials varied depending on the personal tendencies of the artists. In this respect, Jun and Angela

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\(^1\) It is hard to pinpoint when and by whom the term was first coined. To see the origins of the term, see p. 44.
were closer in preference, whereas Greg and Luiza can be grouped together. By separating the four artists into two groups, the idea of how attachment to and detachment from material differentiated and influenced their practices and logistics for art making can be analyzed. This discussion is also linked to the literature from the hierarchies in different arts based on relying on material from the perspective of ancient Greek philosophy (Wagner, 2001), the collapse of boundaries between art materials and everyday objects (Bushirk, 2003; Manco, 2012), and the concept of the dematerialization of art in the early 1960s and 70s (Lippard & Chandler, 1968; Lippard, 1997).

The third theme is *multi-purposeful time*, and it deals with how artists use a certain segment of time for more than one purpose. Although all four artists use time in different ways, they tend to try taking advantage of designated time for non-art related activities by making it valuable for their art making or careers. In addition, when participating in exhibitions most of them compress their efforts and production time by actively using opportunities to work on site. Within this theme, how the artists perceive the nature of time, value their time and intentionally merge different uses of time is discussed. In this part of the discussion, due to the absence of specific literature on artists’ time-management, I had to expand my literature sources into various fields, such as art theory, art criticism, economics, and psychology/neuroscience. This allowed for an examination of how artists perceive time in non-conventional ways, how artists merge time for life and art, how many multiple tasks and jobs artists take on within a given time period, and the efficiency and cost of multitasking with some jobs versus others. Therefore, perception of time from a non-industrialized perspective (Woodcock, 1944), and a hierarchical view of time in ancient Greek philosophy (Raqs Media Collective,
2011) are referenced as a basis of non-conventional notions of time. In addition, Taiwanese artist Teching Hsieh’s extended one-year performance and critical writings about his work by art historian Adrian Heatfield (2009) are included as an example of merging art and life. Lastly, economists Throsby and Zednik’s (2011) study on the multiple jobs artists hold and psychological analysis on the efficiency of multi-tasking (Fisher & Plessow, 2015; Kiesel et al., 2010) are included for the purpose of discussing the reality of artists’ multi-tasking and the resulting productivity based on the kind of jobs and tasks they are involved with.

As mentioned above, there are three additional themes that emerge from the process of data analysis. They are related to the common attitudes of these four artists toward creatively dealing with constraints, acquiring learning from experiences, and maintaining artistic integrity, along with use of various support systems.

The fourth theme is titled creative constraints. It focuses on how the artists overcome certain limitations and further use creative solutions to transform them into unique outcomes. With an overview of those constraints, the discussion focuses on specific moments and episodes where artists transform limitation into a source of creativity. Literature about constraints is included in this part of the discussion. Constraints have frequently been studied in conjunction with creativity in a diverse array of fields. This theme is discussed in conjunction with two studies focusing on creativity and constraint: Elster’s (2000) categorization of three sources of constraint (intrinsic, imposed, and self-imposed) and Onarheim and Biskjær’s (2013) binary approach to constraint, with designated restrainers and enablers. This analytic approach to distinction
between constraints is used for in-depth understanding of a variety of constraints the four artists are grappling with.

The fifth theme is *artist’s learning through experience*. This theme mainly deals with what the four artists have learned from their practical experiences in out-of-school settings, and further, how they have applied such experiences to their life and art practices. In life experiences ranging from travel, day jobs, poverty, tragedy, failure, struggle, to exhibition experience, all four artists have encountered various practical experiences beyond their school education and constantly updated and developed themselves based on those experiences in order to make their careers more sustainable. In this part of the discussion, literature related to instability and the unpredictability of artistic careers that necessitates constant learning is introduced. As discussed in Chapter II, Raqs Media Collective (2009) differentiated the “artist’s education” from general education, where preparatory periods and practice periods are clearly divided. In artist’s education, artists have to constantly find motivations to support their convictions regarding why they have to be artists and they have to continuously construct the contexts and conditions (“networks of solidarity and sociality”) that make art practice possible (p. 76).

The four artists in this study, although they are all professionals, are still in a mode of learning for their next step, whether that be artwork, studio time, or an exhibition. This endless mode of hunting for temporal opportunities is supported by the “Opportunism” concept of philosopher Paulo Virno (2004), who saw the term not as a negative connotation but as an inevitable attitude toward a notion of work in contemporary society, where the concept of a stable job is shifted and the rate of change
in the job market is accelerated. In this part of the discussion, which includes a more in-depth analysis of the four participants’ learning, David Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is utilized, as Kolb saw that effective learning is based on experience, while being in transition between reflection, observation, conceptualization, and experiments in regard to such experience. In order to discuss the learning paths of the four participants, Kolb’s four learning cycles—Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE) are utilized.

The last theme is artistic integrity related to support systems. This part of the discussion focuses on how the artistic integrity of the four participants has been managed, along with the use of a diverse artist support system. This discussion is also linked to a sense of ownership that is strongly held by each of the four participants in terms of verifying given opportunities for promoting their art practice. According to the interviews, it was possible to find that unclear boundaries of artistic integrity and a strong sense of ownership have often conflicted with various sources of artistic opportunities as well as systemic support (exhibitions, fellowships, grants) and reward (artist fees, exhibition fees, and sales of artwork). During the interviews, the artists attested that they do not refuse sales of their artwork, nor do they reject the idea of living off of their art. However, all four artists similarly made it clear that their primary intention is not to make art to sell as a product. They all want to maintain artistic integrity as well as ownership over their art practice, and not be commission-based creators in the sense of being directed to make their art in a certain way. As there is no unified standard in regard to how artists should be treated and how much artists can demand certain creative labor
rights, this part of the discussion examines the individual experiences and mind-sets of the four artists and draws a partial conclusion relative only to the participants. For the this part of the discussion, literature related to the status of artists in history, such as John Ruskin’s political economy of art (cited in Codell, 2008 and Vodokle, 2013), and recent movements related to artist collectives and unions, such as Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC) (Bryan-Wilson, 2009) and W.A.G.E. will be presented and discussed. Plus, there is non-art literature that addresses the status of artists as well as dispositions of artists, such as “charismatic ideology” by Pierre Bourdieu (1996) in sociology, Human Capital Theory that analyzed artists as not “rational maximisers” in economics (Abbing, 2002, cited in Towse, 2006, p. 879). Lastly, more constructive analysis on artists’ tendencies toward the market is found from Fillis (2010) in the field of marketing, who positions product-oriented marketing of artists as innovative and as fitting well with current market trends, as opposed to a consumer-oriented market. Despite the separation of the six themes, the participants’ episodes and stories related to each theme are often duplicated and interwoven, because in many cases a single episode has various aspects that resonate across multiple themes.

**Organization of the Chapter**

The discussion of each theme consists of two separate parts. The first part is a summary of relevant literature from Chapter II, which functions as a precursor for the direction of the discussion. The second part is a cross-case analysis that is conducted through comparison between the cases of the four artists. It is more focused on how themes appear through commonalities between artists, and how differently the theme is applied depending on their situations and the characteristics of their artwork.
Theme 1: Boundary-less Space

Unlike other immaterial forms of art, such as poetry or music, many forms of visual art are heavily involved with physical space. Even if an artist intentionally tries to avoid use of space or minimize reliance on it, visual art requires materiality to be visualized for audiences. Some artists need space for production of their art, some need storage for material and artwork, and even artists who strategically design their art practice to be free from such physical constraints still need, at least, temporary space for exhibiting their outcome.

Collectively, issues of space for the four artists in this study fit all of the categories mentioned above. The artists are equally aware of the significance of space and developed their own strategies to creatively deal with it, and sometimes to overcome unwanted obstacles. Undoubtedly space is one of the most pressing issues an artist has to wrestle with in order to sustain an art practice, and there are fruitful insights that can be pulled from the cases of these four artists. In this theme, I discuss how each participant approached the concept of space based on their own philosophy of art, characteristics of their art practice, available resources and personal disposition.

Literature Relevant to the Theme

To circle back on several key references previously mentioned in the Literature Review (Chapter II), in art history, early spaces for art making were for on-site work, as artists made commissioned murals or sculptures that were part of church architecture in the Middle Ages. It was during the Renaissance that the concept of the studio emerged in its modern sense. During that time, artist space was divided into two functions: space for production (bottega) and space for contemplation and study of artworks (studiolo)
(Wallace, 2014). Since then, over the course of art history, different kinds of artist’s spaces have existed, from *atelier* in French, workshop in English, and *bottéghe* in Italian. Among them, studio has been the most romanticized, as it implies a space for a genius who enjoys “a sense of isolation” for the pursuit of creativity. (Jones, 1996, p. 4) As the act of making art has become equal to the act of questioning its own boundaries, many traditions and preconceived notions have been subject to doubt over the course of art history. In fact, the conventional studio approach has been questioned, especially since the 1960’s when the term “post-studio” emerged with a conceptual art movement that asserted the concept of the “de-materialization of art” (Falb et al., 2015; Green, 2001; Jones, 1996.)

**Cross-case Analysis**

By comparing the responses of the four artists regarding their conceptions of space, it is possible to identify four different, but related, traits. First, Jun has been trying to combine spaces for art production, living, and exhibition together. Second, Angela is flexible in her mode of art making and artist career-related tasks, based on the conditions and availability of space. Third, Greg has a strong obsession with having a studio space. Therefore, he has come up with creative solutions, such as building a movable wall in a shared area in order to maximize the use of space with a limited budget. Lastly, Luiza also has a strong need for studio space. However, her public art projects—because they are produced largely outside the studio—lead to fewer space constraints.

**Studio/storage/exhibition.** Among the four artists, Jun and Angela approach the studio more as an added benefit for art making, whereas Greg and Luiza follow the traditional notion of the studio as a permanent workspace for art. Jun and Angela do not
refuse the idea of having a studio, but they are not concerned enough about it to have to rent one out of their own expenses. In Angela’s case, she acquires temporary studio spaces by applying for term-based artist-in-residence programs that give her free space for a certain period. Based on the availability of space, Angela breaks her art-related tasks into two parts: when she has a studio, she focuses on production, and when she does not have one, she does art-related administrative work. Plus, Angela is very familiar with shifting into different modes of making art based on given circumstances. In fact, she has adapted to various spaces by using more simple and non-hazardous materials. For example, she uses pencil and paper in a domestic setting, whereas she uses paint and clay in a studio setting. In the case of clay, she utilizes a communal ceramic studio, which costs less than having an independent space. One of the reasons why Angela has been able to switch her mode of art making very quickly depending on the availability of space is that she is not concerned about keeping her artwork. (This is discussed further under the second theme regarding material).

In Jun’s case, because he majored in sculpture in college, he came from a background where studio space was significantly valued. He used to make large size sculptures using heavy materials that consumed a lot of space. However, after he moved to New York, the increased price for space made him rethink the direction of his art practice, as well as his lifestyle. He realized that there was a contradiction between space and time, as he had to consume time to make money to pay for space. To overcome this constraint, he intentionally got rid of his living space and started to live in his studio during graduate school. After graduation, although he had rented several apartments with his friends for a while, the idea of merging living space with studio space intensified.
Jun’s commitment to this lifestyle increased four years ago when he basically became nomadic.

On the other hand, even though Jun does not worry about having permanent, solitary studio space, he is the one who cannot make art without space at all. More than any of the other participants, he needs on-site space in which to simultaneously construct and exhibit his art. In fact, space is the core subject of his practice, which is all about how he responds to and interacts with various spaces. Interestingly, his obsession with space as a main subject for his art conversely led him to be free from the burden of securing a permanent studio. The more Jun becomes concerned with space, the less he wants to work in the same location multiple times. He finds that it diminishes his inspiration. Jun needs new space to create new work—art that can only exist in the space where it was initially produced. “Site-specificity” (Kwon, 2002) is the term referring to artwork that can only exist and maintain its value in a specific place. It may sound like this concept includes many restrictions and constraints. However, in Jun’s case, the seeming restriction—his artwork can only exist in the space in which he initially installs it for a show or personal collection—conversely opens up more diversity and availability in his use of space. Jun has been using all of the locations given to him for production of art, from exhibition spaces in galleries or museums to the private space of a collector’s house. In this respect, his tactic to free himself from the burden of permanent studio space is not merely an alternative to the unaffordability of space, but an inseparable concept of his art that makes it more unique and appealing to many audiences.

On the other hand, Greg and Luiza put significant value on permanent studio space. Neither of them has ever lived without a studio. Greg’s ideal is closer to the
romanticized model of the studio. Greg is the one who faithfully follows the Latin root of studio, *stadium*, which is a sibling of the word “study.” For Greg, the studio is, as Jones (1996) defines it, “a special space as well as a contemplative activity or concentrated frame of mind” (p. 2). Experimenting with different types of materials inspires Greg, and the studio is an irreplaceable part of the premise for executing such an experiment. He said, “to me…[the] most scary [thing] is…losing the studio…” Therefore, Greg’s tactic for overcoming space constraints has been more engaged with developing creative solutions for keeping a permanent studio, rather than re-contextualizing the relationship between his art practice and space. The movable wall he built in one of his previous shared studios is an example of these creative solutions. Although he does not mention it directly, what he and his studio mate did is very close to the concept of a “time-share,” which is a common arrangement in artist studios in New York, where rent is high and many artists cannot afford to have their studios full-time. So artists rent out their space for specific amounts of time in a day or a week (usually during their day jobs). This time-share concept can be connected to the recent boom of the “sharing economy,” where through the system created by start-ups such as Uber and AirBnB, people can maintain primary use of a car or house, while sharing the partial cost by renting it out when the owner does not use it exclusively. Sung et al. (2018, p. 1) pointed out that “unused idle resources” are main components to be pooled in a sharing economy in order to “reduce waste” and further “contributes to the increase of common interests in society.”

Recently, a new online platform for finding temporary studio, appropriating Airbnb, came out. It is called *StuStu*—it stands for studio+sublet (Lesser, 2017). Unlike other online platforms many artists (not only in New York but also in other cities) have
relied on for their studio searches (such as Craigslist and the Listing Project) the former is mixed with a variety of postings and the latter is more specialized for artists, but includes long-term lease and short-term sublets together. Stusu is more focused on sublets—“where one artist rents out another’s studio for a period of days, weeks, or months”—and is also used “to fill spots in shared workspaces, and even to arrange studio swaps among artists” (Lesser, 2017, para. 7). Even the website design of Stusu is quite similar to Airbnb, but instead of checking “the number of bedrooms,” Stusu users can search their desired studios by price per day, shared or private spaces, and square footage (para. 8). Although Stusu’s case is not directly connected to Greg’s time share, both show that the temporary use of studio space and acquiring full use of a space can actually be broken down into smaller units of time, as Stusu’s search can be done based on minimum time per day.

In contrast to Greg, Luiza is not as attached to her studio space. This is because significant parts of her art practice involve engagement with public art. Her social practice also frequently happens outside and intentionally targets certain public spaces. One of the benefits of public art projects is that artists can produce and exhibit art at the same time and in the same place. Even given this lack of need to make her work in a studio space, Luiza has kept her studio, and one of the reasons is that she constantly needs storage space for her material and artwork. (This is further discussed in the following theme, attachment to and detachment from material).

**Work on site/exhibition space.** All four artists are familiar with working on site, or at the location where their artwork is exhibited. As installation and site-specific artworks have proliferated in contemporary art, the boundary between making art and
exhibiting art has blurred. Here, Daniel Buren’s “post-studio” is a related concept (cited in Faib et al., 2015). Post-studio is not focused on criticizing the value of the artist’s studio, but rather it argues with discrepancy between studio and exhibiting spaces. According to Faib et al., Buren questions the reason why artwork has to “leave its place of origin and natural habitat” (p. 7). By doing site-specific work in his studio, Buren successfully rationalized why the studio can be an exhibition place. Quoting Buren’s words—“artwork, stay at your location” and “image, remain at the site of what you depict,” Faib et al. interpret his theories as “presentism” or “localism” (p. 7).

All four artists can be linked to Buren’s idea and this is mainly because each of their artworks features some degree of a site-specific nature. As previously mentioned, “site-specificity” refers to a nature of artwork that has a value and context assigned by its specific placement. Although “site-specificity” does not directly translate to working on site, these ideas are related, especially when it comes to the perspectives of artists who regard completion of their artwork as a form of exhibition in itself. The four artists in this study frequently make their artwork at the exhibition site. And in many cases, their artwork either cannot be reproduced elsewhere or holds stronger value only when on the site. Jun makes a new installation every time he is in a new space, and his new installation depends on the type of space. Angela throws her artwork away after an exhibition and makes a new one for the next show. Greg arranges his modular painting installation differently for every show, even with the same sets of paintings. Luiza sometimes uses ephemeral material that cannot be stored. She also undertakes public art that involves temporary engagement with people. One of the benefits of working on site is that artists can simultaneously produce and show their works—therefore, it saves both
time and space. (The efficacy of working on site is also discussed in the following theme, *multi-purposeful time.*)

Space-wise, working on site benefits the artists, who can then practice exhibition making. In order to maintain an active career, artists have to engage others in experiencing their artwork. As seen in the literature regarding the history of the studio (Jones, 1996; Wallace, 2014), an artist’s studio tends to be a space for inspiration, study, experimentation, and production. In many cases, studios that artists can afford—especially in New York City—are not big enough or well enough equipped to simulate the artwork in its exhibition form. According to Greg, in the case of the established artist Tom Friedman, who has a separate room just for contemplating his artwork, it is possible to see how the artist puts importance on being able to approximate or imagine his artwork in the gallery setting.

Art critic, media theorist, and philosopher Boris Groys, in his essay, “Politics of Installation” (2009, para. 1), argued that in contemporary art practice, artists’ efforts towards art making and their efforts towards exhibition making are inseparable. In Groys’ view, art is no longer just “a source of individual works to be traded on the art market.” Rather, he claims that “contemporary art can be understood primarily as an exhibition practice” and that this duality indicates a blurred line between the roles of the artist and the curator. Groys saw that before the advent of Duchamp, “the traditional division of labor within the art system was clear.” Artists produced artworks and then curators selected and exhibited them. However, in contemporary art, “the division of labor has collapsed” and there is no “ontological” difference between “making art” and “displaying
art.” In contemporary art, efforts for making art include attempts to “show things as art” (para. 2).

All four artists in the study create installation art that involves not just hanging paintings at a designated eye level in a gallery, but a practice of designing all of the elements in the exhibition space. Art historian Marian Cousijn (2016) more specifically saw “installation art as appropriation of the exhibition.” In her view, installation art is not limited to the production of objects, but expands into designing surrounding environmental elements such as “the wall color” or “hanging height” (p. 148). In this respect, working on site benefits artists in terms of not only saving money on studio space, but also gaining practical exhibition making experience, which is increasingly significant in contemporary art.

**Giving up living space.** One of the common attitudes among the study participants is that they do not fear giving up their living space for their art practice. All of the artists except for Luiza have had the experience of living in their studios. Greg mentioned, “I had a studio even when I haven’t had an apartment… [My wife and I] slept on a studio floor.” Jun’s case is more extreme, as he has been living a nomadic life for the past three years. Though Luiza does not have the same experience, she has turned part of her living space into her studio to lower the cost of her art practice. How can these artists give up or sacrifice their living space when they have to choose between space for living and space for art making?

This question can be connected to a sense of “resourcefulness” which also is identified in the case of an artist participant in Forkert’s (2013) research. Forkert introduced the case of Robert, an artist who illegally lived in empty buildings in London.
She analyzed him as someone who “take[s] advantage of an overall condition of fragmentation and transience” and described Robert’s life style as “a transient mode of living” (p. 62)—the main advantage for Robert was paying no rent. In Forkert’s account, Robert seemed to be “proud of his resourcefulness.” And he saw the decision to “squat” as “a clever way of short-circuiting the need for paid employment” that “would take time away from his art career.” Forkert concluded that “squatting was thus a form of investment in future career success, rather than an anti-capitalist challenge to the sanctity of private property” (p. 62).

During their interviews, Jun and Greg did not express any kind of shamefulness in regard to their choices to live in their studios. Luiza also expressed a relief about her decision to transform part of her living space into a studio space, mainly because it does not cost anything. It was the best solution for them within limited resources of space and time. Further, such choices endowed them with a sense of resourcefulness, and perhaps as with the choice of Robert, the squatting artist in Forkert’s (2013) study, giving up or sacrificing living space for art making is “a clever way of short-circuiting the need for paid-employment” that would take their energy and time away from their art (p. 62).

**Summary of Theme 1**

Each of the four artists has dealt with the limits of space by coming up with individually creative solutions. Jun combined a space for art making and a space for living into one by living in a studio. Plus, the space-responsive and site-specific nature of his art practice also functioned as a solution to free Jun from the burden of having to maintain a permanent studio space. Angela also freed herself from the need for permanent studio space by becoming more flexible. She took advantage of the
availability of temporary sponsored studio spaces (artist residency programs) by utilizing
an adaptable mode of art making between production and administrative work, using
toxic material in the studio and less noxious materials at home. She also minimized
expense for space by using a communal studio on an as-needed basis, especially for her
ceramic work. Both Jun and Angela were not interested in renting space for working. On
the other hand, Greg’s creative solution to the limitation of space was executed within the
traditional context of a permanent studio. Rather than re-contextualizing the concept of
space in conjunction with his art practice like Jun and Angela do, Greg came up with the
idea of a “time-share” by making a movable wall. This came out of his realization that he
and his studio mates use the space at different times, allowing him to maximize the use of
space in his shared studio. In Luiza’s case, she also showed a strong desire to have a
studio space for herself. However, as she has become interested in public, community-
based art where a variety of public spaces can be used on a temporary basis, her case can
definitely be seen as one of the solutions.

The four artists also have on-site art making experience. As stated earlier,
working on site saves on the cost of space and on time. Each artist’s work has different
degrees of site-specificity, as some of the work is not reproducible elsewhere, while some
of it is (as in the case of Greg). Working on site can also compensate for the needs of
artists to practice exhibition making, which is increasingly valued in contemporary art,
and erases the division making artwork and showing art. Lastly, the common experience
of sacrificing living space, found across the four artists, shows what they prioritize
between space for living and space art making, especially within the limited resources of
space and time, and indicates how such choices are actually accepted as resourceful and
smart, as the artist is less encumbered by the burden of making money to pay for expenses.

**Theme 2: Attachment to and Detachment from Material**

In this study, each of four artists utilize different types of materials for their art. Even within their own art practices, the artists have not necessarily stuck with particular types of material over the entire sets of artwork. Rather, they have been trying to maintain flexible approaches in their material choices, considering affordability and availability of material as well as the connection between concepts and meanings in their art and their selection and use of materials.

One notion of “material” in art practice is a physical element that aids artists in visualizing an idea and in creating a visual outcome to be shared with an audience. The traditional notion of "art materials" as exclusively tools and supplies sold in art supply stores has shifted over time, as artists frequently use free, abandoned, or recycled items, as well as natural materials. This use of alternative materials applies to each of the artists in this study, and was found to be a lesser constraint compared to space and time. However, even free and found materials generate costs for storage or transport. Thus, when we approach the issue of the basic element of material, we need to pay attention to how artists must handle materials after acquisition, just as much as how they acquire materials.

**Literature Relevant to the Theme**

As discussed in Chapter II, until the 19th century, only specific types of materials were regarded as fit for artwork (Wagner, 2001). However, over the course of art history,
the boundary between traditional art material and material hitherto considered non-art material collapsed as a result of artistic experiments, including Marcel Duchamp’s ready-made (Manco, 2012). As in the case of Rauschenberg’s “combines,” involving painting and sculpture with found materials, everyday objects continued into the realm of possible art material (Buskirk, 2003). Allan Kaprow’s concept of *happening* also expanded the use of materials, and his endeavor to bring the temporary aspect of performance into art eventually caused the different types of art merging together and the boundary between art and life becoming blurred. In the 1960s and 70s, as conceptual art emerged, idea and concept in art gained more importance than material quality of artwork. In the essay, “The Dematerialization of Art” (1968), Lippard and Chandler analyzed common trends they found in conceptual art. In their view, the logical thinking process of artists in making art gained more value, enough so to commission third-party craftsmen to produce actual artwork based on the artist’s order. This change indicates that “objecthood” of art became “merely the end product” of the artist’s idea and artists started to become less obsessed with the physical quality of artworks. Lippard and Chandler saw this change as “a profound dematerialization of art, especially art as object” (p. 46). Later, Lippard (1997) toned down her previous claim of, “dematerialization of art” to “a de-emphasis on [the] material aspect” of art. (p. 5)

On the other hand, art historian Kitty Zijlmans (2007) characterizes artwork as a physical object that is created in “a temporal moment” and continuously exists in a “space as well as a duration of time” (p. 48). Such “a temporal moment” gets more emphasis than material permanence of artwork due to an increase in the ephemeral aspect of contemporary art. In this light, Beth Houghton (1980) emphasized the increasing value
of documentation of ephemeral types of art—for example, time-based performance art, process-based conceptual art, and land art—especially those that leave “no physical or permanent end product for exhibition.” Despite the absence of physical existence of actual artwork, various kinds of documentation play a critical role as “concrete evidence” to hold “lasting importance” of the artwork. (p.13)

**Cross-case Analysis**

Although Jun, Angela, Greg, and Luiz are similarly involved in diverse media and are all open-minded about the possibilities for their work, these artists showed different attitudes (especially toward material) when it comes to the issue of whether they keep their work or not. In this respect, Jun and Angela were more similar to one another whereas Greg and Luiza can be grouped together. Thus, this part of the discussion separates the artists into two groups, in order to examine how attachment to and detachment from material differentiated their practice and logistics for art making.

**Detachment from material.** Jun and Angela showed more detachment from their material than Greg and Luiza. Jun even mentioned that even if he could afford a storage space, he does not want to keep his artwork. Angela also embraced the ephemerality of her artwork as part of her concept. These two artists exhibited similar views concerning art practice: art is an ongoing practice and a lived practice, rather than a fixed result.

How did they come to this attitude? Jun, who ironically sells the most art of all of the participants, said, “we tell them [collectors] that they are buying the idea, not the actual material.” He thinks this way because his work does not last for a long period of time—he estimated its life to be between 10 and 20 years. Angela, who returned art pieces that are made out of cardboard to recycling facilities, reasoned that she did this
mainly because she could not afford the expense of storage and shipping. She expressed some sadness about the disappearance of the visual outcome of her artistic endeavors, but simultaneously felt “relief” from the burden of carrying all the physical evidence around with her. Through Jun and Angela’s cases, we can understand they do not completely dispute the materiality of artwork. Rather, they understand the limits of the materiality of art, and that it will not exist forever. Being obsessed with the material presence of their art can become psychological “baggage,” regardless of whether or not the artist has the financial means to store or maintain it.

Another interesting commonality between Jun and Angela is that both had the experience of working with found materials. Jun used to collect random objects and materials on the streets with his peers, almost like shopping, whereas Angela focused on collecting specific recycling items, such as cardboard boxes. In art history and contemporary art, much has been written on the value of everyday objects as the subjects or materials for artwork, especially with regard to how these materials break stereotypes in the hierarchy between “high” and “low” in art. In the 60’s, art critic Clement Greenberg was concerned about the phenomenon of “a blank sheet of paper or a table” being considered as art; that distinction between artworks and “arbitrary objects” was blurred (Lütticken, 2010, para. 1). One of the most well-known art movements that proactively utilized “humble, everyday materials” was Arte Povera, which means “poor art” in Italian (“Arte Povera”, n.d., para.1). This term was introduced by art critic and curator Germano Celant in order to describe the “new sculptural language” of young Italian artists. Arte Povera artists used “non-precious and impermanent materials such as soil, rags, and twigs,” in order to criticize “the commercialization of art.” However, in a
New York Times article, Vogel (2014) described how Arte Povera, which was originally created “in response to the commercialism of Pop Art,” became popular in the auction market due to its rarity. The director of the Gagosian Gallery, Valentina Castellani, analyzed its popularity in the market. The fact that this art was coming from the rare Arte Povera Movement made the works “fresh” to collectors. The commercialization of Arte Povera shows a clear irony in that the use of low valued material that originally aimed to be “the alternative” to and a “non-conformist” act toward the art market became another high-priced art world commodity over the course of time (Cady, 2015, para.1).

The way Jun and Angela use found materials shares many aspects of the motivation of Arte Povera artists in terms of using “non-precious,” “humble, everyday material” (Arte Povera, n.d., para.1). However, unlike the material presence of Arte Povera works that eventually become a source of commodification, Jun and Angela’s abandonment of their artwork cut any possibilities of it being commodified. Perhaps, they would not do this if their artwork was immediately sold after production. However, in a way, compared to Greg and Angela who never mentioned use of found material during their interviews, it is possible to assume that it could have been very natural and easy for Jun and Angela to let their art go after production because they gathered materials for free on the streets, anyway.

Attachment to material. On the other hand, although Greg and Luiza’s practices are very multi-disciplinary, they have not given up the idea of keeping their artwork. To them, making art is still strongly associated with material presence and its aftermath. Greg mostly spends his studio time exploring different materials, which inspires him to make new work. Greg said, “I use the materials as sort of lenses or sort of grounds to try
to understand thinking.” If Jun inspires himself by interacting with spaces and Angela approaches certain materials more conceptually, Greg stated that he needs time to play with materials in order to understand his subconscious artistic motivations, which may include some hidden ideas for his next work. Since Greg spends more than twice as much money on materials in comparison to studio rent, it is clear that he relies heavily on materials. “I have probably, at some point in my life, bought every single material I could have ever seen,” he laughed. In contrast, Luiza is constantly in a transition phase. She repeatedly mentioned that she gets tired of transporting materials and artworks. Therefore, she leans more toward portable and ephemeral materials. As seen in her piece City Souvenir, she began the practice of public art when she engaged multiple random audiences she met on the streets in making imprint molds of the exteriors of urban architecture. In this particular piece, Luiza was interested in the portability of materials, so she brought a hand-size block of clay her audience could easily hold and freely move around to make imprints. However, her choice of clay unexpectedly resulted in a complicated back-end process for her and her collaborator. They had to transport from the site all the blocks of clay the audiences used, and then find space for those blocks of clay to dry carefully at a slow pace so they did not crack.

Both Greg and Luiza expressed concern about the storage space for their work and material. Greg said, “My studio is already filled up with so many things for storage.” And Luiza said: “That’s a big problem. When you do sculpture… My previous studio was a mix between my storage and my studio.” As a result, both artists have not been able to use the entirety of their studios solely for art making.
Cost of materials (buying, keeping, and transporting). From the comparison between the two groups of artists, it is possible to see that when we talk about the cost of materials in art, there are different levels of expense. Expenses related to materials are not limited to up-front costs. Storage and transportation of materials require money, as well. In this respect, Jun and Angela have been more sensitive to the different levels of costs, while Greg and Luiza frequently expressed frustration with storage or transportation. Despite such differences, each of the four participants has devised solutions to deal with the cost associated with materials.

Jun’s suitcase is representative of the amount of material he can buy, keep, and transport. As mentioned in Chapter IV, Jun only carries various kinds of items, and in the minimum quantity. His decision is based on whether an object fits into the suitcase or not and whether a material is easily purchasable in other cities. In Angela’s case, recycling facilities are places that she is very familiar with. She gets cardboard—one of her main materials—there and even returns her artwork to the facilities after she has finished exhibiting it. When she has a show abroad, after determining the most cost effective option, she either ships her work out or brings it with her on a plane. Greg’s modular system of painting certainly lowers the cost of transportation, as well as the cost of production for large installations. He is very familiar with arranging small artworks and assembling them into larger size installations. Though this choice does not encompass her entire art practice, Luiza has used ephemeral materials that were easier items to transport and store.

A commonality across all of the artists, related to their emphasis on portability of materials, is that they have either moved around to different places or have traveled for a
long period of time. Jun did a year and a half-long backpacking trip. Angela has traveled around different countries. Greg had to move frequently from early childhood onward because of his divorced parents. Luiza has also moved to different countries and cities due to her husband’s job.

In the field of consumer research, Bardhi et al. (2012) studied the relationship between material possessions and contemporary nomadism. They found that in traditional nomadism among “gypsies in Europe, Berber groups in Northern Africa, and hobos in the United States,” it is easy to find “detachment and flexibility” with lesser interests in “ownership” when awareness of that attachment can “inhibit their freedom of movement” (Anderson 1975; Barfield 1993; Liegeois 1994, cited in Bardhi et al., 2012, p. 511). Further, D’Andrea (2009 cited in Bardhi et al., 2012) declared that “a detached relationship to possessions and places is a central feature of nomadic cultures and mentality, and it is one that reinforces their mobility” (p. 511).

Despite the experience of moving and traveling, the application of such experiences to the art-making processes of these four artists is different. In the case of Jun and Angela who had more experience with traveling, they are more familiar with figuring out what materials they can and cannot bring, not fearing abandoning unnecessary things. In the case of Greg and Luiza, who had more experience with moving, they tend to find effective ways to pack and carry their belongings.

**Material as temporary prop.** In contemporary art, material is often regarded as one of the temporary constituents of artwork and exhibition, rather than as a permanent, precious substance to be safely preserved. In performance art, it is possible to see that object and material are used for temporary purposes in order to manifest the ideas of the
artists and they are rather treated as secondary to the actual events of performance. One of the pioneers of performance art, Allan Kaprow, not only used the movement of the performer’s body, but also materials such as “cartons,” “blankets,” “ice,” “stones,” “iron barrels” and “ropes” in his performance works, known as Happenings (Kaprow, 1961, p. 15). This un- Precious and instrumentalized notion of material in Kaprow’s performance work actually came from a very traditional domain in visual art: painting. Kaprow repeatedly revealed that his seminal Happenings were directly inspired by the actions of Jackson Pollock, who made paintings with a strong material presence (Buskirk, 2003).

Another example of using material as props for art in performance art can be seen in the work of Joan Jonas, who is one of the pioneer artists in video and performance art. In Jonas’s work, materials are used as a secondary matter—as props that assist or stimulate a performer’s movement. In Mirror Piece I (1969), Jonas used a large mirror as a prop that is carried by a performer. Due to the existence of the mirror, viewers can have a visual experience beyond the performer’s movement. Through this mirror, viewers can see both “the real image of the performer” and “reflections in the mirror moving in space” (Jonas, Marranca, & MacDonald, 2014, p. 40). In a 2014 interview, Jonas clearly revealed that her influence came from Allan Kaprow’s Happenings. She saw that “props and objects added another dimensions” to the language of her performance work (Jonas et al., 2014, p. 40)

It is possible to draw some similarities between performance art and visual art exhibition. First, both are temporary. But one major difference in their temporality is duration—a performance is customarily of shorter duration (an hour or two), whereas visual art exhibitions usually last for longer periods. Second, both involve an artist’s
direct or indirect physical action. Third, both performers and artists make new work for their next events. A main difference between performance art and art exhibitions is that artists who exhibit their work have multiple options at the completion of the show, including to store and preserve the exhibited pieces, to discard the artworks, or to allow buyers to purchase them.

None of the participants in this study is a self-proclaimed performance artist. However, some aspects of Jun, Angela, and Luiza’s works have a temporality that can be connected to performance. Jun and Angela see their art and its exhibition as a temporary event, and are thereby comfortable with the destruction of their artwork after the exhibit’s end. Luiza enjoys the temporary moments of working and communicating with random people in the community as she makes her collaborative works. The most significant difference between her work and that of Jun and Angela is that even though Luiza welcomes the temporality of the public art form, she ended up approaching the end of one of her projects with a very traditional mind-set—she wanted to transport everything back to her studio and store it. While Angela throws away her cardboard sculptures and uses photo documentation to remember or archive them, Luiza has kept all material evidence from her public art projects, even including metal shelves that were specifically designed to display clay blocks. In short, Angela and Luiza have a similar understanding of temporality and ephemerality, through their creation of “temporal moment” artwork during an event such as an exhibition or a public art project (Zijlmans, 2007, p. 48). A difference emerged in their ways of maintaining the existence of their artwork, whether those ways are based on documentation of the idea or remnants of actual objects. In Lippard’s term, their attitudes diverged based on how much each artist de-emphasizes the
uniqueness of the material aspect of their work, how to remember or archive the work, and what they maintain as the “lasting importance” of their artwork (Houghton, 1980, p. 13).

**Size of artwork and material.** In *City Souvenir*, the project that involved community members in making clay imprints from exterior textures of urban architecture, Luiza began with the idea of “walking as an art practice,” which references the concept of mobility. With an individual using a single block of clay to make one imprint, such mobility works. However, when it comes to mass-participation in the form of public participatory art—in which many passers-by can turn into Luiza’s audiences and participants—such mobility becomes unmanageable. Luiza struggled with working with clay in this participatory and mobile project, as clay is actually a heavy material compared to canvas or paper, which Greg used to create modular units for larger work, and thread that Jun used for his installation. So here, while it is possible to see that working with small-scale, lightweight materials can be one of the tactics artists use to reduce the cost of storage space and shipping, the physical nature or properties of the material is also an issue. Clay, unlike canvases, paper and thread, is must transform from a wet, pliable substance to a hard material in order to become permanent. So Luiza not only struggled with transporting clay to and from her public work sites, but also was challenged with finding places to set it out to dry for an adequate amount of time. Thus, although Luiza showed much interest in working in public and outside of a traditional studio context, the choice of material did not fully meet with her expectations and required an extensive completion process, which took a lot of energy.
Summary of Theme 2

The two distinctive attitudes among the artists regarding materials—detachment from and attachment to materials—were evenly split. Jun and Angela are more detached from material, with a clear awareness of the ephemerality of artwork and material. Both are very comfortable with the impermanence of their artwork. Angela expresses a bit of sadness with the abandonment of her art objects, but simultaneously feels relief from the burden of transporting and preserving her artwork and materials. On the other hand, Greg and Luiza are attached to the materials they use, as they both tend to keep all of their artwork and maintain an inventory of materials. Unlike Jun and Angela who choose total abandonment of their art, and rely on photo or video documentation of their past works as an archive, Greg and Luiza choose to wrestle with finding sustainable ways to pack, ship, and store material. Also, both are used to working with or creating small-scale objects that can become larger installations, either through a modular system or a collection. However, from Luiza’s struggle in working with clay, it is possible to see that small-scale artwork and material can generate different levels of efficiency depending on the characteristics of the material.

Theme 3: Multi-purposeful Time

Among three basic elements in the research question: space, material, and time, although in different degree, all participants most value time as a basic condition for art making. Clearly, among those three, due to its immaterial form, time is the most difficult thing to be defined and analyzed. Art critic, Amelia Groom (2013) expresses difficulty in finding “any absolutist temporal model” for perception of time due to “today’s globalized geographic mobility” (p. 13). Thus, she suggests approaching time as “the fragmentary
experience of time” rather than generalizing it unchanging universal nature. Forkert (2013) also finds fragmented use of time in an artist’s life which is inevitable for many artists who have to juggle between various tasks both in their jobs and artist careers including “commuting between home, work and studio” (p. 65).

As physical time and its limitations are equally applied to all four participants, in this part of the theme section, we need to see how artists utilize time through the kinds of tactics they develop, and analyze the efficiency of such choices. As the four study participants are not completely free from the burden of earning money to make a living, methods for using limited time for making art efficiently and maintaining their artistic careers is very important. It does not only matter how successfully they organize their schedules to allow time for making money and making art. One of the participants, Luiza, expresses the necessity of multi-tasking with her use of time in conjunction with her art practice by diversifying its use for “making, application, research, and network.” This fragmented use of time for multiple tasks shows that artists have so many things to do within limited amounts of time.

The most apparent commonality among the four artists in regard to their use of time was that they routinely aimed to achieve more than one purpose during a single period of time. This condition is not uncommon, of course—many people are “multi-taskers.” But for Jun, Angela, Greg, and Luiza, these traits can be found in particular aspects of their practices and lives as artists, from the way they merge boundaries between art and life, to job selection, to working on site. Time efficiency and productivity with regard to time vary across each artist’s case. The theme of “Multi-purposeful Time” mainly focuses on the time-management tactics of the participants at the boundary
between art and life. It also highlights the efficiency of switching between different modes of work, in multi-tasking between art making and money-making, and the productivity of art making in that span.

**Literature Relevant to the Theme**

As discussed in Chapter III, there is a lack of scholarly literature that specifically addresses artists’ time management, especially with regard to how artists utilize limited time in a day-to-day context. It is possible, however, to draw on relevant practical literature, such as artist handbooks (Battenfield, 2009; Bhandari & Melber, 2009; Lang, 1998; Michels, 2001; Vitali, 1996) and short essays (Louden, 2013) in which contemporary artists talk about their life paths and daily lives, and the strategies they use in their art practice. However, artists’ comments about time in these publications are quite casual and anecdotal, rather than critical and analytical. Therefore, in order to make this discussion more fruitful by connecting my findings to relevant literature, it was necessary to expand the literature beyond studies that directly focus on time. So with regard to artistic perception and use of time, artists holding multiple jobs, and the performance efficiency and costs of multi-tasking, I considered related literature from the fields of art theory, economics, and psychology/neuroscience. In addition, due to similar views among the research participants about a perceived merged line between their art and their lives, art historian Adrian Heathfield’s (2009) observations of a relevant seminal performance work by contemporary artist Teching Hsieh is also included in the discussion.

The counter-industrialist view that the current unit of time—24 hours per day, 7 days per week—is claimed by some scholars to be an invented concept to accommodate
human labor to fit well with the industrial system. Historian George Woodcock (1944) observes that before industrialization, time was perceived based on “natural cyclical passages of day to night and season to season” (cited in Groom, 2013, p. 19). Woodcock observed the human body becoming adjusted to the mechanical unit of time measured by the clock, and he argued that such “regulation and regimentation of life” was necessary for the sake of exploiting the industrial system (p.20) In the book *Time*, that mainly focuses on various of approaches to the nature of time in contemporary art, Ras Media Collective (RMC) (2011) theorized time as based on the classism of labor. The authors argue that since ancient Greek society, “the thinkers” who were free from labor had enough time to contemplate higher-level and larger matters, whereas “the doers” whose “hands are busy all day long” had to be distanced from “engagement with social questions.” RMC insists that “the quality of the time of the thinker and the doer are seen to be two different things that have hitherto been arranged hierarchically in all societies” (p. 190).

Such a non-conventional notion of time that might conflict with industrialized standards is exemplified by the work of Taiwanese artist Tehching Hsieh, who is infamous for a series of year-long durational performances. Art historian Adrian Heathfield (2009), an expert on Hsieh’s art practice, argues that there was “a concerted attempt” to force the concept of time to a “definitive, universal and homogenizing measure” during the Enlightenment and industrialization in the 19th century (p. 20). In Heathfield’s view, this idea of rationalizing the perception of time led to “strict division of work and leisure time” in the capitalist 20th century by characterizing those two divided periods as “productive and non-productive” (p. 20). This sort of “capital time”
was challenged by artists in the 1960’s and 70’s. These artists explored “unregulated
temporalities” of time in order to show its “inassimilable” values. In this respect,
Heathfield interprets Hsieh’s work as “resisting time’s spatialization in cultural measure”
of late-capitalism, which deems time as a “commodity that must be exploited to its
maximum potential” (p. 21). Heathfield distinguished Hsieh’s series of one-year
performance works from other performative attempts to merge art and life or find art in
everyday life, due to the extremely long duration of Hsieh’s work. Heathfield called
Hsieh’s pieces “lifeworks” that destroyed “the temporality of eventhood” that is a
common feature of performance art (p. 22). Further, the extended duration of Hsieh’s
performance blurred “the distinction that separates the event from the mundane, the
everyday.”

 Practically speaking, and carrying forward the distinction between productive and
non-productive time, it is hard to separate the notion of artists’ time-management from
the day jobs that they often must hold in addition to, and to sustain, their art practice.
Economists Throsby and Zednik (2011) examined the compartmentalizing of different
types of their artists’ work within their careers and found that artists allocate their
working time between three different types of labor: time for creative work, time for arts-
related work (“not part of their core creative output but that uses their artistic skills in
areas such as teaching”), and time for non-art work (p. 9). Especially when categorizing
creative work, an artist’s main goal, Throsby and Zednik (2011) included all preparatory
processes, such as “time spent on all preparation, practice, rehearsal, and research related
to their creative work.”
I found that multi-tasking was not an option, but an inevitable mission for all four artists in my study, due to the pressure of accomplishing multiple goals within limited time. The literature in regard to the efficiency and expenses of multi-tasking is very relevant to this part of the discussion. Psychologist Rico Fisher and neurologist Franziska Plessow (2015) point out that a central debate concerning performance efficiency in multitasking in the research of cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience is around “whether cognitive processes related to different tasks proceed only sequentially (one at a time), or can operate in parallel (simultaneously)” (para.1). In addition, Kiesel et al. (2010) suggest that “switch cost” is generated in multi-tasking in terms of efficiency (p. 852). The amount of switch cost varies depending on the kinds of tasks and in what order one deals with such tasks—switching between random tasks in an unpredictable order more likely shows “robust” switch cost, compared to other cases, such as when one switches between predetermined tasks in a predictable sequence or repeats a single task. Rogers & Monsell (1995, cited in Kiesel et al., 2010) found “working memory demands” in the cases of repetitive single-tasking and predictable task-switching paradigm (p. 852) In addition to switch cost, there is “restart cost,” which usually occurs when one is frequently interrupted by others in the middle of tasks and has to re-focus on the task. This cost is generated even when one is involved in a single task with a predictable pattern.

**Cross-case Analysis**

Several sub-themes focus the discussion of *multi-purposeful time* across the cases. The first explores how Jun, Angela, Greg, and Luiza have attempted to merge art and life and how such endeavors gain value and meaning—this part of the discussion focuses on
residing in one’s studio, nomadic living, and handling child-care along with art-related tasks. The second focus in the discussion of multi-purposeful time examines how the artists maximize their use of time and increase their productivity in a given time period. For example, although to different degrees, the four artists make their work at exhibition sites and maintain irregular and flexible work schedules, along with day jobs. How they manage their time in conjunction with art-related day jobs and how those jobs are effective in terms of switching between modes of money making and art making are also explored.

**Merging time for art and life - living in the studio.** Jun, Angela, and Greg have all at some point lived in their studios. As mentioned in the discussion above of boundary-less space, the artists’ combining of space for living (focused on non-art activities) and making art was primarily a practical move to reduce the cost of space. Looked at through another lens, however, this combination can take on new meaning. In Politics and Space/Time (1992), social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey points out the impossibility of distinctions between time and space. She suggests that these two are interrelated, especially via movement: “space is not static, nor time spaceless… neither can be conceptualized as the absence of the other” (cited in Forkert, 2013, p. 80). The way these three participants simultaneously live and work in a single space can be seen as a particular example, in practical terms, of Massey’s merging of time and space.

In art terms, as described previously, this merging of studio living and working is exemplified by Taiwanese performance artist Tehching Hsieh, who created a cage and locked himself inside for a year. Heathfield (2009) argued that Hsieh made art and life simultaneously during his performance and those two activities inevitably became
inseparable due to the sheer length of his performance. Heathfield interviewed Hsieh and asked him why he decided to embark upon such a long performance. Hsieh (2009) answered:

The reason I used such a long duration in my first piece was to do with my life experience. At that time, I had been an illegal immigrant in the States for four years. I earned money to survive and tried to do my art but without a smooth advance. One day, after work, I was walking back and forth doing my thinking in the studio. Suddenly, I thought “why don’t I make the process of thinking about art in my studio an artwork, and present it using a long duration?” I had spent a lot of time in this situation of isolation, as if I was doing time. Giving the thinking process an art form, my idea would be embodied. Also, I knew that to present life, I needed to use a long duration. One year is a basic unit for human beings to calculate their life, and it is also the time the earth takes to circle the sun completely. I decided there would be no reading, no talking, no watching TV, nor listening to the radio as a mechanism to show my isolated thinking which had barely any impact from the outside (p. 319).

As seen above through Hsieh’s initiation of merging art and life into a form of long durational performance, naming this practice as a work of art, living in or being close to a studio is a time-saving benefit between two modes of artists’ experience (making art and daily living). At a practical level, participants were able to eliminate their commute between their home and studio. (Greg even had to manage a long commute from Princeton, New Jersey to Long Island City on weekends while commuting to Baltimore for his teaching job during weekdays.) At a psychological level, even if they do not make art physically in the studio, just being there in a creative environment makes them continue doing, in Jun’s word, “brainwork.”

The importance of proximity to the studio can be identified and speculated on through the cases of the participants. Jun does not verbally analyze the relationship between his space-sensitive installation and experience living in the studio. Nonetheless, the beginning of his Room Drawing Series (2010-present) coincides with the period of
time when he was living in a studio during grad school. Thus, it is possible to speculate that Jun was able to pay more attention to very subtle elements in his studio space, as he spent longer periods of time there. In the case of Angela, she directly mentioned the importance of being close to her artwork and the materials in her studio, as they are a physical mediator for her exploration of possible ideas. Sometimes, Angela has to bring her child with her to the studio, and she expressed that it is physically unproductive due to the difficulty she has with concentrating on her art with him present. Despite that, it is better for her to be in the studio, even if she is unable to get work done. She said, “being surrounded by [my] work, [I] can think about possibilities.” In this light, living in or being close to the studio gains much more value in terms of time.

**Merging time for art and life - nomadic life and child-care.** In regard to merging daily life and art, Jun’s case is the most extreme. Currently, he merges different sets and fragments of time within his life through nomadic living, as he moves sequentially around the world based on exhibition and commission schedules. Typically, an artist has a stable place (or regular, multiple places) to live, so life patterns circle distinct activities: daily non-art living, traveling, art making. But in Jun’s case they are all in one. For Jun, these different sets of tasks for art and life are either overlapping or the transition between them is very tight.

In contrast to Jun, Angela has a full-time family commitment as a mother, and she has to take care of her son during the day (except for two days a week, when she goes to the studio). Angela even tries to use the designated time with her son for art-related tasks. For example, Angela takes her son to museums or galleries. In so doing, she can care for him while catching up with the on-going art trends. In Luiza’s terms, what Angela tries to
do in her parenting time can be regarded as research for her art practice. Angela also
takes her son to her studio when she has studio visits scheduled on child-care days. She
expressed that she has been lucky so far, as her son has not been a disturbance and her
visitors seem to understand. Also, when she is home, especially during her son’s bedtime,
Angela spends time on administrative work for her career.

**Time-share - conjunction with space.** Greg’s creative approach for maximizing
the use of space in his shared studio—moving a wall—can also be interpreted through the
perspective of time. In Forkert’s (2013) research, one artist pointed out a contradiction
between space and time in terms of their cost:

> There are a lot of artists who rent their space, and don’t go into it. They’re
> hanging onto it, hoping that they can find time, or clinging onto the idea that
> they’re a creative person (p. 65).

Artists do not only expend labor in the pursuit of earning money for studio rent, they also
spend time that could otherwise be useful for making art. Greg’s moving wall, by
maximizing the use of the shared space, and his understanding that his and his studio
mates’ limited time availability for using the studio can be pooled and scheduled so that
each can have more of the space during their time block, shows a practical solution for
the tension between artists’ time and space for art making.

**Working on site - merging time for making, exhibiting, and communicating.**
As mentioned in the discussion of *boundary-less space*, all four artists devote time to
installing their artwork at exhibition sites to various degrees, and they all leave some
parts of the production to be done on site. Working on site is beneficial not just for
overcoming the limitation of studio space, but also for fulfilling multiple goals. Artists
can create new work on site, simultaneously showing the work and communicating with
audiences. Angela’s solo show in Canada clearly satisfied those multiple purposes. Despite her full-time commitment with the flight attendant job, by planning ahead, carefully structuring her preparation time, and preparing small parts in advance, Angela was able to manage to produce the largest installation she had ever made, assembling the pieces together while on site at the gallery.

Likewise, Luiza has been involved with art making on site or in public spaces, and she has done so more frequently than the other participants. She described this work as “bringing one of [her] process[es] to [the] streets.” Making artwork in a public space offers Luiza a chance to interact with people on the streets and this can be regarded as communication with an audience. Similar to both Jun and Angela, who cited “dialogue” as an additional basic element of art making and a source of inspiration for them, Luiza described the joy she got from communicating with curious passers-by while working on her site-specific latex installation. This excitement about dialogue with the public around her artwork led her to more active engagement with people. Therefore, her second piece, *City Souvenir*, was developed as a more complete and prepared form of participatory art.

In short, in terms of space, Luiza’s practice went beyond the traditional notion of the studio as being the only place where art making is possible. Time-wise, she is fulfilling more than one task at a time when making work in public, as she makes art while interacting with public audiences, and is inspired by these conversations.

**Irregular schedule.** Based on individual schedules, each study participant has varying amounts of time to make art. In other words, for these four artists, living as an artist and making artworks does not take place according to any standardized or regular “artist schedule.” When an exhibition is approaching, each participant puts more
intensified energy into art making, whereas under normal circumstances, they are more flexible. To maintain this pattern of living, it is crucial that employers can accommodate such irregularity. Jun and Greg are both satisfied with their current part-time artist assistant jobs because of the flexibility of the work hours. While Greg is able to take days off from his position at the Lego sculptor’s studio when needed, Jun travels a lot and takes unpaid leave for several months, returning when he needs money.

**Day job - minimizing time for day job.** From the responses of the participants, it is possible to see that they set limits on the time they spend on day jobs. Jun has a rule that he does not work (for money-making) more than three days a week. With this creed, he has refused a full-time job offer. Also, he recently quit spending time writing grant applications because, after receiving a grant, the process required even more time, as he had to write a report on his expenses to the organization. In the case of Angela, even though she had very limited means after graduation from art school and before getting a full-time flight attendant job, she had received unemployment money from the Danish government and she intentionally tried to elongate that period so that she could have more free time to do her art. This clearly reflects that the artists tend to prioritize time for art over stable income.

**Day job - an art-related job for networking.** Many artist handbooks suggest that one of the non-monetary benefits stemming from art-related jobs, such as art handler and artist’s assistant positions, is the chance to gain a better understanding of how the art world works and to network in order to gain artistic opportunities through the job (Battenfield, 2009; Bhandari & Melber, 2009). Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza also place significant value on time spent networking and communicating with people in the art
world. Thus, I approach the discussion of day jobs in terms of whether artists can acquire benefits beyond wages within work hours, acknowledging networking as an inevitable requirement for maintaining an artistic career. In this respect, even if art-related jobs do not generate an immediately visible outcome, such as getting exhibition opportunities or meeting a future collector, artists might actually be accomplishing more than one mission. In this light, Jun and Greg intentionally chose art-handling jobs to get close to the art world and learn about its day-to-day realities. They also tended to look for more art-related jobs because of the potential for being discovered as artists. Jun has had more luck with this, as he has gotten several shows through his art-handling job. In Greg’s case, although the outcome from working with galleries and other artists did not meet his original expectation, he approaches his art-related jobs more strategically. For example, he calls in sick to his main part-time job—artist assistant—when he has a chance to work in galleries.

**Day job - time-management for art making.** While different types of art-related jobs may offer benefits such as those described above, splitting time between day jobs and art making presents challenges related to time-management and the smooth transition between different tasks. Luiza is the only one of the study participants who is currently teaching at the college level, and her classes are directly connected to her MFA major, Fiber Material Studies, and to her art practice. However, she expressed that although she only teaches three days a week, she has a significant lack of time for her own practice. This is mainly because in addition to working on the days she teaches class, she has to spend two other days preparing for teaching. On the other hand, despite working three days a week at another job, Jun did not remark about a lack of time for art. In the case of
Greg, lack of time is a major concern but he actually works full time, between four and five days a week. In this respect, it is possible to speculate that all art-related jobs may not offer the same amount of benefits in terms of concentration on art making. What kinds of conclusions, then, can be drawn from weighing the benefits and drawbacks of different art-related jobs? Do the particular characteristics of art-related jobs affect the efficiency of artists moving between their art practice and day jobs?

In Jun and Greg’s artist assistant jobs, they assist their artist bosses and complete given tasks. Jun’s boss is a visual artist who works mostly with painting and Greg’s boss is an artist who makes sculptures out of Lego bricks. Although the practices of both artists are not closely associated with the art practices of Jun and Greg, the types of assistance they have to provide is similar, as they are more related to predetermined tasks such as painting (Jun) or building Legos in a predictable sequence (Greg). This sort of work that can collect “working memory” might have enabled both Jun and Greg to more efficiently switch from their day jobs to their art practices, so that to them, parallel ways of multi-tasking seem to be feasible (Rogers & Monsell, 1995, cited in Kiesel et al., 2010). Plus, since they do not have that much responsibility, they do not have to think about their jobs outside of their paid work hours.

On the other hand, Luiza is running classes under her own supervision. Thus, it is not easy for her to make a clear division between work hours and non-work hours. She said that she focuses more on teaching and the administrative side of her art practice during school semesters and dedicates more time for production of art during breaks. This pattern shows that Luiza’s multi-tasking is conducted sequentially over a long span rather than “operat[ing] in parallel” on a weekly basis, as in the cases of Jun and Greg (Fisher &
Plessow, 2015, para.1). In her time-management over a week, it is possible to see that teaching generates a significant amount of switch costs. Luiza mentioned that she enjoyed “learning…sharing with students,” however, at the same time, she mentioned that teaching “consumes” a lot of her energy and she wants to teach fewer classes for the sake of her art practice.

Economists Throsby & Zednik (2011) describe art-related jobs as a kind of middle ground for artists. They cite teaching as one of the art-related jobs. However, whether teaching is clearly related to an artist’s primary work (art practice) and whether it truly enhances an artist’s productivity within her own art practice is questionable. In this light, an artist may do well to choose among art-related jobs in a more analytical manner, by verifying how easy and smooth the switch is between the tasks involved in the job and those involved in art practice. While relevance to one’s artistic interests is important, artists also need to weigh the higher level of responsibility and extra preparation time that art-related jobs like teaching entail.

**Efficiency of time and productivity.** In their art practice, Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza perceive that the amount of time invested for art making is not necessarily proportional to the quality of the resulting artwork. In response to a question about how long it takes for him to create an on-site installation, Jun answered that it depends on the time he is given. He said he can make work for any amount of time, “even for three days…I could have done it….There is no success or fail. It is just the time I have is what I use.” He does not measure the quality of work based on time. Rather, he sees time constraints, at least in the installation period, as a boundary or pre-condition for his inspiration and physical work. Such disconnection between quality of work and duration
of time can be found in Angela’s case as well. When she had a full-time job and a solo show in Canada, she only had fourteen days to arrive and finish the installation for the show. Angela reported that nonetheless, she made the largest installation she had to date. Obviously, the amount of actual hours she used for preparation are uncountable, as she researched and made parts for sculptures in advance. Despite that, both Angela’s and Jun’s accounts suggest that perceptions about time constraints depend on the attitudes of artists. Another example of this variance is how Greg found a benefit in making small-scale artworks, not just because he saved space and used less materials but also because of productivity over a given time period. He mentioned that he can make many small artworks with the same amount of energy and time that he spends on a single, large-scale work. In this light, it is possible to see how use of time and efficiency of time can also be connected to how artists choose the size and scope of their artwork.

**Summary of Theme 3**

This part of the discussion focused on the theme of *multi-purposeful time*, with an examination of how the four artists compress and merge their time for art and life in order to achieve multiple goals at once. Through living in or being close to the studio, an artist can expand time for both creating art and, in Angela’s words, the “brainwork” involved in conceptualizing ideas. Also discussed here was using time for art making that is supposedly set for another purpose—exemplified by Jun’s nomadic living and Angela’s practice of merging child-care with studying and generating new ideas for her artwork.

Achieving multiple goals with a single task is also apparent in the ways the artists produce their work, as well in the ways that they select day jobs. In the cases of Jun, Angela, and Luiza, working on site generated the double benefits of art production and
exhibition. Luiza’s public art project especially showed the benefit of communication with an audience, which can function as a source of inspiration for future work. In the case of day jobs, Jun’s and Greg’s cases showed how art-related jobs, such as art handler, can provide them with the added benefits of networking, although they didn’t experience an equal level of benefits.

As all four artists held multiple jobs, the efficiency of multi-tasking between art practice and day jobs is a very relevant subject of discussion. Especially through the cases of Jun, Greg, and Luiza, who all are involved with art-related jobs, it was possible to see, depending on the job responsibility and characteristics of job, the different amounts of switch cost generated, which effects the ease of transition between art practice and day jobs.

Lastly, through Jun’s and Angela’s cases, it is possible to confirm that the relationship between invested time and the quality of art is not always proportional. On the other hand, Greg theorized that working with small-size artworks can be more productive in terms of the number of artworks that he can make within a given time.

Overall, among the three basic elements—space, material, and time—time seems to be the most deeply embedded element in the four artists’ lives. The analysis of their collective responses suggests that Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza all have to find feasible solutions within the flow of their lives and try to grasp even very tiny fragments of time for their art practice. In this respect, they tend to look for ways to achieve multiple goals simultaneously in their day jobs and strategies for art making.
Theme 4: Creative Constraints

Artists encounter many challenges and constraints in the process of art making, as well as in life. However, those challenges and constraints are not just negative barriers for artists to overcome. Rather, in many cases, such challenges open up hidden possibilities that sometimes lead artists to better outcomes. Architect Frank Gehry emphasized that constraints are actually a starting point of his creativity (Sturt, 2013). This idea of seeing constraints as a source of creativity applies to all four of the participants in this study. Some of them actually built new ways of art making based upon constraints they encountered in the process of developing solutions. Some artists made creative approaches to art making with limited resources.

In this part of the discussion, I present evidence that each artist has creatively dealt with constraints they have encountered. First, I analyze the kinds of constraints the artists have had over the course of their lives and career histories, and second, by pinpointing specific moments, I discusses how each participant transforms constraints from obstacles to creative agents.

Literature Relevant to the Theme

Seeing constraints as a source of creativity is not limited to the field of art. In studies of creativity, constraints and creativity have long been considered oppositional concepts (Joyce, 2009), and throughout history some scholars have concluded that “too much constraint on freedom may decrease the intrinsic motivation to create” (Amabile, 1983 cited in Joyce, 2009, p. 1). In the ample research on creativity, studies have focused on the effects of specific types of constraints (Amabile, 1998; Baer & Oldham, 2006; Karau & Kelly, 1992), theoretical considerations (Johnson-Laird, 1988; Sternberg &
Kaufman, 2010; Stokes, 2006), and specific approaches to handling constraints (Darke, 1979; Maiden & Robertson, 2005; Richard, Poitrenaud & Tijus, 1993), as well as more recent research urging for further work on the relationship between creativity and constraints (Joyce, 2009; Liikkanen et al., 2009).

Onarheim and Biskjær (2013) point out that constraints exist in any “creative endeavor,” regardless of domains or disciplines (p. 2). Citing the Latin root of the word, *constringere*, meaning “restraint, compress, or bind together,” Onarheim and Biskjær acknowledge a constraint’s negative connotation as a “restrain[ing]” force. However, they further emphasize that we should not disregard the significance of constraints as “enablers” (p. 7). In this light, Onarheim and Biskjær specify their research subject as “creativity constraints,” focusing more on the efficacy of the “enabler” between two oppositional aspects, “enablers” and “restrainers.” They found different approaches and understanding depending on the field—engineers often call constraints “requirements,” whereas poets tend to approach them in terms of “styles, idioms, and genre conventions” (p. 2).

On the other hand, Elster (2000) dug into the origin of constraints and categorized them as three separate sources: “intrinsic (inherent in the material), imposed (by external agents such as a client), and self-imposed (freely initiated by the creative agent himself in expectancy of a higher creative payoff)” (cited in Onarheim & Biskjær, 2013, p. 5).

Stokes (2008) more specifically addresses the relationship between creativity and constraints in art. In her essay, “Creativity from Constraints: What Can We Learn From Motherwell? From Modrian? From Klee?” (2008), Stokes divides constraints in painting into four elements: goal (stylistic conventions), source (elements for recombination), task
(materials and their applications), and subject (content or motif). However, overall, by only exemplifying famous artists such as Braque, Picasso, Motherwell, and Mondrian, her approach remains in the domain of art history. It also focuses on internal aspects of making art, rather than reaching further into various external constraints artists face beyond their art-making processes.

Sturt (2013) also asserts the benefits of constraints in the creative process, quoting architect Frank Gehry, who expressed that he faced more difficulty when working in a constraint-free environment. Gehry said:

I had a horrible time with it...I had to look in the mirror a lot. Who am I? Why am I doing this? What is this all about? ...It’s better to have some problem to work on...I think we turn those constraints into action (para. 7).

**Individual Case Analysis**

The discussion of this theme consists of two parts. The first part identifies the kinds of constraints participants experience and how such constraints emerge. In the lives and career histories of the four participants, there are numerous constraints that come from different sources. Some constraints have been cleared, as the participants found ways to overcome them, whereas some still remain. The degree of constraints varies depending on each participant. In this light, the first part of this section is an overview of the constraints in each participant’s life, while the second part examines, based on specific episodes, how participants have creatively dealt with constraints, and therefore how, based on the perspectives of the artists, those constraints can be positioned on the spectrum between enablers and restrainers.

**Source of constraints - intrinsic, imposed, and self-imposed (Jun).** Jun’s first externally imposed constraint was the cultural difference and shifting environment that he
encountered as he moved from Spain to Korea in his childhood. He struggled with the language barrier and pressure to do well in school. This frustrating environment led him to impose on himself another constraint—that he delay, for a while, deciding on a set career. This constraint disappeared when he started going to a private art academy. Another externally imposed constraint for Jun was the unexpectedly poor quality of the college educational system in Korea (as previously described, his professors did not attend class regularly and the students were not independently productive). This specific constraint did not disappear until he went on a long backpacking trip, which he described as one of the most important experiences of his life. After the trip, he came back to the same college, and though nothing had changed and the school was still disappointing, Jun no longer regarded the system as a constraint. Rather, instead of passively expecting the school to give him an education, he proactively started to be creative on his own. This included finding a part-time job building a stage set for broadcasting and embarking on his own sculpture project. In this light, Jun’s experiences from a year-long backpacking trip, even if they did not offer a direct solution for getting rid of the ongoing constraints found back at school on his return, changed Jun’s attitude regarding how to deal with constraints. Therefore, the backpacking trip played a critical role in changing Jun’s short-term view about the constraints of school. On the other hand, the backpacking trip also served as a catalyst for changing Jun’s long term view about future constraints in his life as an artist.

When we look at his backpacking itinerary in detail, the trip was actually full of constraints. The first constraint in the trip was self-imposed—Jun was very nervous and cautious, so he over-prepared, making an itinerary and attempting to learn the languages
of the places he was visiting. However, as he started to enjoy unexpected elements of his travels (staying with Vietnamese hotel workers and a Syrian family), he opened his mind and let some of the unavoidable constraints fall away. Since then, there have been many constraints in his life imposed by external factors such as lack of time, and lack of money for material, but the constraints he imposes on himself now have to do primarily with the conditions under which he makes his artwork. (Detailed examples of Jun’s constraints are discussed in the second part of the cross-case analysis.)

Source of constraints (Angela). Angela has had intrinsic constraints from the beginning of her life. Living as an Asian adoptee in a white-dominant country, Denmark, has always made her question her identity. Later, over the course of her career, she has tried to transform this unwanted constraint of mixed identity into subject matter for her art practice. This can be seen in the distinctive cultural background of trans-nationality exemplified in her imaginary flag piece, Dirty Laundry. Though Angela was able to turn her constraints related to identity into art with powerful messages, she still experienced other limits. Even though she got a government subsidy for art school, Angela was still financially constrained. She said, “It is not a very big amount…I actually had jobs on the side. Several jobs.” She ended up getting a full-time job as a flight attendant, which set her free from financial constraints, but also imposed other constraints on her time. However, rather than using that as an excuse, Angela just worked harder on her art during her time off, and she seamlessly maintained her artistic career, using her vacation time for participating in artist residencies. Then, once she moved to the U.S., she had to deal with the most obvious imposed constraint: poverty. However, on the other hand, such economic difficulty was due to her decision to quit her full-time job and move to New
York. Thus, it can be regarded as a self-imposed constraint. So, poverty can be a mix of externally imposed and self-imposed limitations.

**Source of constraints (Greg).** Of the four participants, Greg has the most self-imposed constraints. Due to several failures with his applications for graduate school, jobs, and open calls for exhibitions, he has very low confidence in his ability to produce effective applications, which he attempts less and less. Primarily, low rates of getting opportunities through open-call application processes can be seen as an externally imposed constraint, as his career might have been more successful if he had gotten them. However, in a way, it also serves as a self-imposed constraint, since a sense of failure has been trapping him and he fears trying again. He is the only white, Caucasian male among the four participants, and he attributed his failure to land a teaching job to his ethnicity. This can be seen as both an externally imposed and self-imposed limitation. However, the self-imposed aspect seems to be more apparent because white males are not regarded as a racial minority, and usually do not have a hard time finding jobs. Due to his generous personality, he has undergone externally imposed constraints from others who take advantage of his personality. Since he is an accommodating and friendly person, he has been lied to and exploited by others, including the artist-employer who paid him low wages. In a way, this can be seen as a self-imposed constraint as well because he was usually the one who volunteered his assistance.

**Source of constraints (Luiza).** Luiza had a self-imposed constraint in her childhood. She thought she was not a talented artist (she still has low confidence in her ability to draw) until she unexpectedly won first place in an art contest. Another one of her constraints was imposed through marriage. Although she was able to attend art
schools in Portugal and Chicago, her uncertain living location hindered her chance to build a stable career in one place until her husband got a job in New York. Even though she had the most prestigious opportunity of all four participants—participation in a major museum show in New York—the disappointing reaction and a lack of fruitful feedback depressed her, which, for a time, became a self-imposed constraint.

Previously, I reviewed what kind of constraints each participant has had in their lives. In the following section, the discussion pinpoints moments in subjects’ art making processes in which each artist turned their restrainers into enablers.

From restrainers to enablers (Jun). Among the four artists, Jun has been most successful with transforming constraints that act as restrainers into constraints that act as enablers. More precisely, he is very good at not concerning himself about things he cannot control, focusing instead on what he can do at the present time.

In Jun’s case, there are two aspects of his art practice that clearly exemplify the restrainer-to-enabler process—first, his lack of funds for material and second, his challenges with space. However, he did not take the shortage of those two elements as a constraint, but rather started looking for practical solutions. The first solution was collecting found materials on the streets. This act was not just a solution to fill the void of material supply, but actually contributed to one of his art series, *Found Gesture* (2009). Jun called the sculpture he made in the series a “fragile sculpture” because he did not use traditional sculpture techniques such as welding and casting. Rather, by understanding unique physical characteristics of materials he found, such as “broken mirrors,” “a piece of glass,” or “broken chairs,” he made each object lean against another with a balance,
creating an arbitrary form. Here, the lack of material functioned as an enabler that led Jun to try new ways of sculpting with found material.

Another transformation of restrainer to enabler occurred from lack of space. Jun started living in his studio during graduate school as a solution to reduce cost of space and maximize time for art making. It happened after he began to work on the *Found Gesture* series, with which Jun’s art practice was relying on objects despite changes in his sculpting style, from attaching things together to leaning things against each other. As he started spending more time in his studio, he started to see subtle visual elements in the space itself. Jun said:

So, I started to see like cracks on the walls, windows or doors…I couldn’t avoid it…I would have to bring everything in the space. Whatever exist[ed]…even the light, and shadows it creates…So there is no border between space and my work.

This scrutiny led him to see a possible new direction for his art. He realized that instead of producing objects with materials to place in a space, he could just intervene in the space itself, interacting with space as a way of art making. Clearly, living in the studio functioned as a significant enabler that led to Jun’s signature series, *Room Drawing* (2010-present). If Jun had been overly concerned with convention, like a preconceived idea for living and art making, such as having separate space for art making and living and enough budget for art supplies, instead of focusing on the things that he could control, he may not have come up with such unique types of art.

**From restrainers to enablers (Angela).** Angela tends to see constraints and restrictions as a challenge she would willingly accept to go in a new direction in her career and art making. She did not answer clearly how many constraints she could
endure. However, she clearly mentioned that she is not afraid of that and willing to take it as challenge if she can experience and try unprecedented things.

Angela’s attitude of facing restrainers with an open mind, finding benefit embedded in such restrainers, and then using that benefit as an enabler can be seen in her comments related to her philosophy as an installation artist:

You have to be open throughout the whole process from the beginning to the end because…all of sudden…there is bump on the wall…another color of floor or something unexpected or the light switches sitting differently from what you thought…I am very good at adjusting to space and working with what is there. Hopefully trying to transform into…strengths instead of…just trouble…

As seen above, Angela tends to naturally accept unexpected restrainers. She used terms such as “trouble” and “strength,” which reflect how she understood those two as linked matters or two sides of a coin. Angela also used the words “adjust” and “open” which are indicative of her goals of not being frustrated by restrainers and making use of such challenges for maximum outcome.

Angela’s transformation of restrainers into enablers was also confirmed in how she managed to create her large installation in a solo show in Winnipeg while she was a full-time flight attendant. Contrary to her previous assertion about her openness and adjustable manner, Angela pointed out that it required “a lot of planning” because she only had 14 days for the installation process, and that was the only time that she had access to the space. Using cardboard as a base and thousands of small hand-cut scales, she made an enormous body of a whale which occupied the entire space. Angela had to make parts of the sculpture in advance, but still there was not enough time to do the whole thing by herself. She said:

…for the first time…I had to ask for help to finish installation because all the scales…between 10,000 and 12,000 [pieces]. I actually had to make them before I
left Copenhagen. So I had friends and family coming in to help cult these scales. And…in Winnipeg, I had help from other artists…[who] helped cut and also glue these scales on.

Limited accessibility to exhibition space and a shortage of time may have been restrainers. Yet Angela overcame these challenges by making a concrete pre-production plan and receiving help from others. This “reaching out” for help had never happened in Angela’s career. She described it as a “great experience,” and this experience functioned as an enabler for her art practice to reach an unprecedented level in terms of the scale of what she was able to accomplish.

**From restrainers to enablers (Greg).** As discussed earlier, Greg showed the strongest attachment to material in his art practice. He is inspired by experimenting with diverse materials and this requires a place for investigation—these requirements in turn can be seen as constraints or restrainers. However, unlike other participants such as Jun and Angela who adjust and transform their art making within given conditions, Greg has been quite consistent with his style of art, regardless of the availability of his resources. As previously mentioned, Greg kept his studio even when he had no place to live. Therefore, one of the significant moments for Greg in terms of turning restrainers into enablers happened when he had to keep his sacred space for creativity: his studio. The construction of the moveable wall so that the studio space could be customized is a vivid example of Greg making opportunities for himself. He successfully transformed a small space that was acting as a restrainer into an expandable space with a moving wall, making it an enabler. Two previous cases from his early period in New York foreshadowed his creative solutions in the face of restraints. The first one was living in his friend’s van. After taking out the back seats, Greg lived in the van for a
couple of months. Although Greg described this experience as terrifying—due to extreme hot weather as well as witnessing a robbery of a car parked next to him, it might have been his only way to stay in New York. The second case occurred when Greg lived in a studio that did not allow live-in artists. In order to live and make art in New York, he had only one choice: to live there without getting caught by others. Greg’s studio at that time was one of the spaces in the partitioned shared studio. If his spot had been on the one of the corners, it would have been much easier. However, his space was a kind of hallway and his studio mates were constantly passing through. Therefore, he built a multi-purpose structure out of an 8-foot long table, covering three sides of the table with wood plates, all except the side that faced the wall. Greg called the structure “my house” (Greg slept underneath the table so that no one could see him there). His creativity did not stop at just making this camouflaged home structure. When his studio mate came in in the morning, Greg had to act as if he had just arrived by getting out from under the table and secretly going to the door and closing it loudly to signal that he was entering the room. From these three examples—constructing a movable wall, living in the van, and building a multipurpose, secret home table, it is possible to see the tactics Greg utilized in order to transform limited resources to maximum use, manipulating existing given conditions and tailoring them to fit his own needs.

Another tactic Greg uses to overcome space constraints can be found in his art practice. Working with small-scale artworks is obviously one solution, and Greg attributed such tactics to his early and continued nomadic experiences (he had to frequently move between his divorced mother and father and also traveled a lot himself). Greg said that this frequent moving affected the size of his work, and repeatedly talked
about artwork for travelers. Indeed, he creates modular, multi-paneled paintings by
keeping each unit small and offering the potential for them to be assembled into a larger
size. His artwork clearly functions as an enabler, allowing him to overcome the size
constraints of small pieces.

From restrainers to enablers (Luiza). As for Luiza, she is in the process of
figuring out how various restrainers she recently faced—from storage and transporting
issues to uncertainty about her career direction after the MoMA show—can turn out to be
enablers. She shows a strong desire to find enablers within those constraints, or as she
calls it, finding “sustainable ways.” She has been setting a clear boundary between what
she wants to do (support herself with a teaching job and more community-based art) and
what she doesn’t want to do (compromise her art for sales and participating in shows
without budgets). With a clear awareness of her boundaries, she has been exploring
possible directions—community art, use of ephemeral materials, and being selective with
opportunities.

Summary of Theme 4

Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza have dealt with various kinds of constraints over the
course of their life histories and artistic careers. Those constraints range from intrinsic, to
externally imposed, to self-imposed ones. The four artists experienced constraints
embedded in their early and later personal lives, including struggles with cultural and
family background issues. They have also encountered numerous externally imposed
constraints, such as poverty, lack of time and space, and failure to succeed. Depending on
how each of the artists accepted those limitations, these externally imposed constraints
often led to self-imposed constraints.
Although to different degrees, by seeing restraining aspects as enablers, the four artists have attempted to transform those constraints into a chance for development. Jun’s case shows how a lack of space and materials actually functions as a significant enabler for developing site-responsive installation art. Angela’s case also shows how artists take unexpected situations that they face in the process of art making and installation for exhibition as builders of, in her words, “strength” rather than “trouble.” Greg’s case is an example of how an artist can creatively deal with space constraints, such as starting out with living space sleeping in a van or under a disguised table, and making a wall to maximize work space. Compared to the others, Luiza did not show any clear evidence of creating enabling moments from her constraints. However, she showed ceaseless passion for her future career, as well as possible direction for the sustainability of her art practice. While this discussion of constraints and how the four participants creatively deal with them has focused in large part on turning challenges into opportunities for growth, the next theme focuses on the learning that may come from this process, as the four artists have had to adapt their strategies in response to both constraints and other changing circumstances in their careers.

**Theme 5: Artists Learning Through Experiences**

Through an analysis of the interviews, it was clear that the four artists in the study have constantly developed new strategies for survival and maintenance of their art practice based on life lessons. Jun mentioned that his graduate school did not teach him “how to live” and “survive as [an] artist,” indeed, all of artists reported that their acquired knowledge did not come from their formal education. Rather, they spontaneously learned over the course of their careers and lives, through experiences of failure, poverty,
simultaneous senses of success and disappointment, and witnessing tragedy. Those lessons were not necessarily only from art-related events, but also from various personal life events.

As previously discussed in the chapter II, the Raqs Media Collective (2009), in a chapter called “How to Be an Artist by Night”, talks about the unavoidable dual positions of young artists who must shift between a day job and their art practice, and their sense of resulting disorientation in making their careers. The authors described this dual status as “double life”. Artists are “no-collar” workers in the cultural industry in daytime and artists at night. The relationship between the two is called a “battle.” The authors argue that this battle and double life is “traumatic” due to “the fear of irrelevance, obsolescence, and marginality” as well as “pressure to exhibit as an artist.” This trauma and sense of disorientation, in RMC’s view, comes from an absence of “a stable canon” in contemporary art practice, where everybody is unsure about the next step in “a swiftly changing world” (p. 73).

RMC characterizes the constant learning mode of artists by using the term “artist’s education.” In their view, education, in a general sense, refers to a stage where students are in “the position of apprenticeship” without feeling the burden to execute “a professionally productive life.” Here, two moments of “being someone” and “learning to become someone” are clearly divided and the former follows “the successful completion” of the latter. However, in artist’s education, there is no completion of “learning to become someone.” Artists have to constantly rationalize “the reason to continue to be an artist” (p.74). In RMC’s words, an artist’s education is endless. In this respect, RMC has expanded the boundary of art making into all kinds of managerial efforts for making their
art practice possible. In other words, “the work of art is not just making art but also about making the conditions and initiating the networks of solidarity and sociality that enable the making of art” (p. 76).

This sort of ongoing learning mode of artists can be linked to philosopher Paolo Virno’s analysis of “opportunism.” In his seminal book, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004), Virno did not see opportunism as a matter of individual choice; instead he saw it more as social structure (in Forkert, 2013). He found the origin of opportunism to be the following:

outside-of-the-workplace socialisation marked by unexpected turns, perceptible shocks, permanent innovation, chronic instability. Opportunists are those who confront a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities, making themselves available to the greater number of these, yielding to the nearest one, and then quickly swerving from one to another (Virno, 2004 cited in Forkert, 2013, p. 64).

According to Virno, “Opportunism is about living with continual instability and the underlying knowledge that one must adapt to quickly changing circumstances” (in Forkert, 2013, p. 64-65). Although Virno’s approach to opportunism was more broad, it provides a basis for how artists have to be in a constant mode of learning in order to recognize opportunities and adapt to act on them.

By acknowledging the significance of consistent learning, both broadly in contemporary human life and specifically in artists’ lives, this discussion of artists living through experiences analyzes what kinds of lessons the artists have learned and how they employ them over the course of their careers and lives.

**Literature Relevant to the Theme**

To discuss what the four participants have learned in their practices and careers, I borrow David Kolb’s 1984 educational theory Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Kolb
defines learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Kolb claims that effective learning can occur when one engages with a new experience fully and open-mindedly and without bias, along with “reflection on and observation of the learning experience from different perspectives” (Fickel & Matey, 2014, para 1). Kolb’s ELT consists of four different learning modes: **concrete experience (CE)**, **abstract conceptualization (AC)**, **reflective observation (RO)**, and **active experimentation (AE)**.

These four learning modes construct a learning cycle; (Kolb 1981,1984 cited in Petkus, 2000). *Concrete experience* is related to “sensory and emotional engagement” and it “evokes feeling.” *Reflective observation* is involved with the act of “watching, listening, recording, discussing, and elaborating on the experience.” This mode also can be involved with “making connections across experience,” but not necessarily with “integrating theories and concepts.” *Abstract conceptualization* is focused on “integrating theories and concepts into the overall learning process” as “the in-depth thinking phase of the cycle.” In contrast, *active experimentation* is action-oriented and learners engage in “a trial-and-error process in which the accumulation of sensory experience, reflection, and conceptualization is tested in a particular context” (Petkus, 2000, p. 64). According to Kolb, there is no beginning point in the cycle—he encourages learners to go through each phase for the most effective learning, regardless of where they begin.

There are some criticisms of the Kolb model. Forrest (2004, cited in Konak et al., 2014) argues that learning does not always occur in “sequential, ordered steps, but rather that the steps overlap” (p. 13). Beard and Wilson (2006, cited in Konak et al., 2014) write that Kolb’s model does not consider “social, historical, and cultural aspects of learning”
(p. 13). Despite these drawbacks to Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory, I utilize Kolb’s four learning modes as one way to understand how the four artists’ experiences may be transformed into learning, which is the focus of this theme.

**Individual Case Analysis**

In this section, instead of cross-case analysis, I focus on the learning path of each artist as it relates to individual life histories. As an overview, each participant's learning cycle, including relevant life events and actions, and theorizations, is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Participants’ Learning Modes Using Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Angela</th>
<th>Greg</th>
<th>Luiza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Concrete Experience**     | 1) A year-long backpacking trip  
2) Seeing unknown, deceased artist’s artwork discarded for trash removal | Downgraded status from full-time employee in Denmark to unwanted temporal nomad in the U.S. | 1) Younger brother’s suicide  
2) Failure with open call and application process  
3) Being exploited by other artist  
4) Working with pop-up gallery | Participation in MoMA PS1 show but no change with emerging artist status |
| **Reflective Observation**  | Realizing value of freedom and open minds  
1) Feeling “easily starved to death”  
2) Selling out unnecessary items | 1) Artists can exploit others  
2) Some gallerists do not care about artists | 1) Dream did not match with reality  
2) Emerging artist status never resolved | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract Conceptualization</th>
<th>Artist as traveler</th>
<th>1) “Acceptance of not knowing future” 2) Choice of being in New York (analogy of playing tennis)</th>
<th>1) Efficacy of MFA degree and ways to go about networking</th>
<th>1) No compromise with style of art for sales 2) Pursuing more community-based, public art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Experimentation</td>
<td>1) Making art and money separately 2) Nomadic and minimal lifestyle</td>
<td>1) Using various ways to support system (from artist grant to maternity fee)</td>
<td>1) In-person networking 2) Voluntarily offering favors</td>
<td>1) Teaching at a college 2) Trying to use portable, ephemeral material for sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning path (Jun).** In Jun’s case, Kolb’s (1984) four learning phases are relatively well-balanced. He had several sets of concrete experience that can be seen as transitions to the other three learning modes. One of Jun’s most influential *concrete experiences* was the year-long backpacking trip. Once on the trip, Jun realized that his predetermined plans for his travel itinerary and concerns were not necessary. He encountered various local people who offered him unexpected hospitality (Vietnamese hotel workers, a Syrian family) and experienced living conditions that were new to him (the Syrian family had no electricity). Through these unplanned experiences, Jun became braver and less nervous about facing unexpected situations in foreign countries.

Through *reflective observation*, Jun realized the importance of freedom and the value of “living in a moment,” while minimizing uncontrollable concerns about the future. This realization led him to construct his view on the artist’s life as a sort of
abstract conceptualization. In our conversation, Jun made an analogy between artist and traveler, illustrating his perspective on the artist’s life—artists inevitably have to face an unstable career path and living conditions, however, they have to focus on and enjoy living in the moment, reducing unnecessary concerns. His motto of “living in a moment” was reinforced by other sets of reflective observation that included witnessing the abandonment of an unknown, deceased artist’s studio work and pessimism of former art professionals who are now sushi restaurant and laundromat owners. Jun expressed sadness, especially about the discarded paintings of the dead artist, but did not become discouraged by that too much.

More than any of the other artists, Jun has experimented (active experimentation) with ways of art making, maintaining his career and living situation. Based on lessons from past direct and indirect experience and reflection, he has tried to minimize monetary requirements for art making, as well as required expenses for his nomadic lifestyle, where he has tried to shorten the gap and transition between art making, exhibiting, money making, traveling and living.

Learning path (Angela). Angela’s learning phases are as balanced as Jun’s, but they became more relevant when she started living in the U.S. Formerly living in Denmark, a country with one of the strongest social safety nets in the world, Angela actually felt a real danger in New York City, thinking that “anyone can easily be starved to death.” Her problems have been compounded by the fact that she has not been able to work legally and moved 11 times in the first year she was in the U.S. She claimed that she had been very familiar with living in poverty, as she was from a working class family and she had relied on unemployment money in Denmark for a while. Nonetheless, her
experience of poverty in New York might have felt more intense because she had previously maintained a well-paid full-time job (flight attendant) before coming to New York. This abrupt transition in economic status was a *concrete experience* that led her to *reflective observation* about the boundary of being poor. In order to overcome this harsh situation, Angela engaged in *active experimentation*, such as selling unnecessary items for the sake of money and mobility and extremely minimizing weekly spending, for example by eating on a very small budget and by routinely waiting for someone to come out of the subway entrance and asking them to swipe her through with their unlimited pass. Another example of Angela’s *active experimentation* is maximum use of the governmental and institutional support system from her home country—including use of a loophole in the law—for her art making and living expenses.

In spite of having gone through struggling situations in New York, as *abstract conceptualization*, Angela described an artist’s life as involving “acceptance of not knowing [the] future” and made an analogy of artists spending time with more advanced or successful artists and learning to play tennis—one needs to play with a more advanced player to be good at tennis. This analogy explains the main reason why she chose to stay in New York instead of her home country. On the other hand, Angela’s “acceptance of not knowing [the] future” can be directly connected to an attitude found among the London-based participants in Forkert’s (2013) study, who showed familiarity with “acceptance of their own transience.” Forkert found “a short-term sense of stability” among some of the artists in her study, with participants tending to “think mainly in terms of the present. The future, beyond a few months, was difficult to imagine” (p. 60).
Learning path (Greg). Compared to the other three artists, Greg’s learning phases are heavily focused on concrete experience and active experimentation. His concrete experiences were often difficult, but he tried his best to face and overcome them with actions. His brother’s suicide, an obvious tragedy, made Greg re-design his career plan by questioning the meaning of life. As Greg confessed that he had no idea how artists make a living, he did not go through too much reflective observation and active conceptualization at that time. Instead, he acted on what he wanted to do (active experimentation). Another influential concrete experience for Greg was ongoing failure with the open call application process. From applying to graduate school to securing his teaching job, Greg did not have much luck with formal applications. And with this failure, rather than trying to figure out what was wrong with his application as a sort of reflective observation, he moved on to more active experimentation—in-person networking.

This more tangible tactic of getting opportunities by meeting people has dominated many parts of his career, as well as his day jobs. Greg voluntarily offered to work as an assistant for an artist he met in Brooklyn, for a very low wage. Greg said that he did so because he expected to learn how artists at a higher level made it there. Greg also hoped someone would hire him after seeing how hard he worked. And his hope was partially realized, as a local carpenter in the neighborhood hired him. However, Greg described working with the artist as “brutal.” This was not only based on his own experience, but also from witnessing other young art graduates being exploited, working for nothing but experience, with an expectation that such experience would lead them to more professional level of artists.
On a practical level, Greg’s swift shift between concrete experience and active experimentation also happened in other situations. He utilized gallery openings as a chance to eat, and this idea came from his mother who shared the concrete experience of being poor. When he was literally homeless after arriving in New York after graduate school, Greg tried to overcome this limitation with two solutions: living in his friend’s van and sleeping in the studio where he wasn’t permitted to live.

As abstract conceptualization, Greg expressed pessimism and frustration in describing the futility of some of his endeavors, but he did not express these ideas as theories or realizations in the way that Jun and Angela visualized (through metaphor and analogy) the artist’s life. Greg expressed particular futility in regard to his networking efforts. As seen with his difficult artist assistant job, Greg tends to do things voluntarily. This is apparent in the case of working with a pop-up gallery where his artwork was sold out. Greg described this moment as a “high point” in his career. However, in the second show at the pop-up gallery, sales of his art work were not as good as in the first show and Greg voluntarily brought a collector who ended up purchasing Greg’s work. A sense of camaraderie led Greg to expect appreciation of his endeavor by the gallerists, who earned profit through sales of Greg’s work. However, in Greg’s view, the gallerists did not seem to care and the relationship between Greg and the gallerists ended soon after. As he has put a lot of personal effort into networking, this experience led Greg to feel like the networking process was futile.

As discussed previously, Greg has also not been successful when it comes to applications, and there are many examples here of abstract conceptualization. When he repeatedly failed to get a teaching job, he began to think that white, Caucasian males are
victims of counter-discrimination in the higher education job market, where racial and gender diversity is increasingly significant. Plus, frustrated that he was not able to attend his dream school for his MFA, Greg pointed out the contradiction between the emphasis on hiring Ivy League professors for art programs at non-Ivy-League schools, which ironically clarifies the fact that the graduates of those non-Ivy-League schools would not be hired to teach there after graduating. He also questioned the high cost of an MFA degree and the efficiency of networking at those schools by asking whether it would be more meaningful to instead host a big party with the same amount of money the degree would have cost, and to invite art world VIPs.

Learning path (Luiza). Luiza’s four learning modes are also well-balanced. There were several sets of concrete experience that influenced Luiza to decide to be an artist. In fact, her decision was made relatively late compared to other three artists. The experience of winning the art contest in her childhood was a sort of confirmation of her talent in art. However, she had consistently dreamed of a career as a set-designer, which led her to pursue dual degrees (architecture and fine arts) at two different schools, with the expectation that the combination of both would benefit her dream. As another concrete experience, taking two different majors made her realize how much she actually enjoyed hands-on art making. Despite her previous two experiences, she was still not sure whether she wanted to be an artist. She began to understand what serious dedication artists have to their art practice through her professors in Portugal when she was doing a studio assistantship there. After reflecting upon these experiences, Luiza started pursuing a career in art.
There have been numerous transitions between concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation during Luiza’s artistic career. The concrete experience of making site-specific installations using latex in Portugal allowed her to communicate with curious passers-by. This showed her the possibilities of engaging with audiences in public space, which she has applied over her entire art practice over the course of her career. Luiza has also been shifting between the abstract conceptualization and active experimentation stages, especially in her experimentation with using clay as a portable material that allows mass-participation in the making of imprints, creating an urban architecture. Conversely, along with the transformative nature of the material, Luiza overcame challenges of transportation and finding proper spaces and enough time for her clay to dry. This lesson was based in reflective observation that made her rethink her choice of material afterward.

Another concrete experience, one that influenced Luiza’s current view of the artist’s life, was participation in a major museum show in New York. She felt like all of her artistic endeavors were “paid off” when she was invited to be a part of the MoMA PS1 show. Clearly her career had ascended to a high level, one to which many artists would aspire. However, the experience of the major museum show in New York did not lead her down a hidden, magical path. It was almost like that previously unapproachable door, when she finally reached it, turned out to be a concrete wall. The museum show ended up as just one of the shows on her resume, and left her with more depression than encouragement. Many details of the process and aftermath of the exhibition let Luiza down. There was no stipend, or a chance to network with other exhibiting artists who might potentially lead her to a next step or even to a higher level. Instead, there was an
absence of fruitful feedback and reaction from other parts of the art world, and a
disconnection with the curator after the show. All of this was a disappointment. Luiza
was simultaneously exhibiting her work at a solo show at a Lower East Side gallery,
where she experienced lagging sales of her work. Combined, these events left Luiza
feeling challenged, and she wondered about the sustainability of her art practice. An
absence of fruitful reactions at the MoMA show, such as no subsequent show invitations,
forced Luiza to apply for opportunities as an emerging artist. However, this sort of up and
down experience made her realize what she really enjoys in her art—which is
communicating with an audience in a more open format, rather than just exhibiting
artwork in galleries. Plus, she found ways to sustain her art by doing art-related jobs and
college teaching, while being more selective about incoming show opportunities,
checking whether the shows offered financial compensation.

Summary of Theme 5

This part of the discussion focused on the individual lessons of each participant
and demonstrated how Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza each engaged in diverse styles of
learning over the course of their lives and careers, based on David Kolb’s (1984) four
learning styles: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization,
and active experimentation. In the next and final part of the discussion, the topics of artist
integrity and support systems are explored, as these relate to how the participants identify
and sustain art practices they both believe in and can live with.
Theme 6: Artist Integrity Related to Support Systems

In addition to income from day jobs, the four artists have sustained their art practices through various types of support—from institutional grants for production or exhibition, to temporary, free or subsidized studio spaces in artist-in-residence programs, to artist and exhibition fees, to profit from sales of artwork. However, those supports are not equally available for all artists. This issue can be linked to the value of artist labor, which has long been an issue in art history and sociology. Moreover, artists’ rights and their need for support and reward may conflict with their strong beliefs in artistic integrity, ownership over their art, and the potential limits of how much integrity one is willing to compromise for sales. Those sentiments are dependent on individual choices and beliefs of artists.

During the interviews, the four participants shared their experiences of obtaining the supports mentioned above and expressed their sentiments toward artists’ rights, value of artistic labor, and the idea of commercializing their artwork. In addition it was possible to see some moments in the conversations when each showed a strong artistic ego: artistic integrity and a sense of ownership over their art practice. This part of the discussion features the kinds of support systems each artist has relied on, what they think about the reality of such systems and their ideal notion of artists’ rights.

Literature Relevant to the Theme

Two different threads of literature can be utilized for the discussion of this theme. One is the history of artists’ status and records of claiming their rights; the other is an analysis of the passive economic position of artists from the point of view of economics and sociology. In reference to art history, it is possible to find more information about the
ideal status of being artists and how artwork should be treated from an artist’s point of view. On the other hand, in economics and sociology references, it is possible to confirm what traits of artists are different from those in other professions, what causes the passive position of artists in terms of commerce, and what kinds of artistic attitudes and practical strategies may be valuable in a changing trend in the field of arts marketing.

As discussed in Chapter II, in the 19th century, after artworks and artists were free from control of the church and the art market emerged, John Ruskin initiated discussion of the political economy of art, focusing on the proper ways to produce and consume art (Codell, 2008). Ruskin was concerned that artwork and artists were driven by and benefitted from profit. This led to the first legal trial of James Abbott McNeil Whistler, which focused on the value of artist labor. Ruskin claimed that the innocent image of the artist should be distanced from the art business (Vidokle, 2013).

In the mid-20th century, there were several collective movements of artists who sought to claim their rights. Among them, the Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC) listed the rights of artists in detail, especially how their artwork should be treated and rewarded during and after museum exhibition (Bryan-Wilson, 2009). One of the most recent artist collectives advocating for artists’ rights is W.A.G.E.—this organization argues for artists to be paid for exhibiting their work and makes this happen partially through association and collaboration with several museums and art spaces.

From an economist’s point of view, the artist economy does not qualify as typical economic activity. Based on Human Capital Theory, expected amount of lifetime income primarily influences on one’s decision about occupation, however artists do not follow this trend and fail at being “rational wealth maximisers” (Abbing, 2002, cited in Towse,
2006, p. 879). On the other hand, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1996) argued that “charismatic ideology,” which mainly refers to artistic autonomy, actually contributes to artists being “detached from the social,” by idealizing perceptions of artists as geniuses working in isolation (Forkert, 2013, p. 15). Bourdieu claimed that this view puts artists in a passive position where they are waiting to be picked up by a gallery or patron who can promote their artwork. Vidokle (2013) states that such detachment from commerce began in the modernist period when artists encountered “a peculiar dilemma” in regard to economy around their art. Disassociating from “older artistic formations such as medieval artisan guilds,” 19th century bohemian artists stayed away from “the vulgar sphere of day-to-day commerce” in order to pursue “an idealized conception of art and authorship” (para. 1). Vidokle points out that this “rejection of normative bourgeois life” ended up requiring artists to “entrust their livelihoods to middlemen—to private agents or state organizations.” Vidokle cites famous artists such as Paul Gauguin, Piet Mondrian and Aleksandr Rodchenko who died in “abject poverty” despite popularity, and he attributes artists’ poverty to domination of “the circulation and distribution of their work” by others, “whether under capitalist or communist regimes” (para. 1).

However, Fillis (2010) suggests that trends in marketing are changing, and that as part of a shifting paradigm, the marketing of artists can be an innovative and creative “product-orientation” marketing that has the potential to bring customers into new, desired markets—rather artists making suitable products for customers in the existing art market ideology.
Cross-case Analysis

This part of discussion focuses on various kinds of systemic supports for artists and the perspectives of the four participants about such forms of support. It begins with an examination of how artistic labor has been valued, according to their experiences, and moves on to artist/exhibition fees, space, and exhibitions that involve networking and sales of artwork, with particular attention to personal limits on compromise for commercialization of their art. Lastly, Jun’s case is connected to Fillis’s (2010) “product-orientation” marketing. Jun’s art is more commercially successful than that of the other artists, and is an illustration of how artists create their own market to draw customers.

Value of artist labor. From the aforementioned literature, it is clear that the way the value of artist labor is measured does not have a generally accepted standard. It was possible to confirm this finding through the cases of the four participants. In Greg’s past experience at his artist-assistant job, such loose, unclear standards for the value of artist labor was not just an issue related to how artists are treated by galleries and other art institutions, it also emerges among artists themselves. Greg was poorly paid (five dollars per hour) by the artist he worked for. Even after his wage had been raised, he was utilized as a false model by the artist to justify hiring recent art college graduates for non-paid internships. The false reality the artist communicated to unsuspecting unpaid interns was that working for other artists for free can be substituted, as far as one’s career advancement, with paid work experience. This attitude is very similar to the concept of apprenticeship—for example, in the mid-19th century, masters not only acquired free labor from their apprentices (who were offered accommodations and training from the masters in return) but also sometimes even received a fee from the apprentices’ parents.
Greg’s case was actually more related to a day job than reward of his labor for his own artwork. Looking across the cases, how is the labor that the four artists expended for the production of their artwork valued and rewarded?

In Luiza’s case, there was no stipend, neither an artist fee nor an exhibition fee, given for the MoMA PS1 show. The museum paid for the transportation of the artwork and the labor of the art handler who installed Luiza’s work, but she did not receive any monetary reward for her participation in the show. After the MoMA show, with growing awareness of her sustainability as an artist beyond just accumulating exhibitions on her resume, Luiza started to be more selective in choosing opportunities and accepting offers. She asked whether galleries had a budget at least for transportation, which used to be covered out of her own expenses. She said, “I still pay for making art and [am] not getting paid for that.” In the recent Miami show, Luiza’s travel was funded by the gallery but still, it is far from a situation she is satisfied with.

Jun, the most commercially successful of the four participants, also receives monetary reward through the sales of his artwork. Most of Jun’s expenses related to his nomadic living, such as accommodations, transportation, and sometimes food, have been covered by hosts, such as galleries or collectors. However, these payments function more as reimbursement for what Jun has spent rather than as an artist fee. Even if he spends a lot of energy to travel and install his pieces, Jun receives money only when his artwork is sold. In other words, he only gets rewarded based on the object-hood of his art, instead of for his physical endeavor and performance. In response to John Ruskin’s criticism of the high pricing of his artwork, Painter James McNeil Whistler (1890) answered that the price was calculated not based on a sum of hours he spent for painting, but on the entire
amount of time he spent in his life to reach that level. If artists’ labor cannot be rewarded unless their artworks are sold, would the high pricing of Whistler’s paintings be validated in terms of compensation for the instability in the sales of his artwork?

**Systematic support - artist fee and exhibition fee.** While artwork sales-based compensation is one kind of financial support available to artists, such as Jun and Luiza, Angela’s case demonstrates a number of other forms of support, although these are largely based on her affiliation with Denmark. Of the four artists, Angela has the most experience receiving production grants, artists’ fees and exhibition fees. According to her account, when she applies for grants, she always sets a certain budget amount for her artist fee as part of her income. This is an example of how artist labor is rewarded, in addition to supporting production expenses, in Demark. In addition, when her artwork is exhibited, she gets paid an exhibition fee which is determined according to the price of the artwork and the duration of the exhibition. In Denmark, the concept of artist fee and exhibition fee clearly meets with the demands for artist rights by such artist collectives as the Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC) and W.A.G.E., who claim that artists have to be monetarily rewarded not just through sales but also by the institutions that show their work to audiences. On the other hand, the way Angela used these support systems is far from that of “rational wealth maximisers” (Abbing, 2002, cited in Towse, 2006, p. 879). She told me that when production costs go beyond the budget, she always cuts down her share of the profits first rather than lower the quality of her art. This clearly shows that her artist mindset is not based on a profit-driven attitude.

**Systematic support - space and networking.** Going back to Luiza’s account of the MoMA PS1 show, Luiza was a bit surprised at the reality she faced during the
process of participating in a show at one of major museums in New York. The paperwork was complicated and detailed and she didn’t see any benefit. On the day of opening, she expected a chance to get to know other artists or art professionals who would be doors to new exhibition opportunities, but she was only communicated with her own guests, because the curator did not introduce her to other guests. From Luiza’s case, it is possible to see that the benefits an artist expects from participation in shows or artist residencies are not just based on immediate outcomes, but also on finding a potential ladder or bridge that will allow career advancement.

Beyond the typical exhibition setting, other forms of networking include artist residencies, as described earlier. Artist in residence programs do not just offer a free space. Luiza expressed “such a relief” when she was accepted into two different six-month studio programs, and she did not have to worry about space for art making for a year. Plus, each program curated two shows she needed to prepare, and that gave her a sense of a direction and purpose, “I am working for something, I have a plan.” Moreover, as Luiza was new to the city, those residency programs were also helpful in terms of networking with other artists and with curators.

Sales of artwork - boundaries of compromise and ownership. When Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza were asked if they believe that living off of their art is feasible, they all answered that they do. However, they admitted that making a living from one’s art is very rare and only a small number of artists have achieved it. Ironically, although the study participants would welcome the idea of living solely from their art, they tend to negotiate their art practice to be more suitable for the demands of the customer or the market in order to make their work more sellable. From the responses of the four artists,
it was hard to draw a clear line between what parts of their artistic output would be negotiable, in terms of making the work sellable, and what parts would not. Also, during the interviews, it was possible to detect senses of ownership and artistic integrity from the participants, although to different degrees.

Despite participation in the major museum show in New York, Luiza still feels that she is an “emerging artist,” mainly because she still cannot make a living from her own art. During the interview, Luiza wondered about the definition of “emerging artist” and expressed that there is a big gap between artists who can live off their art and those who cannot. She confessed that she “did everything [she] could [to] try to sell the work.” Her definition of the varying levels of artists is obviously based on whether their artwork is sold enough so that they can support themselves. However, she has not been interested in tailoring her art practice to fit into market tastes. In response to the sarcastic question posed by her former professor, “are you doing colorful paintings?” she bluntly denied doing so just to generate sales. Instead, she chose other sources of support like teaching, and she rationalized such choices as “then I can do whatever I want for my art without [having] that frustration.”

After the MoMA PS1 exhibition, Luiza has been rethinking her art practice and its direction. She concluded that she would pursue more community-based art, not limiting her art to being an object-based product. In a way, Luiza’s non-conformist attitudes can be linked to her strong sense of ownership, which can also be linked to her break-up with her collaborator in the City Souvenir series, the participatory public art project using clay. Breaking up in itself can reflect the strong egos of both artists. Luiza called it “divorce,” and the way she and her collaborator even separated very detailed materials and parts of
the project (including metal shelves for display) indicates the strong sense of ownership they each had.

In contrast to Luiza, Angela showed openness to negotiation for selling her art but she insisted that such negotiation and her inclination toward commercial success should not jeopardize her artistic pride. When she was asked about the extent to which she would compromise the style of her artwork in order to be sold more widely, she answered she would not make “something that I wouldn’t be acknowledged with for the rest of my life.” She added that it all depends on what kinds of galleries want to work with her and what kinds of opportunities they provide. On the other hand, Angela mentioned a very resonant ironic example of the gap between artistic freedom and money, citing the case of the rock band Fever Ray who sold their song to be used in a Samsung commercial. According to Angela, they said, “if I can live without worrying [about] money for [a] few years and [be] solely focused on music, it is OK.” Indeed, the tipping point at which artists feel that their artistic integrity has been harmed is very subjective, and dependent on their perception of the art world.

In Greg’s case, it was possible to see how much he values sales of his artwork. He described the experience of a sell out at his first show in the pop-up gallery as a “high point” in his career. Among the four artists, Greg has been more proactive toward “the vulgar sphere of day-to-day commerce,” as opposed to the innocent artist promoted by Ruskin (Vidokle, 2013, para. 1). During the second show at the pop-up gallery, Greg brought the collector he knew, in an attempt to sell his work. Despite his endeavor, his relationship with the gallerists ended and their perspectives on the amount of profit did not match. Greg recalled, “there wasn’t enough money in it for them…they decided to get
other jobs. So they sort of quit.” The different viewpoints between artists and gallerists can be confirmed by Greg’s previous experience of being represented by a gallery in upstate New York. Although he had a strong will to sell his art, he felt that the gallerist there did not put his best effort into it. “The gallerist…his role is to sort of sell these things…I wasn’t good at selling and he didn’t do anything about selling.” Moreover, the gallerist was not supportive of Greg’s installation due to his preference for artwork that can be simply hung. Greg recalled, “And they were like ‘do I have to put in 36 nails into my wall?’ I was like ‘yeah.’ ‘No I don’t want to deal with that.’”

Greg’s relationship with the gallery in upstate New York ended. Greg was not upset about it, mainly because he had already gotten another offer from the New York pop-up gallery. He was instead relieved, knowing that he had a gallery to work with, regardless of sales rates.

Artists create their own market. Among the four artists, Jun is the clearest example of how an artist can lead his customers by creating a new market on his own. However, this kind of art market creation has not been Jun’s primary interest. In our conversation, Jun repeatedly mentioned that he prioritized an “institutional” level of success, which indicates that he considered his significant career achievement to lie in his shows at non-commercial venues such as museums and non-profit spaces. Plus, he holds a very strong sense of ownership over his art. He has been asked to produce more traditional “two-dimensional work” for sales by his friends or galleries, but he has never accepted such offers, which he feels compromise his artistic integrity. He only sells his art as he creates it.
Despite his stubbornness with the style of art, Jun clearly has his fans and customers. Jun’s five gallery representations around the world and his constant requests for artwork for shows as well as for collector’s houses is an indication of his popularity. Even when some collectors who show interest in his art as it is in a gallery want to purchase the work from the site and bring the art home with them, Jun does not negotiate.

So, if somebody sees my work and they are interested in [it], we tell them in the beginning that it is going to change because you have a different space and my work is site-responsive. And the artist has to go…it’s not like buying a painting.

He explains his concept of art to collectors and only sells his art to those who are willing to follow his way of doing business. In terms of maintaining artistic integrity while pursuing sales of his artwork without compromise, Jun has been quite successful. He only sells his artwork to buyers who agree with all the detailed rules and constraints Jun prescribes. In fact, Jun understands that the complicated nature of his work blocks sales to more conservative collectors who may expect to simply purchase works from a gallery. Jun said that only approximately ten percent of collectors who showed interest in his art actually end up purchasing it. Jun appreciates his collectors and described them as “liberal” and “open” to unconventional types of art.

In his argument for a product-oriented market, Fillis (2010) emphasizes understanding fine art’s uniqueness and promoting a marketing strategy based on its unique nature rather than forcing it to fit a consumer-oriented market where products are made for fulfilling consumers’ needs. Fillis quotes Oscar Wilde (1881), who defined “artist autonomy” as the “core nature of fine arts.”

A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. (Wilde, cited in Fillis, 2010, p. 77)
Based on Wilde’s view, Jun clearly has been following the “unique temperament” of his art. He has been making what he wants and appreciates his fans and customers. However, he has not changed his style to get more popularity. Fillis argues that in art history, many “one time avant-garde artists who, through their creative marketing activities, attract a following and creative success, shape[d] market demand in the longer term” (p. 77). Meyer and Even (1998) found the potential of “art for art’s sake marketing,” in which artists do not create products for customers but look for customers for their products. They argued that “art becomes a traded good once it is brought to the marketplace which, however, may not be the objective during the process of creation” (cited in Fillis, 2010, p. 77).

In this respect, it is possible to see that artists are not failed economic entities. It is not that they only seek the pure nature of “fine arts,” refusing any possibilities of their work to be commodified. As Meyer and Even (1998, cited in Fillis, 2010) said, they do not want to just make “products” suitable for customers. They want to find customers who can appreciate and be willing to pay for what they produce as it is. In Jun’s case, his own market clearly exists, but he is not in a hurry to make greater profit right now. With regard to Fillis’s (2010, p.77) “longer term,” perhaps Jun aims his long-term success at both commercial and non-commercial sectors.

**Summary of Theme 6**

In this part of the discussion the support systems artists use and their sentiments toward the reality of such support systems were analyzed. Those support systems ranged from artist and exhibition fees as forms of rewarding artistic labor regardless of sales of artwork, to artist-in-residence programs, to exhibitions in which artists expect a chance to
network for future opportunities. The discussion focused on four topics: value of artistic labor, systematic supports, sales of artwork, and artists create their own markets.

In regard to the value of artistic labor, Greg and Luiza’s cases show that the labor of artists is sometimes not valued or rewarded at all. On the other hand, in Angela’s experience, the concept of artist fees and exhibition fees is firmly established as a form of reward for artist’s labor in Denmark. Also, through Luiza’s case, it was possible to see that non-monetary support, such as studio programs and exhibitions, function as ways of networking and career making.

The four artists believed in the idea of making a living from their artwork, and were aware of its rarity, but they showed different attitudes toward compromising artistic integrity for the commercialization of their art. Angela showed more openness to compromise than others, but simultaneously, she admitted that she would not sell something she didn’t approve of. This sense of ownership was more apparent with Luiza, who refused to compromise the style of her artwork even though she was disappointed with her failure to sell her work. Greg has been more proactive than the other participants, voluntarily inviting a collector he knew to sell his work at an exhibition. Despite his endeavor for boosting companionship with the gallerists he has worked with, Greg experienced the sometimes incompatible mindsets between artists and gallerists.

Lastly, Jun’s case was discussed as an example of Fillis’s (2010) product-oriented market, in which artists lead consumers rather following consumers’ needs. Although he has received many requests to produce two-dimensional artworks, Jun has been very stubborn with his style of art. Jun would not even negotiate with collectors who showed interest in his installation artwork, which turned off some potential customers. While Jun
appreciated his fans and collectors and called them open-minded and progressive, he has persistently maintained his style and pursued success at more non-commercial art venues. As Fillis noted about many avant-garde artists who have gained commercial success over a long period of time, Jun’s case shows that artists aim not for just short-term commercial success, but long-term achievement, which may include both commercial and institutional success.

**Summary of Chapter V**

Over the course of their lives and careers, Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza have encountered numerous moments where they struggle due to the limits of their resources in regard to space, material and time. These three elements are a significant part of the research questions, and were selected as basic elements for art making with an assumption that the logistics of art making may fall under one of those three categories, or all of them. Chapter V was initially structured by setting these three elements as boundaries and starting points of discussion concerning the four artists’ practical aspects of the artist’s life, from the inner process of art making, to career management, to ways of living. However, over the course of the analysis, it was possible to discern other significant considerations which may not fall into the categories of space, material, and time. Thus, Chapter V presented an additional three themes dealing with other matters in an artist’s life, such as constraints, learning processes, and sense of integrity. Therefore, Chapter V consists of six themes in total: *boundary-less space, attachment to and detachment from material, multi-purposeful time, creative constraints, artist’s learning through experience, and artist integrity related to support systems.*
The first theme, *boundary-less space*, focused on how artists overcome space constraints by thinking beyond conventional notions of space for making art, for example, the studio. The artists utilized diverse tactics, from merging living space and space for making art into one, to changing to different modes of art practice based on availability of space, to modifying shared studio space, to making art in public spaces. These tactics reduced expenses for space as well as maximized the artists’ use of space. Along with solving problems, the artists’ space-related adaptations to some degree influenced their artistic styles and changed their conceptions of art practice. For example, the site-specific nature of the artists’ work at times turned once-perceived space constraints into more efficient ways of producing artwork—such as the artist seeing exhibition and on-site installation as an art form in itself, which decreased the artist’s burden of needing a permanent studio space.

The second theme, *attachment to and detachment from material*, presented different attitudes of the artists toward requirements for materials needed to produce their work, including transportation and storage of these materials. Artists who were detached from their material (did not save their work after it was shown) saw the abandonment of their artwork after exhibition as very natural, and they were fully aware of the cost of keeping their artwork. Their attitudes were linked to an increasing trend in contemporary art of promoting the ephemerality and temporality of artwork, where the physical artwork exists only in temporal moments of exhibition and its existence is archived through video and photo documentation. On the other hand, artists who were more attached to their materials (those who kept their work after exhibition) were apt to seek lower cost
solutions for making and storing their work, such as producing smaller or more portable works, and using found or portable materials.

The third theme, *multi-purposeful time*, focused on how the artists utilized limited time in order to achieve multiple goals. Their tactics ranged from merging time for art and life by living in their studio, to using time efficiently by moving from place to place to make on-site artwork instead of maintaining permanent housing and studios, to merging child-care with tasks related to art production. Here, making art at an exhibition site also helped with overcoming time constraints, since such action can satisfy multiple goals: production of art, having an exhibition, and communicating with an audience that can potentially function as a source of inspiration for future work. In addition, as time limits apply equally to the four participants due to their day jobs, I discussed other benefits of working at art-related jobs (such as networking) and the efficiency and cost in switching between art making and a day job. Lastly, since not all of the artists’ works were labor-intensive, it was possible to see that the relationship between the amount of time spent making the work and the quality of the artwork were not necessarily proportional.

In the fourth theme, *creative constraints*, I discussed how various constraints or limitations artists may face can function as sources of creativity. This part of the discussion provided an overview of constraints the four artists have experienced in their lives and specific moments when they have transformed the restraining nature of the limitation into an enabler for creativity. Overall, the artists tended to deal with constraints creatively when they fully accepted the unavoidability of limitations and started to broadly consider what they could do within that limitation.
The fifth theme, *artist's learning through experience*, described the kinds of lessons the four artists gleaned through diverse real-life experience and how they applied this learning to develop strategies for survival and maintenance of their art practice. The discussion borrowed David Kolb’s (1984) four learning styles: *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualization*, and *active experimentation*. During the analysis, diverse analogies for and perspectives on the reality of the artist’s life emerged—for example, “artist as traveler,” “acceptance of not knowing the future.”

Lastly, the sixth theme, *artist integrity related to support systems*, focused on the kinds of support systems the four artists have used and relied on and how they feel about the reality of these systems. The discussion highlighted the value of artist labor, monetary rewards (artist fee, exhibition fee, and sales of artwork), and institutional non-monetary support (artist residency and exhibition). Here, it was possible to see how an artist’s strong ego (artistic integrity and a sense of ownership) often conflicts with what they have, what they desire, and how much they can compromise. On the other hand, through Fillis’s (2010) product oriented marketing of artists, it is also possible to see that artists may not be failed economic entities, but pursue a different type of economy by drawing customers into their desired market, making the customers fit the artist’s work and not the other way around.

In Chapter VI, following a summary of the dissertation study, these themes are brought forward into recommendations for practice and implications for future research.
Chapter VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final dissertation chapter, I summarize the parts of the study, carry forward the study’s findings in conjunction with the dissertation’s research questions, and provide implications for practice and future research.

Summary of the Dissertation

This dissertation is situated in New York City’s art-world mecca context that on one hand draws young, would-be-artists to the city and on the other hand offers extremely high costs of living, including rent for housing and studio space (which artists must manage on top of any debt from student loans along with other expenses). The unaffordability of studio space due to ongoing gentrification in previously under-developed areas has been a common issue for many artists and this is not solely a problem with achieving a balance between the price of space and artists’ incomes. Rather, the issue is intertwined with the time and energy artists have to spend to earn money to pay rent, which could otherwise be used for their creative activities.

In describing the problem taken up by the study I explained why the real-life experiences of artists living today—in regards to their struggles and strategies not only to survive, but also to sustain their art practice—need to be studied through multiple lenses. I argued for the necessity of the research by citing other scholars’ descriptions and analyses of the current struggles of young artists (Clements, 2014; Gleisner, 2014). I cited diverse references from art history and art theory concerning the changing status of artists and their rights (Bryan-Wilson, 2009; Johnson, 2013; Vartanian, 2014). To get an outside
viewpoint, I included research on artists done through the lens of economics (Frey & Pommerehne, 1989; Lena & Lindemann, 2014; Menger, 2001, 2006; Throsby, 2001; Towse, 2006; Wassall & Alper, 1990), which presented the difficulty of defining artists with the same measurements used for other professions in society. I thus contextualized the dissertation’s research questions—which focused on the kinds of strategies low-income, under-established artists in New York City build, especially with regard to space, material, and time, in order to sustain their art practice, and how these strategies affect the nature of their art. Lastly, with a brief introduction of previous related studies on fine artists’ careers, I emphasized the value of the dissertation study by pointing out the lack of attention in the literature paid specifically to under-established artists (Forkert, 2016; Lamb, 2015).

While it is impossible to generalize the findings of the study in any quantitative sense—as the four study participants cannot be representative of the broad and diverse landscape of even those artists living in New York City—the primary significance of the study lies in its intended benefit to artists themselves and to those who prepare them. These include struggling artists who can learn from the cases of fellow artists (the stories of Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza), college-level art teachers who want to prepare their students with the more practical knowledge of artist survival skills, and college administrators who develop curricula to fit to the future needs of art students as they grow their careers after graduation.

The dissertation’s conceptual framework is based upon various theories and ideas from art history, art theory, economics, sociology, and philosophy. These range include the value of artistic labor throughout history (Bryan-Wilson, 2009; Johnson, 2013; Sokol,
In Chapter II, I organized a review of related literature according to five different topics: Art and Labor, Artist as Occupation, Duality of Social Status of Artists, Three Elements for Art Making: Space/Material/Time, and Related Research and Writing on Art Graduates and Young Artists’ Careers. In Art and Labor, beginning with ancient notions of art and the later emergence of fine arts, I explored the kinds of relationships that have been forged between art and labor, and further, how the value of artistic labor was treated and claimed in art history. In Artist as Occupation, I explored economic research concerning the fine arts as a profession, focusing on whether “artist” can be acknowledged as a type of occupation by economic standards and on how the profession of artist differs from other jobs. This section of the literature review also summarized ideas related to how to become a successful artist, based on artists’ experiences presented in practical artist handbooks. In Duality of Social Status of Artists, I took a more sociological lens. Here, I presented common perceptions and stereotypes in regards to how people regard artists; these ranged from seeing artists as sole, charismatic geniuses who are detached from social activity, to placing artists in the middle class if their
poverty is out of voluntary choice, to condemning artists as agents of urban gentrification.

The final sections of Chapter II’s review of literature focused on several of the conceptual framework’s basic elements and related writing on artists’ careers. In *Three Elements for Art Making: Space/Material/Time*, I used art historical and art theory lenses to describe how those elements for artmaking have been redefined, transformed and re-contextualized in the evolution of contemporary art. Lastly, in *Related Research and Writing on Art Graduates and Young Artists’ Careers*, I introduced literature to support the necessity of my research, as well as to make clear the boundaries between what has already been studied and elements that are missing, thus identifying a gap in the literature that the dissertation seeks to address.

Chapter III, the methodology chapter, described both the design of the study and the process of carrying out the data collection and analysis. My choice to conduct a qualitative study was based on a desire to attend to the in-depth particularities and qualities of artists’ experiences within “a natural setting” (Lancy 1993, cited in Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 233, Yin, 1994). Within the qualitative research methodology, I chose the method of case study in order to see “a specific, a complex, functioning thing” (Stake 1995, p. 2) as I examined the lives of the four participants. My role as the researcher was as a non-participant and I used one-on-one interviews with participants to collect the data. I chose the semi-structured interview approach to collect “feelings, thoughts, and intentions” (Patton, 1990, p. 196), as the study focused on the artists’ perspectives on their ongoing art practices.
The study participants all had more than two years of professional experience as an artist. The four artists have either insufficient income from their artwork or have separate day jobs, or constantly apply for and rely on grants or fellowships from cultural institutions. In most cases, I used multiple interview sessions in order to maintain an openness and flexibility of conversation with the participants and for the sake of a focused atmosphere where participants didn’t become fatigued after one long conversation. The methods of data analysis in this study were transcribing interviews, emergent coding of interview transcripts and then categorizing the codes into broader themes.

My positionality as researcher is very relevant, as I myself am an active artist who has 11 years of experience working as a professional, with participation in exhibitions at various venues such as museums, commercial galleries and non-profit organizations in the U.S., as well as in South Korea. With regard to ethical considerations, I did my best to protect the subjects’ privacy, public personas, and confidentiality of information by not using any visual images of their artwork, and with strict use of pseudonyms, not only for the participants, but also for people mentioned in the participants’ stories.

In Chapter IV, the findings of the dissertation, I presented the interview data from the four participants in narrative analysis form. The narrative presentation of data for each artist followed the actual sequence of dialogue during the multiple-session interviews, and it is divided into three parts: Life History, Art Practice and Career History.
In the *Life History* section, although the structure of detail and concentration of specific episodes varied for each participant, overall, the section contains various details of each participant’s identity, cultural background, upbringing, education and experience, motivation to become an artist, and experience in New York. In the *Art Practice* section, I reported on three art pieces or series selected by each participant, personal works that they felt represented important aspects of their practice. Here, the artists explained the concepts, visual elements, material concerns, motivation, and processes as they related to the chosen art pieces. In addition, there were several keywords that each participant frequently used in the interviews and were indicative of the core nature of their art practice. The *Career History* section was focused on the trajectory and itinerary of each participant’s career path. Each artist talked from personal professional experience about attempts to gain gallery representation, identifying funding opportunities and submitting grant applications, having exhibitions at various venues and day jobs. This section of the findings also highlights the artists’ perspectives on the New York art world, the reality of the life of an artist, the idea of living off of their artwork, required conditions for art making, and current struggles.

In Chapter V, I discussed how the four participants have developed strategies to deal with the limitations and challenges of space, material, and time, how they used lessons from their life experiences to transform their struggles into a source of growth, and what they think about living as artists in contact with diverse support systems and opportunities in the art world. The discussion was organized according to six themes that emerged in the data analysis: *Boundary-less Space, Attachments to and Detachment from Material, Multi-purposeful Time, Creative Constraints, Artist’s Learning Through*
Experience, and Artist Integrity Related to Support Systems. Each of these major themes consisted of two parts: a review of relevant literature and a cross-case analysis.

Overall, through the previous five chapters, this dissertation manifested the reasons why this research needed to be conducted in the present time, as well as what kind of target readers this research would aim to benefit. Also, it attempted to show the conceptual and theoretical landscape in and around this research through various sources of literature, and rich data from interviews with the four participants through detailed narratives.

Finally, based on the cross-case analysis of interview data from the four artists, including the categorization of those findings into the six themes identified, I now discuss how the interpretation of the data as presented answers the dissertation’s research questions. In the following and concluding parts of this chapter, I return to the research questions in light of the findings, and offer final thoughts about recommendations for practice and future research.

**Conclusions**

The dissertation sought to investigate the following questions, as contextualized here:

Artists often find it difficult to live on their art practices, and this necessitates locating other sources of income. This also challenges the sustainability of their artistic careers due to the inability to secure studio space, have a satisfactory budget for materials, and make sufficient time to concentrate on their art production. Therefore, what kind of strategies do low-income, under-established artists in New York build, especially with regard to space, material, and time, in
order to sustain their art practice? And how do these strategies affect the nature of their art?

In this study, although the cases of four artists showed different characteristics, there were several common findings across the four artists. In response to the research questions, the four artists have been fully considering the limits and accessibility of the three elements of space, material, and time from the beginning of their careers until the point of the interviews. All of the artists reflected on their art career-related endeavors as a trial and error process, and developed and applied new strategies (if necessary) in an attempt to resolve ongoing struggles in the three areas. Mostly, their strategies for dealing with challenges related to space, material and time were not one-time practical solutions, but rather were actively immersed or integrated directly in their ongoing art practice. Frequently for the artists, these strategies became a significant part of conceptualizing or reconceptualizing their approach to the use of space, their approach to using materials, and the size or scale (expandability and portability) of their artwork.

**Space: A Practiced Place for Flexible Use**

More specifically, the artists dealt with the first element, space, in two major ways: (1) by re-conceptualizing the nature of their art practice to fit within given space conditions or constraints, at times based on their lack of permanent, secured studio space and (2) building pieces, at times with limited material resources, that can be configured and exhibited in different ways, in order to maximize use of space, even if the artwork was designed to be temporary and discarded after exhibition. In addition, all of the artists showed efficacy by making their artwork or completing the production of their art on the site of the exhibition; this satisfied two goals, production and exhibition of the art,
simultaneously. This act of leaving some parts of the art making to be completed on site or wholly finishing production on site also had other benefits. One of them involved the potential to make larger artworks, which in some cases may not be feasible in a small studio. Also, the production of art on site can benefit artists in terms of exercising exhibition making practices, the importance of which is acknowledged by art professionals (Faib et al., 2015; Groys, 2009; Cousijn, 2016). Lastly, a common tendency among the four participants is the sacrifice of their living space for art making. These artists were not ashamed or stressed by their inability to properly maintain their living space, rather, as in Forkert’s study, they expressed feelings of “resourcefulness” for their ability to secure space for their creativity within limited resources (Forkert, 2016, p. 62).

This dissertation’s finding in regards to strategies artists used in the face of space constraints highlight several ideas that have not been frequently discussed in the art and art education literature. Space is not an element that is fixed, permanent, designated for specific use and unchangeable for these artists. Rather, it is a flexible element that can be given up, and transformed, primarily based on the needs of individual artists and according to their prioritization of necessary elements in their art practice. Certeau’s (1984 cited in Grabner, 2010, p. 117) approach to space as “a practiced place,” the use of which can be re-contextualized by users, clearly supports this finding from the four artists in the dissertation study.

I also identified the possibility that the limitation of space actually influences creative development of an artist’s practice. This was especially true for Jun. This influence becomes more constructive, especially when an artist is open-minded toward such limitations, not frustrated. This finding is very useful in terms of advising other
artists or teaching young art students because we do not have to pressure them to acquire studio space of a certain size as an assumed requirement for making art.

Moreover, the four participants’ experience of working on site (making art in public and completing their art at exhibition sites) manifested in a shifted notion of art practice in contemporary art. As Groys (2009) defined the act of making art as “show[ing] things as art,” the notion of art making is not limited to material production of art. Rather it is more expanded, as artists have to consider where their creative ideas are embodied, not just what kinds of ideas are visualized. This may sound like it would put more pressure on artists who may be too busy with production to even think more expansively about exhibition sites (in terms of how to get an opportunity to show their art). However, like Luiza used public space (like the street) to both produce and exhibit her art, without permission or invitation, seeing the end of art making as simply exhibiting art may not be added pressure, but rather a source of escape from the traditional notion of studio as the “sole site of artistic enterprise” (Grabner, 2010, p. 4) or the museum or gallery as the sole site for display.

Overall, when analyzing techniques the four participants used to deal with space constraints, it was possible to see that those strategies did not come from simple consideration of how to pay studio rent or how to get less costly studio space. Rather, these decisions come from a more multi-leveled consideration concerning what kind of spaces are available to them and how they utilize those available resources—not just in a realistic compromise, but as a source of inspiration to advance their creativity and art practice.
Material: Temporal Element for Art

In regard to the second element, material, artists were able to reduce the cost of materials used to make their artwork by primarily using found materials. However, there can be additional and ongoing costs associated with materials generated later, when artists decide to keep and transport their artwork. With this issue, the tendencies of the four participants in the study fell into two categories or groups. The first group, Jun and Angela, who were detached from the materiality of their artwork, showed willingness to abandon their art after exhibitions and make it again for other shows. The second group, Greg and Luiza, were strongly attached to the material aspects of their artwork, and despite both having permanent studio space (unlike the Jun and Angela), they struggled with their need to store all of their artwork and materials. Thus, the two groups took different approaches in dealing with the material constraints of keeping their art and transporting it. The first group chose complete abandonment and made new pieces for each new event, whereas the second group tried to figure out ways to efficiently arrange and transport their materials by scaling down in physical size and using easily accessible materials.

The dissertation’s findings concerning material are that when artists regard the materiality of artwork as having a temporal existence rather than considering their artworks as permanent objects to be saved, they actually increase the sustainability of their art practice, as they can significantly reduce the cost of materials. This has to do with the idea that materials and artworks are not precious things to be saved; rather, they are conceptually chosen to embody an artistic idea for the temporary duration of exhibitions. This idea of the temporal aspect of materiality and de-emphasis of its
irreplaceable quality is supported by art historical writings that do not see art as based on permanent material presence, but as a temporal embodiment of artistic ideas (Birshirk, 2003; Houghton, 1980; Jonas, 2014; Kaprow, 1961; Lippard, & Chandler, 1968; Lippard, 1997; Zijlmans, 2007).

In regard to material, the most important finding was that one does not pay for materials only at the time of acquiring them. Rather, artists have to keep paying for materials after their purchase in terms of materials storage, artwork storage, and transportation of artwork (and sometimes materials). While this may seem to be a common sense consideration, it is actually not a simple issue that can be resolved by finding affordable storage space or means of transportation. As Greg and Luiza both expressed, their increasing use and storage of different materials over time actually hindered the maximum use of their permanent studio space for making and storing artwork. Ironically, the post-process for securing materials is about how to fundamentally escape from the accumulation of materials. In contrast to Greg and Luiza, Jun and Angela’s cases may present solutions and their attitudes can be matched with the philosophies of various nomadic tribes in the world who were clearly aware that material possessions and attachments can “inhibit their freedom of movement” (Bardhi et al., 2012, p. 511).

Overall, two different strategies were found in the four participants’ dealings with material constraints. Their concerns were not so much about how to obtain materials, but rather about how to reduce costs after production. Greg and Luiza’s strategy of working with small-scale materials for the sake of mobility is definitely a feasible solution, but not long lasting, because even small materials accumulate over time if artists keep building
their material inventories and decide to keep and store their artwork in their studio. Therefore, it is not just a logistical matter of how to store and transport materials. Rather, it is a psychological and conceptual matter in how artists consider and maintain the value of their art practice and completed works with regard to materials. Valuing art with a non-material centered perspective clearly can be a long-lasting solution. In this case, first and foremost, one has to fully understand the temporality of artwork and exhibitions in contemporary art.

**Time: Reduction of Switch Cost between Multi-Tasking Activities**

The third element was time. The four artists’ strategies for managing and maximizing time for their art practice were more focused on how to accomplish more than one goal through a single task and how to decrease wasted time by making tight transitions between their art practice and their non-art related tasks. The reduction of transition time between different tasks was more apparent in the artists’ attempts to merge their time for art and life by living in their studios (Jun, Greg) and by integrating their family time with studio time (Angela caring for her son while in her studio). On the other hand, it has been found that a successful transition between multiple tasks depends on minimization of “switch cost,” which is related to the type of day jobs an artist chooses (Kiesel et al., 2010, p. 852). This further indicates that even among art-related jobs such as artist assistant, art handler, and teaching, the degree of consumption of energy varies, so that regardless of actual work hours spent, artists showed different levels of efficiency in switching smoothly between their day jobs and their art practice (Greg, Jun, and Luiza). Also, through the cases of Jun and Angela, it was possible to see
that their time-productivity was not necessarily proportional between the quality of artwork and the amount of hours they spent making it.

The findings of this dissertation with regard to time involve understanding the use of time in an artist’s life. Unlike the previous two elements—space and material—which can be discussed as relatively independent entities, time is not just an element for art making, it is actually a resource to be consumed (along with labor for money making) for purchasing space and material if an artist decides to do so. One of the reasons why the participants tried to implement creative strategies to solve the limited resources of space and material—by means other than simply earning more money—is that money making actually consumes the time they could otherwise use for art making. Therefore, as seen in the cases of Jun’s rule of only working three days per week and Angela’s unemployment money, artists tried to earn the minimum amount of money to sustain a minimum condition of living in order to secure more time for their creative activities.

Regardless of how much they earned or consumed, in order to acquire more time for art making, the artists chose to merge boundaries between art and life. This tactic was conducted in two different ways: (1) by intertwining space and time in the case of Jun’s and Greg’s living studios, and (2) by combining time used for different purposes or tasks into one (Angela’s child-care in the studio). While living in the studio clearly showed the benefit of having more time to make art, Angela’s attempt to be close to the creative environment (studio and art exhibitions) and look at and generate ideas for her art, while simultaneously caring for her child, reveals the value of the cognitive and psychological aspects of an artist’s practice, “the process of thinking about art” (Hsieh, 2009, cited in Heathfield, 2009, p. 319). Artists are both “thinkers” and “doers”—based on the divided
notion of time in ancient Greek society (RMC, 2011, p. 190). They can maximize the use of their time as thinkers for the cognitive development of their art practice, especially when they are unable to be in a doer mode for physical production of art, which requires not only time but also space.

As all four participants are inevitably involved with multi-tasking (day job, art making, and family care), the findings of the dissertation in regard to time were focused on the efficiency of the artists’ transitions between multiple tasks, such as their day jobs and art practices. Among the art-related day jobs of artist assistant, art handler, and teacher, teaching unexpectedly showed a lower efficiency of transition from work to art practice than the other two, as seen in the case of Luiza. Although teaching was suggested as a more desirable job for artists by many writers of artist handbooks (Battenfield, 2009; Michels, 2001) due to its steady income, job security and the conceptual coherence between teaching art and one’s art practice, it may not be an effective side job for simultaneously sustaining of an art practice on a weekly basis because of the consumption of cognitive energy, as well as the extra preparation time, which was not required in artist assistantship or art handling jobs.

Overall, the four participants’ tactics of time usage were not as deeply connected to their concept of art practice as they were in the two previous elements—space and material. However, it was possible to see that such tactics influenced their strategies for making art and led to changes in their style of art making. For example, Luiza’s term-based physical production of art during school breaks and Angela’s changes to her art production from labor-intensive work to work that required less labor show how time influenced their practices.
**Artistic Attitude: Constraints, Learning, Integrity**

In addition to the three elements of space, material, and time, which were set as the main focus of the dissertation’s research questions, over the course of data collection and analysis it was possible to obtain rich data that touched upon the psychological aspects of the four participants’ lives, such as creative constraints, learning, and artistic integrity. Thus, in order to answer the research questions in more depth, I include these considerations here to support the conclusions of those previous three elements.

The four artists have constantly faced numerous constraints, and it was possible to see the moments that they transformed those constraints into sources of creativity. The findings related to the creative constraints of the artists were related to what kind of mind-set and attitude they held in dealing with incoming constraints. In response to the constraints, the artists tended to take a converse approach, seeing them not so much as limitations but instead paying more attention to what was available to them and how they could approach a seemingly troublesome situation as a source of strength and opportunity.

Jun, Angela, Greg and Luiza have learned about how to live as artists in a non-school setting through practical, real-life experience, reflection on and theorizing about those experiences, and emotional insights gained from their experience. Some of them have theorized their perspectives about the artist’s life—“artist as traveler” (Jun), “acceptance of not knowing [the] future” (Angela)—these are more open-minded attitudes concerning the instability of the artist’s life. On the other hand, there were other types of realization that were made through a sense of failure or disappointment in an
artistic career, whether it was a feeling of futility about networking (Greg) or an artist who never rose beyond the status of “emerging artist” (Luiza).

Lastly, the four artists showed a strong sense of artistic integrity and ownership with regards to their art practice. Unclear boundaries between how artistic labor is valued and the proper ways to pursue freedom and profit in art making cannot be resolved through or generalized beyond the cases of these four artists. Nevertheless, the findings of this dissertation suggest that a strong sense of artistic integrity and ownership over one’s art practice are not things artists have to abandon to fit into the ideology of the art market. Rather, these are unique features that can go as far as to transform market trends, as seen, for example, in Jun’s case where an artist is very stubborn and persistent with his vision and boundary of art practice, making the market fit his work rather than catering to incompatible market demands.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations and implications for practice, as well as future research, that have emerged from the dissertation. These are discussed below.

Recommendations/Implications for Practice

- Artists and teachers should understand the notion of space for art making in an imaginative, flexible and expanded manner. Space should be considered not just as something that is fixed, like a permanently secured studio space that needs to be paid for out of an artist’s own pocket, but also as an open concept in which artists can merge space for art and life together, can accomplish production and exhibition of art by working on
site, can be free from constraints by taking up a flexible mode of art practice within given conditions, can maximize use of space through understanding the different schedules of their studio mates in shared studio space, and can lessen constraints by working in public space.

- Artists and teachers should consider expenses of materials in a more expanded manner as well, including not only the initial costs from purchase or acquisition of materials, but also the cost of transportation and storage of accumulated inventories of materials and completed artworks.

- Artists and teachers should be aware of different benefits and costs of day jobs, even those of art-related jobs such as artist assistant, art handler, and teaching, especially with regard to jobs that require large amounts of prep time beyond scheduled hours (such as teaching). I suggest that artists carefully analyze which day jobs allow them to sustain their art practices with a low psychological cost of efficiently switching between job-related tasks and art practice tasks.

**Recommendations/Implications for Future Research.**

- With an expanded focus on perceived requirements for space for art making, future research could compare artists who do not need a studio at all with artists who have permanent studio space.

- With an expanded focus on artists’ perceptions of the materiality and temporality of their art production, future research could analyze the
meaning of the documentation of artists who produce ephemeral and temporary artwork.

- A large scale study with an increased number of participants could examine the nature of and artists’ experience with art related side jobs, like artist assistant, art handler and teacher, to determine those jobs’ efficiency for sustaining an artist’s practice.

**Final Reflection**

Through the process of writing this dissertation, I realized that artists might not pursue the sustainability of their practices based on stereotypes of how-to-become-a-successful-artist, and based on suggested spatial and material conditions for art making that have been regarded as default necessities for a long time. Rather, due to the absence of any magic key for survival and success, sustaining one’s art practice and artist career requires more fundamental investigation, which is to figure out what resources are not currently available and how one can overcome such unavailability not just as a practical solution but also as a form of art, through creative ideas (which are found in artwork of many artists who are at the edge of art and life in contemporary art). Limits remain as just limits when an artist sees them as a deficiency or default setting. But limitations can be a source of unprecedented creativity when artists re-think the validity and necessity of so-called premises or defaults, and tackle them through further action. Art is not a fixed notion, instead it is a contextual matter, and any artist can claim their philosophy of art. Regardless of legitimization and acceptance of such philosophy, this open conception of art is a key to not fearing the inaccessibility of space, material and time in one’s art making. Perhaps, this dissertation was conducted to question attempts for setting basic
elements for art making in the first place. There are no universal basic elements for art making—the features of one’s practice are totally up to the individual artist. Artists’ sustainability is achieved when artists think out of the box, away from preconceived ideas, and fully accept that they are, or can be, different from other groups of people.

Lastly, I have to confess that my previous perception of space, material, and time have been enormously shifted over the course of the research through long and in-depth conversation with four artists. Before I started the study, I was assuming that artists holding certain types of art practice would take more advantage and have developed better solutions than others. However, after the completion of this academic journey, I realized that my assumption was going in the wrong direction. Through the whole process of research, I was able to see equal amount of seriousness and sincerity in all creative solutions four artists have made, regardless of their effectiveness. It was not a matter of whose solution is better than others. Each artist has fought against different reality in front of them. Since all human matters cannot be perfectly free from the flow of time, even seemingly the most effective solution at one moment can turn out to be not feasible at the other moment in life. In this light, discussion of three basic elements: space, material, and time cannot be separated from who approaches to them and when. In other words, I realized that perception of space, material, and time vary enormously, depending on what kind of artistic attitude is projected on them in certain period of one’s lifetime.

Overall, through the course of the research, I learned wide openness of talking about artist’s life and endless humbleness in approaching such constantly changeable
subject. Perhaps, such realization will constantly stimulate my curiosity about artist’s life as well as my future research as an artist, educator, and a human.
REFERENCES


