

## Artist Funding Now! Transcript

--our second Zoom program. Thank you all for taking time on your Sunday to participate in this conversation about funding for artists. My name is Isabelle Lutterodt. I'm the director of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and also Barnsdall Park. And I am delighted to introduce the staff who have worked really hard to help put this together.

So Steven Wong is one of the curators who was the curator for COLA this year and worked with the different visual artists who are part of COLA to help them move their work along. Stephanie Sherwood is our assistant curatorial assistant. And she has worked to help put this program together for us today, along with Jamie Costa, who will be helping to manage on the back end some of the logistics. Steve, I'm going to turn it over to you.

Thank you, Isabelle, for the introduction. Good morning or good afternoon. Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us. My name is Steven Wong. As Isabelle had mentioned, I'm one of the curators at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery. And I had been and continue to work on this COLA show. And I'm really happy to have this ensemble of guests who will be speaking. And I just wanted to greet everyone and say hello.

And I want to introduce Anji Gaspar-Milanovic, Director of Grants and Professional Development for the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture. It's really important to have and to hear from Anji. She's been around the block for quite some time in terms of arts funding and being at the LA County. And I'm really excited to have her as the moderator. And I'll have her introduce herself again and introduce our panelists. So Anji?

Thank you so much, Steven. I'm really excited to be here today. And I just want to say a big thank you to the city of Los Angeles for putting together this panel and for all of you and all of the work that it involves to get a group of artists together to talk about arts funding and their work and what they see happening in the future.

I'm also really delighted to be here with all of you today and to be in conversation. We've had some time to get to know each other over the last few weeks. And I'm really looking forward to diving in and for you to have an opportunity to hear from them and their insights on what they're seeing in Los Angeles at this time.

This is an unprecedented moment, as we all know. It's a historical moment in Los Angeles, around the country, around the globe. And to frame our conversation today, we're going to be discussing the role of artists and arts and culture in this time in a region where, government grants and other support notwithstanding, financial support continues to be challenging, especially for artists.

We don't yet know the full extent of how much government funding will be impacted by the pandemic at every level-- municipal, county, and state level. COVID-19, we know, is a health crisis. And with it, the economic crisis has affected nearly every sector. And it's also shone

a bright spotlight on the racial inequities that have continued to come to light and seeing which communities have been hit hardest during this time, especially in LA.

We know that the arts and culture sector in Los Angeles is diverse and complex. There are hundreds of museums and art galleries, music venues, cultural centers, everything from very small grassroots led by volunteers to multimillion-dollar institutions. LA has been called America's artist super city. And it's home to more working artists than any other metropolitan area in the United States.

And we know that since doors closed in mid-March, it has been devastating, not only for the artists and arts organizations that work in LA, but for all of the communities that rely on arts and culture, spaces, and places where we go to think, to enjoy, to find solace, to share in cultural traditions and activities. I recently read that the city of Los Angeles is home to 96,000 artists. And that's nearly 5% of the city's workforce.

So today's conversation about how artists are navigating this financial landscape and economic crisis is even more urgent as we also discuss what they're seeing from their unique vantage points, as well as an eye towards the future. With us today, we have Alison O'Daniel. She is a visual artist and filmmaker working across sound, narrative, sculpture, installation, and performance. Her work has been shown in the US and internationally at the Hammer in Los Angeles, as well as at CentroCentro in Madrid, Spain.

We also have Vincent Ramos, who received an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts and a bachelor from Otis College. His work has been included at venues across Los Angeles County that include the Hammer, LAXART, and 18th Street Art Center. He's received a California Community Foundation Fellowship. And his work is included in the permanent collection of the Hammer.

And to get us started, I'd like to introduce artist Tatiana Vahan. In 2019, she founded the Los Angeles Artist Census, a socially engaged research project that's collected data on LA County-based visual artists to assess need versus resources available. Her work explores how economic and cultural values are created and how these processes create systems of power and hierarchy and how this impacts our bodies, as well as our individual and collective consciousness. Tatiana, if you could start us off and please tell us about this work.

Yeah. Well, first of all, thank you for inviting me as a non-COLA artist into this discussion. So I have been working on this art project called the Los Angeles Artist Census, which is also a research project that gathers information on the quality of life of artists living in LA County. And the reason why I started the project is because this information didn't exist anywhere.

And this type of data helps funders and policymakers know what the situation is, if there's particular resources that artists need, if there's specific groups in our community who don't have access to these resources, and thinking through, how can we remove barriers to access? And it was inspired by the US Census, which gathers data on people, obviously, in the US. And that information is used to determine how federal and state funds are distributed throughout the county.

So in the spring, we gathered this data through an online survey that was circulated throughout LA's visual artist communities. And what makes the project very different from other research projects is that I'm an artist. And I've organized it so that other artists could be involved in all phases of the research process so that we could have a multiplicity of perspectives creating the questionnaire, promoting the survey in various visual artist communities in LA, and then eventually a multiplicity of perspectives analyzing the data.

So last year, a group of artists helped write the survey. And more artists were invited to pilot test and edit the survey. Alison was one of the pilot testers. And so artists in this instance, rather than being the passive subjects of the research, are actually the active agents of it. And then because of that, we're also able to address issues that are typically unknown or misunderstood or misinterpreted by organizations that typically conduct this type of research.

And then I'll just add one of the reasons why this information has never existed before in Los Angeles or elsewhere is because it's really difficult and problematic to collect this kind of information. We're having to measure and quantify things that are not really measurable or quantifiable, like artists and art. And social science data research generally is complicated and, you could say, problematic because the objective is to quantify and measure people and quality of life.

So the last thing I'll say-- and then I'm going to just read some of the statistics that we gathered-- is to give you an idea of the breadth of information that we collected. Well, first of all, this was for LA County visual artists. And we were specific about visual artists because our economy is very different from the economy of musicians or of actors or what have you.

And there were a total of 114 questions that were created. Nobody answered all of those. Some of them were depending on how you might have answered another question. And then the questions covered issues of housing, of health care, of employment, of income, and of debt. And so the survey circulated for two months prior to the pandemic. And we received over 2,000 responses.

So with that, I'll say the statistics we gathered. And again, this is before the pandemic. 51% percent of our respondents were looking for work. So half of the artists before the pandemic were looking for work. 79% of those who were looking for work were doing so for better job security, better employment conditions, or for income needs. Half of the employed respondents had no employment benefits. 61% had no paid sick days. And 77% of employed respondents had no paid time off.

And then with the income section-- so the US Census lists \$64,251 as the median household income in LA County in 2019. So 76% of our respondents earned under \$60,000. So that's like 3/4 earned under \$60,000. And 46%, almost half, earned under \$30,000 in 2019. 53% of respondents had a household income of \$60,000 in 2019.

55% did not find it easy to predict their income from month to month. And 52% considered moving outside of LA County because of their debt-- and again, tying this into now we're in

a pandemic. And things are a lot more squeezed for people. I personally am accruing debt because of this situation.

And then health care is the last one I'll say, which is 40% of respondents could not or had difficulty accessing and/or affording health care. And then 43% of individuals who were unable to see a mental health provider would have liked to but were unable to afford it. And then I guess the last thing I'll say about the project is that I'm planning to do another survey in February next year to be able to measure the differences between the data that we collected this February to the data we collected in the following February.

Thank you so much for that overview. Vincent, if you could tell us a little bit about what you're working on right now.

OK. Well, there's, in some ways, been plenty of time to work, considering our circumstances. With that said, though, I've been able to-- once the transition hit, because I'm an educator, I was able to continue to work at least with one of my gigs. So there's been time, but not a lot of time. And for me, summer has just started because of my job.

Prior to this-- and this goes back to the COLA grant and the exhibition that we were planning and everything up until a few months ago. We were on the tarmac, so to speak. And then we got sidetracked big time-- I was working on a project that dealt with the immigration issue. And I was in dialogue with Steve. And we were doing studio visits and everything else.

And I think the last visit we had, I was done with one body of work. And we were talking about this installation. And then I was going to begin this other piece that dealt with the violence last summer that occurred in El Paso with the shootings. And I was going to work on that.

And then the pandemic hit. And then we found out that the COLA show was going to be canceled and all these other things. And then I just got immersed in my own job. So ultimately, I kind of put that project aside.

And because of everything that was going on with the pandemic and how it affected Latinos across the country, I started thinking about the Latino Chicano experience as it related to science fiction and this moment that we were living in and how it kind of mimicked in some strange ways a lot of the films and all the kind of stuff that I was interested in in relation to science fiction and fantasy and all these things.

So I was working on that and still continuing to do some research on that project or whatever it is at this point. And then the protests happened with the Black Lives Matter and just worldwide attention we're seeing. And so that adds another element or layer, potentially, to my research.

I've never considered myself a topical artist. But with our current situation and the government and everything else, I found myself responding, in many ways, to what's going

on. And that's a bit of a first for me. I've been frustrated before with our government and our presidents. But this is a whole other level of like anger and whatever you want to call it.

So that's what I'm working on. And who knows what tomorrow will bring, next week, and the coming months? And it may change drastically from that from that point on.

Thank you so much, Vincent. Alison, tell us a little bit about what you're working on.

So I've been working on this epic, long-term project for about-- I think it's been seven years now called *The Tuba Thieves*. And it's a project that in a lot of ways is really about the sound of LA but also about how a lot of people hear the sounds of LA. So I'm hard of hearing. And I've been collaborating with a lot of deaf and hard-of-hearing people to make this project.

And the way that I've built the project was through starting with inviting three composers to make the musical scores. And then I listened to those compositions and then really built narrative through this process of listening, hearing, not hearing.

And when I started the project, I was shortly out of grad school. It was just after I had gotten out of grad school and finished my first feature film. And I knew getting out of school that I didn't have any sort of funding model in place, really. But I knew that I was going to need to be very scrappy.

And so when I started off this project, I really started immediately thinking about, how can I do this without participating in a normal funding sort of model, which means you build up your entire budget, and then you-- there's all this waiting. And maybe it happens, and maybe it doesn't. And I was just not at all willing to wait. So I really jumped in with a little bit of money and figured out what I could film.

And so I say all that because what I found is over these seven years, in some ways, I've built up this of vocabulary of scrappiness within film. And so in this current moment, I was actually really trying to move towards finishing this film. So in August, my producer and I had planned to do a 20-day film shoot and finish it like a normal feature. And then this completely got scrapped, obviously.

So in a lot of ways, what I'm working on right now is things that had been shelved for a long time that I was just too busy to deal with. So I'm editing some documentation of a performance. I'm editing a scene from this film that I just never edited before while we are attempting to reinvent the wheel of filmmaking.

And so I have so many question marks about how we're going to proceed. My film happens to have a ton of music scenes with crowds. So I don't know. I don't really want to be a supporter of the blow-up doll industry in order to make some fake crowd. I have no idea what's going to happen. But we are attempting to answer those questions and move forward.

And then otherwise, I have shows in the future that I'm still moving towards. I have a solo show coming up at some point a little bit farther out with Commonwealth and Council and

then some group shows and another solo show. So weirdly, I don't know. I'm moving forward as if things aren't different and also with things being radically different and trying to figure out what that means, as well as invent these paths.

Thank you so much, Alison. And Tatiana, is there something you wanted to share about what else you're working on during this time?

You're muted.

Hey. Still figuring out technology. Oh my god. Well, the Census is already an almost inhumane amount of work for me to be working on. But it has its own legs. And so it's going in directions. It's going in its own directions. And I'm trying to keep up with it and follow it.

But I guess a larger prospect for the project is to take this to other regions of the country and following this model of including artists' voices in the research process and using overlapping questions so that we can create basically a national database. This is amalgamating small data into something that can be bigger and that could possibly inform federal funding and policymaking as it relates to visual artists.

So that's something that I'm working on and that I'm in conversation with some other regions about. But I don't know what, if anything, will happen with those. But that's taking up all my time.

Thank you. In terms of how you all navigate available funding to do your work, I know you've all taken different paths, from scrappiness to enterprising. And so it would be really beneficial, I think, to all of us to hear about, how do you navigate this landscape to get funding to do your work? Who would like to start us off?

I can. My method is just this building blocks sort of approach. I teach. And teaching is what supports my-- what pays my rent and gives me food and pays my bills and stuff like that. And then arts funding for me comes from grants and then any sort of honorarium or fees for participating in a show or giving a lecture and then budgets from galleries or nonprofits that are specifically production budgets.

And they kind of all combine. And that's how I make the work, really. I'm new, also, to this model of film financing, where I'm working with independent financiers. But even that model still comes through granting organizations. So Creative Capital is one where I received money through getting that grant. But then also, they connect you with people who they think might be aligned with your project.

And then because I was in Made in LA, somebody from Sundance saw my installation there and then reached out and then roped me into this whole new world that's very new to me through meeting people who want to invest in film projects, although that model has really radically been impacted by COVID-19. Because a lot of people who were independent financiers are now supporting things that just seem much more urgent. And so I navigate this landscape through combining this whole ladder of different funding sources and

trying to be really resourceful within those, within those common-- my projects truly are built by a village.

Thanks, Alison. Vincent or Tatiana.

I can go. Yeah. We discussed because we had some discussions prior to this question. Or I had seen this question. And I wrote in my notes that I don't in terms of looking for or navigating, if I remember the question correctly, the grant world or funding outside of essentially what I could do for myself.

I kind of agree with Alison. I like this idea that she used about scrap or scraping or scrappy. That's kind of my MO. And it has been for many, many years. I've been pretty fortunate to show in some key institutions here in LA. In each one of those instances, there was a bit of a budget to produce the work. In most of those situations, I did not have to ask. They offered it to me.

And I've never had a commercial gallery. I've shown very little in commercial galleries, to be quite honest with you. And I come out of a couple of schools. And being here in Los Angeles and being Chicano slash Mexican American, there's this kind of notion or this term [NON-ENGLISH], which essentially means making something out of nothing. And I operate by this notion all the time, all day, every day. And I've managed to make my work based on this.

The past three or four years, I've had some steady work finally after getting out of grad school in 2007. In 2008, the recession hit. And myself and many of my colleagues were kind of hung out to dry because of that. And I struggled for many, many years, trying to find an adequate gig that I could one, contribute to my family dynamic, but also have a little piece of that pie for my own work.

So that's kind of happened finally after many years. And that's good. With that, I've continued to make work. And the work has grown. And I've done some larger projects. So once again, in doing so, that has helped as well. I've shown at LACMA. They gave me a little money for a project. I was in Made in LA. They gave me a little money for the project.

I did a project for the last [Frieze thing]. I asked immediately for money for that project. And I'm assuming I would have got some. But I did ask beforehand. If I could give any advice to anyone that's out there, just ask. They asked you, so why don't you ask them?

But yeah, I think Alison or someone-- we've shared many emails at this point. And there's all kinds of notes and things that I've been reading. But someone said that they applied to about eight grants. And they get one or something. And maybe in the early days, that was kind of my-- yeah, that was Alison. That was kind of my MO as well.

And at one point, I just got a bit disheartened. So I stopped applying, to be quite honest with you. And I tried to figure out another direction. So yeah, I wish I had a more grant-focused way. But I don't think any artist survives that way.

I think that's kind of smoke and mirrors because the competition is tough. It's fierce. This is not the LA of 40 or 50 years ago. Everyone and their mother is out here trying to make it happen because they're under the illusion that it's a lot cheaper than New York or whatever the heck. And there's a lot more opportunities. But I don't know. I think that's a bit of a myth.

But yeah, I think you just have to figure out a way to do it and really be honest with yourself and see what you can and cannot do and build very slowly. And I think in making-- I've been around a bit now-- that I've made connections through the years. And I've just kind of met people.

And you never know. Every once in a while, there could be a panel or something with a grant. And someone in that panel knows you. And that's always beneficial because they could speak up your work in a way outside of the application. And the application is always not perfect. It is what it is.

So if an actual person could be in the room that could advocate for you that maybe has seen the work or knows the work-- that has happened on a few occasions with me that I found out after the fact. And that's been very beneficial. But that comes with many years of dialogue and just being around and hopefully not being a jerk and working well with others. Let's hope.

So that's it. I think that's my advice. That was a tough question, actually. It took me a while to understand for myself.

Thanks, Vincent. Tatiana, we've talked about scrappiness and the philosophy of [NON-ENGLISH]. How are you navigating this? How do you find funding to do your work?

I'm going to jump on the scrappy boat. I know that it seems like there's a number of people that think the Census is an organization. But it's not. It's just me in my little 320-square-foot apartment that I've been in for nine years.

And I have applied for-- I counted in preparation for this. I applied for nine grants for specifically for the Census. They're really time-consuming. They're actually really emotionally draining for me because I'm not that type of writer. And so I have a lot of, I think, confidence issues that I struggle with with that. But I've applied for them anyway.

And I'm with Vincent in that I think I've finally come to the point where I am giving it a rest because it's discouraging. It takes energy away from doing the work that I actually want to do. And I don't know.

So the Census is actually mostly powered by artists who have offered their skills, graphic design, web design. I feel very lucky about that. But at the same time, I also feel conflicted by it because in a way, I'm perpetuating this underpayment of artists, although it's a little different with this project.

But yeah, I don't know what else to say except, I'm a massage therapist. That's my day job. It's something I've been doing for many years. And that also is what funds the project. But it's also what makes my life in general pretty draining because it's a lot of output without a lot of input. So I'm giving massages. And that helps me pay my bills, which I keep very, very, very small.

And then I take what I can from that, and I put it towards the Census. So I'm funding the Census mostly. At the beginning, I did have a couple donations to the project that amounted to-- just for the sake of transparency because I feel like people don't talk about this stuff. But I think it was about \$1,800. And that covered partially a data analyst and the survey software for the project.

But yeah, I actually think maybe something like crowdfunding is-- if I spent the amount of time that I spent grant writing on crowdfunding, I would have more money, I think. And I don't really know what the solution is except that I think that there should be more funding available to Los Angeles-based artists for it being called-- what is it, America's super city? Yeah, artists, art-- yeah, whatever it is.

And I was writing something. And I was quoting Mayor Garcetti, who called Los Angeles the creative capital of the world in like five different articles talking about completely different things. He loves to drop that.

But at the same time, there really isn't an infrastructure that supports artists here. It's kind of like a backwards answer. But it's less advice to artists about finding funding. And it's more advice to, I guess, foundations and government agencies to provide more money.

Thank you. I've worked at LA County, the Department of Arts and Culture, which was formerly the Arts Commission. It's going on 13 years now. And our flagship program, the organizational grant program, funds nonprofit arts organizations. And so through that, yes, artists are supported indirectly through the structure of a nonprofit. But we don't have a separate fund for artists.

Through our civic art program, there are commissions. There's a process for that for public artists. But that's still only one segment of the artist population. And even within the county of LA, with 88 cities, there's only eight municipalities that actually have any kind of funding program at all-- City of LA, of course, Pasadena, Culver City, West Hollywood, Santa Monica, Long Beach, and Santa Clarita.

But for the other cities, it's kind of buried in parks and rec. Or it may be the teaching artist who's giving classes at a rec center, that sort of thing. And so also, as a region, we need to strengthen giving capacity to both arts organizations and artists.

And one of the things that I was excited about with this panel is that my background is in a-- it's usually a year-long application process. From application to finding out about funding takes about a year. And Tatiana, you founded the Bar Fund, which is actually the other side of how funding can look. If you can tell us a little bit about the Bar Fund and this artist-initiated funding, how did that process go?

This is the interpreter for Tatiana. Do you mind holding just one second while the interpreters switch? Thank you.

Thank you.

All right. Thank you.

OK. Both the Census and Bar Fund are projects I could talk literally for hours about. So I did a little bit of writing to keep it, hopefully, more concise. So Bar Fund is another socially engaged art project that I started a few years ago in 2017. And it was a grassroots, again, like the Census, artist-driven grant-building project that was created to address the lack of funding for visual artists in LA.

And like I was saying, like the Census, artists were invited to be a part of the fundraising and grant-gifting processes. So both the Census and Bar Fund are using horizontal organizing models that puts artists in a position of power. And it's meant to create this bottom-up dynamic in the art world that I'd like to see more of, especially now.

And then for those who aren't familiar with Bar Fund, the fundraising process involved artists-- it was for visual artists. Any visual artist that was interested in the projects could participate in it. And basically, any time there were art openings or events with spaces that I created relationships with, participating artists could bartend at their opening or event. And we would take the tip money that was collected at the event, and we would pool it together.

So over many events, we would pool together the tip money. And that is what created the grant. And we did it for two years. And we had two different open applications for it. So there was two grant rounds. We gave out, in two years, over \$17,000 that was collected in tips.

The grant was distributed-- most people don't know except the recipients and the gifters. It was given in the tip money that was collected. So I was laying out thousands of dollars of single dollar bills. And that's the grant. And that's meant to be this kind of poetic or maybe this embodiment of the labor involved. And also, money just generally tends to be this kind of abstract entity. So it was meant to materialize that.

And so that \$17,000 was distributed to 15 artists in two years through an open application process. And the mission of the project was to increase funding for artists in LA, which I've been saying has been needed. It was to bring attention to the need for more funding-- so kind of like an ice bucket challenge. We had bars with our little sign. And people became familiar with it over that period of time.

And then the most important part of the mission was to put artists in a position where they could choose who and what they wanted to fund. And this is something-- actually, I was talking with someone named Evan Klekamp, who I think is in this somewhere, who is hosting this grant-writing workshop that I'm really excited about at CCI that is called How to Communicate in White People.

And he's basically deconstructing how the grant gifting process goes. But it's also literally a workshop for how to write a grant while also understanding what's going on with that, which I don't feel comfortable speaking to because it's his thing. It's not mine. But part of what we were talking about or maybe what I was reading of something he sent me was-- oh my gosh. I'm losing my thoughts.

Funding is a big part of shaping the art world of who gets shown. It's a part of visibility for artists. It's a part of what gets chosen as being worthy of being upheld, of being historicized. And I don't know. I think it's really important for artists to be a part of that process.

For some reason, in the art world and in the art ecosystem, I think because artists just aren't organized, we don't have a platform. So we're just kind of this sea of individuals without any kind of glue. We get whatever trickles down to us. And we don't have a seat at the table. I think I'm on a really big tangent right now from this question. I'm sorry.

[Oh you're fine.]

But yeah, so a big part of Bar Funds was putting artists in this position. It's the same thing with the Census. It's trying to kind of level up, put us in these positions of knowledge. What's going on with the Census? What's going on in our community? What are our needs? That knowledge is power.

And then also being in a position of distributing funds-- and most of the people involved were emerging artists. It was very democratic in that way. OK. I'll be quiet.

Thank you. Thanks, Tatiana. One of the things as we were planning for this conversation is we started talking about who is creating grant programs and the very few that there are for artists, where it's either foundations, or it is government agencies. And so how often are artists involved in the actual creating of the grant-making process? And so from that, there is an opportunity to dream a little bit.

And so the question is, if you had either a million dollars or \$10 million to distribute to artists, what are you thinking about in terms of barriers that you would remove, processes that you would put in place? How do you consider your values as a grant maker? And how would you approach equity and historically underfunded artists? So it's an open question.

And because so many of the opportunities-- it's almost like winning the lottery if it's 1 out of 10,000 applicants that will get something or even fewer percentage. So Alison or Vincent, would you like to discuss? Also I think what was brought to light was some of the more thoughtful processes that you saw in some of the grant applications. So I'm curious to hear your thoughts, Vincent or Alison.

Alison, why don't you take this?

OK. So I had this really amazing opportunity this past year to participate in-- United States Artists did their first disability award, a large-scale funding grant for people who identify

with disabilities. And before they did this-- so similar to United States Artists, that grant, it was also a nomination.

But before that nomination process happened, they did a survey with tons of artists across the United States who identify as having a disability and just asked us all these questions, like, what has your experience been like working with organizations, with curators, with applying for grants? It was a very thorough, comprehensive questionnaire.

And it was a pretty amazing process because then shortly after, I was nominated for it and got to do the applications. So I saw the exact-- I've had two experiences like this this year, where I've seen the results of having given feedback. So this valuing of my actual lived experience and my community's lived experience was embedded into the actual process of applying for the grant.

And what I noticed was that the actual grant application involved very little writing. It was all image-based or video-based. And I think I answered two questions. And there were no word count limits. But also, they were very short. They were very clearly not paragraph-type questions. You could answer them briefly.

And I did not receive the grant. But the process was not at all dispiriting. It was almost like there was this strange experience which I-- I also got paid to do the grant, which was my second time. It was a small amount. But still, it was meaningful to just have the work that I was doing in the grant application process acknowledged.

The other experience I had this past year was that I participated in-- Sundance had their very first accessibility impact initiative, where they invited a few filmmakers who are pretty far along in their projects and then a few filmmakers to act as advisors. So I came in as an advisor even though any of these filmmakers could have been advising me, which was also a really nice model, where I felt like there were people who-- like for example, Jim Lebrecht, who just made Crip Camp, which was just executive produced by Netflix and the Obamas.

This was a project that's just massive and super mainstream and bringing disability justice awareness to a very mainstream audience. And then me, who makes projects that are much more embedded within the art world-- I was able to act as an advisor on that. And then I went to Sundance and saw the results of them listening to all of us.

And I think this model, where-- to me, this is an exact representation of what Tatiana was mentioning, the way that artists can get embedded into the advising process that then results in the way that we participate in being supported and also supporting ourselves in being supported, which to me feels pretty profound. And in some ways, I've also been really thinking about a mutual aid model versus a social Darwinist model of funding.

And then I'll just say two other things. One is that it's so amazing to get a grant and have no strings attached. The check just arrives, and I don't have to answer for it. So if I need to buy myself a truck, then I can just do that. Or if I need to pay a cinematographer, I can do that. It's really up to me. And I have the agency.

But then I would also say-- and I don't mean this to be the opposite. And I don't really know what this means. But if I'm going to dream about how to use a million dollars in funding, I would love to-- because I have this epic project, I would so love to have a financial [resource] for my project that helps me.

So I don't know what this looks like. This is not my job. But this is my dream-- is that on some level, someone who just gets into all the nitty-gritty of my project and helps me. The funding's already in place. And they're just helping the funding actually happen on this very, very involved level. I don't know what that looks like, but it would great.

Thank you, Alison. Vincent, a million bucks-- what would you do?

So I agree with everything that Alison said. It sounds fantastic. The word count thing made me laugh. They give us a question, and we answer. And then the word count happens. And my answer turns to crap.

I think we talked about this a little bit before. Making the process easier is always the best. It goes back to this thing is representative of us. And I don't know. I've only been in one panel. It was for something very small. It had to do with my old alma mater at Otis. But it's nice to have artists involved in the process on all levels. It just makes it a bit easier. And it kind of makes it more creative.

So the question is nice in terms of what I would do. But I don't really have any kind of specifics. It would be an ideal world where-- and maybe there is a potential for this world now with everything that has happened in the recent weeks-- where it would be more inclusive. And there would be more opportunities for more people of color and more women and just across the board.

A lot of the kind of grants that I see-- some I've applied to. But some I just-- by looking. Because at this point, once again, I'm kind of burnt out by the whole process. But they kind of go to the same people, variation of the same group of people.

In every city, I'm assuming, like Los Angeles, there's flavors of the month in terms of artists. And these people are kind of the sweethearts of the game for x amount of years. So it would be nice if it could be more inclusive and different folks and different communities and different ways of thinking and people that maybe don't have a lot of connections or whatever. It could just be more open, right?

I think with everything that's going on right now, there's this big cultural reckoning. So I hope that all of that bleeds into the arts, whether it's museums or grants or funding or commercial galleries or whatever.

Big things happen. And that should be with funding as well. There's a lot of good work being made in a lot of different places. And a lot of times, it's so limited. And it gets a bit disheartening. So that's kind of where I stand on it.

Thank you. And listening to all of you, to have grant making with, first of all, simplified-- a simpler application process that's really centered in equity and also just a wider range of the kinds of artist work being supported. Paying the applicant to apply, I think, is a wonderful idea.

And this idea of no strings and actually just trusting artists to do their work as they best see fit, I think, are all ideas that-- we've seen some of them manifested. For some agencies, that's more challenging than others. But I really appreciate your thoughtfulness in thinking about how to make this better and how to include artists' voice in that entire process.

And thinking about the future, obviously, there's a lot of unknowns. And how do you think things are going to change? And I don't like the expression "the new normal," but that's what comes up most often. What does this mean for you as an artist in LA?

This can be in terms of the pandemic. It can be in terms of how you're perceiving public demand for social change, how that relates to your work and your ability to continue to work as an artist here. I'm really interested in your future thinking. Who'd like to start us off? Or do I have to pick?

I just had this really interesting experience. I'm in a really interesting experience of-- I left LA in August. So I'm in the Bay Area right now because I got a tenure track teaching job. And so I've had a really interesting year of switching sides, in a way.

My 13 years living in LA prior to coming up here-- I really am the stereotype of so many artist experiences. I had a lived work space where the owner sold my building to these terrible developers. And we all got kicked out. And we tried to fight this eviction. And it was a nightmare. And it was a nightmare that went on for like two years. It was just a really bad experience and really indicative.

I'm constantly still having people contact me that are going through these kinds of situations of getting kicked out of their buildings as LA becomes increasingly unaffordable. And ironically, I came to San Francisco, which is like-- it's the aftermath of what already happened. Everybody who was up here left and went down there, which possibly has risen the rents.

And now I have this tenure track job. And I have no plan to leave LA. I'm trying to figure out this kind of dual life. So I don't know what the future holds.

I just know that one of the things I've been talking to other artists about with new intensity over the last few years is really about artist sustainability with this mindset that the system and the powers that be are just so dead set about moving forward with this intensely capitalist model that the only thing that seems possible is that artists must-- to go back to the scrapiness-- that we must define these new models, that we must invent systems, that we must try and find loopholes or worm our way into systems that already exist. I would love so much if we could reinvent the model.

And I think interestingly, I think culturally, because of the murder of George Floyd and what is happening with Black Lives Matter right now-- is that maybe there is this way for this entire infrastructural rethinking with defunding the police and-- maybe there is this way that artists can be so much more aware of a kind of intersectional thinking. I come from just thinking about disability justice and the ways that that informs our entire lives.

I really feel like right now, there is this intersectional demand that we must move forward with. I don't know exactly what that means. And I think this is a tricky thing that happens for artists-- is that on one level, we are the thinkers who redefine culture.

But also, we want to be able to make our work. And we want to be able to have sustainable housing. We want to be able to have a studio. We want to be able to have funding to make our work. And so we end up wearing so many hats or having like 10 full-time jobs because we're trying to figure this out. And so I don't know. I'm down to figure it out but with help. But I'd love to just make my work, too.

And this is the interpreter again. Please give us just one second. We're all set.

Thank you. Tatiana or Vincent, what are you thinking about?

I could go. Could you repeat the question, though?

Sure-- thinking about the future and what you're seeing in terms of your future work here as an artist responding to either the pandemic or just this massive change and upheaval that's happening.

Yeah, yeah. I'm pretty optimistic, I think, ultimately. And that's fairly new. As we know, we've been living through this kind of hell this past few years here in terms of the country and our government.

And the events of the past few weeks have really shown that people are very frustrated. It's about a certain kind of collectivity. And these protests, whether it's in this form or others, is not going to go away anytime soon, which is a very good thing.

I think many of us the day after the election were pretty beat up and drained and pretty freaked out. And we knew that it was going to be pretty bad, which it has been. And once again-- and I alluded to this early on-- things happened so quickly that the past few weeks have shown that there's a good reason to be optimistic about things on many fronts.

In terms of Los Angeles, I'm born and raised here. I will always be here. I don't see myself leaving any time soon. At this point, it's like almost a political act to plant your flag and stay here. I grew up in Venice. And when I was a young person, a boy, Venice was really screwed up. You had Santa Monica on one side and Marina del Rey on the other. And their streets were both paved in gold. And Venice was very post-apocalyptic.

And now it's quite different. Those cities kind of bled into Venice and choked out all the working-class people. So I've managed to survive here. And hopefully, I can do that for a while.

But yeah, I just hope that with everything that is said and done now, because we're talking about much larger issues, that the art world takes notice in any and all facets and really does their best to make change within that within their own systems. And I'm thinking of just like the museum structure and hiring more curators of color, of having a more diverse program, collecting different work, all in an effort to tell a much more inclusive history of American art.

We know that what's there, whether it's MOMA or any museum here-- there's huge gaps in these stories because it's like one way to look at art and art history. If you're a person of color, you know that there are many different kind of directions and forms and histories that are missing. So I hope with everything that has been said and done with what's going on now that that's one thing that really changes.

And I think there was a little bit of talk about that prior to all this. But they were moving really, really slow. So hopefully, the process is sped up now and that it becomes a more inclusive place. That would be nice.

Thank you, Vincent. Tatiana, did you want to add anything?

I'm not sure how personal to get with it. But the question is thinking about the future. Yeah. I guess the Census is meant to be a tool for looking at what we came from. And always, actually, from the very beginning, before pandemic, my hope was-- I like thinking about infrastructures and how things work and systems and ecosystems.

And the ecosystem of the art world-- the way that it works for artists is really not sustainable. And so I was hoping that the Census could be a tool that could be used by artists, by advocates of artists to look at-- I don't know. There's a lot of things that could potentially happen with it. So my head is kind of there.

But yeah, again, with LA, I'm optimistic because there is this massive movement happening that's really being felt by all different kinds and levels of institutions. So I feel very happy and optimistic about that. And obviously, that's much greater than the art world and artists.

But yeah, I guess my concern, if I'm going to be specific to the art world, is if there isn't more resources available to artists here, then LA's art world becomes a space for those who have economic privilege. I don't know. I think that's a big consequence. And I don't know what else to say about it except that that's something that would be really disappointing and sad. Yeah. Not to end on a downer.

Can I add something to that? I think that there is-- one thing that I feel like is really necessary is for this level of engagement and thoughtfulness and investigation to come from organizations that are funders. So one of the things that I think this term keeps

getting-- is being used right now a lot of virtue signaling of the virtue signaling that's happening.

And I think what would be a real tragedy is if funding for artists became just a blank, lacking thinking virtue signaling. And I think there's this understanding amongst artists that there's two types of artists that exist within the art world. There's what are called the "trust funders." And then there's the hustlers.

And it just seems like this is what the art world is made up of. It's made up of the people who are able to do it because they don't have any obstacles and then the people who are just going to do it and bump those or be hit by the obstacles but just keep moving anyway in whatever way that means. And I think that one of the things that gets in the way with funding is that it does this, here you go, sort of move of like, here's your funding. But there's no in-depth infrastructural look.

And so I'm just adding on to what Tatiana just said. But I really hope that there could be this level of like thoughtful engagement in what it even means to be a funder. And again, I don't know exactly what that looks like. But I know that what has existed so far is a model that leaves a lot of people feeling depressed, to be honest, and doesn't necessarily build a healthy ecosystem or healthy true art community.

We call it an "art community" or an "art world." But what does it really mean to use the idea of community as a model where we're all lifting one another up? And again, I'm saying this thing, recognizing, who even determines that? So I'm just going to leave that there.

Thank you. I wanted to just touch on a few of the comments made in terms of in these last few weeks. One of the things that I've read about is voter drives are increasing. The number of voter registration that has increased during these past few weeks is really notable.

And so in thinking about advocacy for arts funding, from my perspective as a government arts funder, there's work that we do in the hopes that the board of supervisors, for example, will increase funding. But there is also the advocacy work on the other side, which is community pushing for larger share of budget. And we're seeing that in terms of the people's budget with City of LA.

And when there are proposed cuts to be very vocal about why this has continued-- not only to cut, but to increase funding. And so what I'm seeing is that there's more-- paying attention more to what the city or even county, state budgets-- it's very complex for a lot of people to even enter that. It's another language to be learned.

And at the same time, understanding how government allocates funding is also to understand allocation of values and what's important. And all of us have a voice in that. And so there's this opportunity to become more involved, not just now that we're getting close to the end of the fiscal year, but really understanding the process throughout the year. And that's not for everybody. But I think what I've seen is that there's a lot more interest in what that process looks like, especially with the attention being paid to defunding the police.

I also just wanted to surface there was a question that came up about, what do you mean paying people to apply? And I wanted to just-- you mentioned, Alison, that it was a symbolic amount for the amount of time it took, almost an honorarium to understanding. It's not an hourly wage for how long it took you to apply to an application. But there is an understanding of that it is time and work.

And I'll just say, in our process of grant review, reviewing grant proposals is-- we have over 100 panelists that read and review applications. And all are paid an honorarium. And for those of you out there that have never participated in a government panel, I'd encourage you to become panelists to just review applications, make recommendations, see who your colleagues-- in our case, it's arts organizations-- but seeing what's out there, which projects are on the horizon, and having an understanding of that.

Because the application process can feel very burdensome. It is in a lot of instances. But at the same time, you read 20 applications. And patterns start to emerge. And I think for anyone that is looking to increase the number of grants that they're applying for, to be on the side of discussing applications is super helpful.

We're at about 2:15. And I know there have been some questions in the chat that we'd like to address. But I'd also like to give a moment to City of LA just to discuss the COLA program if someone would like to just let us know about what's next with COLA and just to share out that information.

Thanks, Anji, for allowing me just a quick minute. And I think since we have so little time, I do want to say that things are changing because of COVID for at least for next year. We're hoping that funding will continue. Just historically, during the 2008 recession, the funding did continue. But it was a challenge for the department to continue that funding.

So we don't know what's going on for next year's. We do hope that it will continue. But yeah, that's yet to be seen. And this year's, unfortunately, we did have to cancel the organization. But we will be launching websites hopefully by the end of this coming week. But no date has been officially set. But if there's questions about COLA, about how to apply, you could always contact me. You could email me. My email is on the website.

So please contact me. But just so everyone knows, too, I represent the gallery. We are part of DCA. But we really focus on the exhibitions. So I'll try to answer all questions that come to me. But if there are any further questions, I might have to refer to our grants team that actually administers the grants.

But I do hope that COLA continues. And if there's any questions-- but I think there's some much deeper questions to address for the remaining time. So I'll pass it back to you. So thank you, Anji.

Thank you. I know there were some questions about data sources. And I think Bronwyn, who is my colleague, the director of research and evaluation, answered the question about the 96,000 artists, where that statistic comes from, and that it is from [INAUDIBLE].

I also just wanted to surface, in this time, there are a few additional funding sources that have emerged for artists and arts organizations. And there will be more in the works. But we can follow up with an email. We created a resource center on our website with links to grant opportunities, funding opportunities for artists and arts organizations.

And I know that City of LA has as well, along with some other resources. And if you're interested in more arts advocacy, Arts for LA's website, as well as-- I know that CCI's upcoming session on grant writing is happening. So we're happy to follow up with all of that, all of those links in an email. But I would like to see some questions. There is--

I had a comment about the 96,000 number. Just to point out that most-- I think. And maybe, Anji, you know. But I imagine most likely that when they use the word "artist," they're using it in a broad way. It's not for anyone thinking it's visual artists. I think it's musicians. So it's a broader population of artists.

And Tatiana, do you have published information yet? Or is that still in the works in terms of the statistics and data you shared with us at the beginning?

Yeah. Thanks for asking. So we closed the survey at the beginning of the pandemic. And then I put out a quick-- I called it a quick report. It's a fact sheet, basically. And it's a one-page PDF that has statistics, some of which I cited at the beginning. But there's more than that. And you can find that on the project's website, which is [losangelesartistcensus.com](http://losangelesartistcensus.com). There's a PDF there.

But there will be a more in-depth report that will get into all kinds of stuff. And we collected data about adjunct teaching, about no-fault evictions, about different types of employment situations, the different ways that artists make money. We have demographic information that we can combine with that.

So if any artists that are listening have information that they want to know about or if they want to be involved in the analysis process, I'm just starting to get into that. And we'll be putting out an in-depth report probably in the fall.

Great. Thank you.

We also have a mailing list you can sign if you want to know when that comes out.

Awesome. Thank you. Other questions from the group? Or is there information you'd like to share? One question that has come up, Tatiana, Vincent, Alison, in terms of funding-- what other kinds of support systems are you part of in terms of receiving support as your work as an artist? It could be financial. It could be other.

That we're directly a part of?

Are there other support networks? I know that's a very broad question. But it's something that came up. Who is your immediate community? And who do you rely on?

I don't know. I know that just through the years, like I said, I got into graduate school in 2007. And anyone that gets out of school here-- we just have to kind of find our way.

And so I've got a lot of small opportunities through some of the smaller institutions. And even, actually, now that I'm thinking about it, I would do an artist educator thing at MOCA when they still had that. Or I did a little thing with what was then the Craft and Folk Art Museum. I think it's called Craft Contemporary, 18th Street Art Center.

So some of these smaller institutions-- Beyond Baroque. If I was-- and I still am. I mean, these places are very important to me. So I still am open to working with them. And actually, I think I'm going to do something at Beyond Baroque at some point once all this stuff is cleared up, this moment that we're living in.

But some of these smaller institutions-- they may not have as much money as the bigger institutions. But it's nice to get your feet wet in some of these smaller places by doing whatever kind of programs they have available, if they have any. And I've never had a problem reaching out as well.

I think in terms of artists, we wrestle with our work and doubts about our work and this and that. And I've done that in my own work, as an in life. But I like my ideas sometimes. And I like them so much that I feel comfortable and confident enough to reach out to someone and say, hey, I am such-a-such. And I have this idea. And would you listen for a minute or two or in an email or something? Or maybe I know someone that knows this person.

And I've been relatively successful with that. You wouldn't think that that was the case. But I think people-- and once again, I'm going back to these smaller institutions. I think if you're really sincere with them, and they know that you're willing to work and to bring something to the program, I think people are open to that.

Once again, I'm talking about these smaller or middle institutions, like some of the ones I mentioned or some of the school-- LA has a huge history of college-level galleries and artists in the beginning of their career showing in spaces like this. So it's this kind of stuff.

You really got to find a place that works for you and not-- I think especially because the art schools are here, people get out of art schools. And they have their minds set on the big three-- LACMA, MOCA, the Hammer, blah, blah, blah. I never had that, not that I didn't have the desire to show there. But I never felt that I was ready for that. And it's been kind of a process for me.

So I work very slow. I do a lot of research-based work. It's very slow. I process a lot of my information slowly. That's why in the beginning of the thing, when we were talking about what I was going to do for the project-- and it took me a year to figure out this whole El Paso thing.

I'm about to start work on this project, and the pandemic hits. OK. Let me start thinking about this. And then all of a sudden, it's protests in the streets. Wait a minute. Things are going way too fast for me.

I think the same way in terms of my, quote unquote, "career." I'm kind of moving. And I'm kind of figuring it. I'm kind of meeting the people I want to meet. I'm forging relationships. I hope I'm sincere in that effort and that people respond to that. And I'm not worried about the bigger LA art world picture. And I never have been. It's just what I want to do, what I feel good about at my own speed.

I love working with artists and other folks that are really committed to the process. And sometimes it's hard to do that because you got to eat. You got to survive. But once again, I had my gig for that. And this other stuff is kind of my other thing. And you just got to find a balance.

Thank you. There's a question that came up from Albert about having some sort of periodic convention, convening of visual artists or other disciplines, either City of LA or nationally. Curious about your interest in that in terms of being able to discuss funding or any other concerns. And Evan shared that Common Field is doing this to some extent. I think all funders-- there is something. But what are your thoughts on having this opportunity for convening among artists to discuss funding? Anyone can answer that.

This is the interpreter. Can we hold for just one second while we switch interpreters?

Yes. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Tatiana, Alison, or Vincent-- your thoughts about more regular convenings among artists to discuss pressing issues.

My immediate thoughts, again, are just, who organizes that? And Common Field is a great example. That's an organization that I think is doing really amazing work run by Courtney Fink, who's just-- she's connected to a lot of different communities. And the way she approaches that I think is really responsible and inclusive and open to growing. And so that seems great to me.

Otherwise, I would echo a lot of what Vincent was saying. For me, I have a lot of various small groups that I can take advantage of. And some of that came from the model of after I finished my master's degree from UC Irvine.

Me and a few other people-- we started this female-identified crit group. And out of that, some of the people who are in that are still some of my closest friends and people who I still go to when I need what I trust as really good feedback on my work and also on my life and just people who I can ask for advice.

And then I have groups that have been started through-- I have a group through Creative Capital that is like a small group of my cohort. And then I participate in this other thing through New York Film Festival, where all of the young filmmakers in that-- we just very organically made a WhatsApp group. And that has become this really great resource.

So I feel like I have a lot of these little-- my dog is falling off the couch behind me. I feel like I have all these really great small resource groups which serve an intimate function that I feel like I need. And then, like Vincent, I also believe so much in artists and what artists have to offer.

And every time I leave this country, I'm more emboldened by that belief because here, I think we get really weighed down by this oppression of the devaluing of arts and the way that that enters into our psyches. And we feel apologetic for even dreaming and thinking about making the work that we make because, on some level, we've swallowed some degree of this not being important work.

And every time I leave, I'm so emboldened by how important it is. And I realize how important my community is and that we are truly the people who I think are doing some of the best and most important and most valuable work. And so similarly, sometimes I've had experiences where I've seen a film by an independent filmmaker. And I've just emailed them and developed some relationships through that.

So I find I gain value from these larger symposiums like Common Field. But also, for me, the most value comes through having these groups of various artists that I can turn to that I know are going through these similar things and are generous people.

So obviously, this depends on the company you keep. But for me, the people who I am the most inspired by and grow the most and I'm able to reciprocate are people who are artists with a spirit of generosity. And I'm just endlessly inspired by that and want to participate in that as well.

Thank you so much, Alison. And we are at the 2:31 mark. So I just want to thank everybody for participating on this panel, sharing your insights and thoughts, and also a beautiful white dog there in the background. And thank you to everyone who tuned in today for this virtual panel. We will definitely follow up with some resources.

As someone who is on the other side of paperwork and contracts, it's always an absolute pleasure to talk to artists about what they're seeing, thinking, feeling, and the work that they're doing. And this question of accessing funding and financial support-- it was crucial before the pandemic. It will be crucial after, but particularly now, when there are so many economic disadvantages. So thank you all for your time. And I'd just like to pass it back to Steven with City of Los Angeles to close this out or if there's anything else you'd like to add.

No. Thank you. I just want to thank everyone for coming together today. I do want to thank you, Anji, for moderating, Alison, Vincent, and Tatiana for being panelists, and all the staff who made this possible. So thank you, everyone.

And again, please let me know. This is just the tip of the iceberg for this conversation. And I think this is the time to have these conversations and even harder conversations about funding, about the complexities of even applying for a grant, and the idea of who is applying, who has the resources to apply. And just even looking at us here on this call with over 40 people, who is here at the table to have these discussions?

And so I think these are some of the deeper-level conversations that we'll have to have in the future. But thank you, everyone. This has been a great discussion. And I hope to continue this discussion in the future. So thank you.

Also, thank you, Nicole and Hilary, for interpreting and the other captionists and such.

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