

M O N E Y M A T T E R S

here's a conversation-stopper: how much do you make in a year? Nothing will get potters to change the subject faster than a frank question about money. It is the great taboo of our field, the one topic an extremely garrulous tribe doesn't want to discuss. In certain circles – and art is certainly one of them – talk of money is viewed as distasteful, irrelevant, or toxic; we do this for other reasons and measure its worth by other criteria. Which is not untrue, only incomplete. Let's admit that money is one of the axes along which we plot our creative lives. It can empower, victimize, or undercut. It can aid creative exploration or block it. It can bolster self-worth or shred it, bring focus or distraction to making. Our personal ideas mingle with the collective consensus about value and exchange, reflecting both a private credo and a public system.

Yet real information is hard to come by. How do artists manage the tension between financial considerations and artistic ones? How much can you earn making pots, and what does that entail? Where do young artists find the resources to set up a studio, and how the hell do you figure out what to charge for your work? In the articles probing these questions, generational fault-lines emerge. Older and more established makers tend toward thoughtful parsing of the role money plays in their studio practice, while young potters voice frustration and resentment at the script they have been handed for navigating a life in clay. Starting up a studio now, when credit is tighter, real estate more expensive, and student loans an additional drain on the monthly budget, seems out of reach. They wonder how their teachers and mentors managed, and suspect that they haven't been given the whole story. We should ask: who does this silence benefit?

STUDIO POTTER's very history embodies these complexities. The idealism that drove so many young people into the studio in the 1970s also gave birth to this journal. Proudly independent, SP positioned itself outside the grubby halls of ad-supported journalism, only to find that things can look different when you're closing in on forty. Balancing our ideals and standards with financial realities requires that we think about both kinds of value, not treat them as mutually exclusive. Perhaps it's more honest, and more interesting, to acknowledge that money and art are not an either/or proposition, but a both/and one. Money is a fact of our lives. We track it into the studio as surely as we track dusty footprints out.

–MB

STUDIO POTTER is a non-profit organization which publishes journals, produces educational programs, and provides services to the international community of ceramic artists and craftspeople.

A professional journal, THE STUDIO POTTER is published twice a year and focuses on critical issues of aesthetics, technology, history and personal development. It is aimed at a discerning readership of ceramists, educators, and others committed to supporting work and dialogue. By fostering innovation and creativity as well as respect for tradition, the organization endeavors to improve the quality of life and work for studio potters.

STUDIO POTTER welcomes hearing from potters, artists, scholars and educators with special interests in writing and reporting on topics and events in ceramics.

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