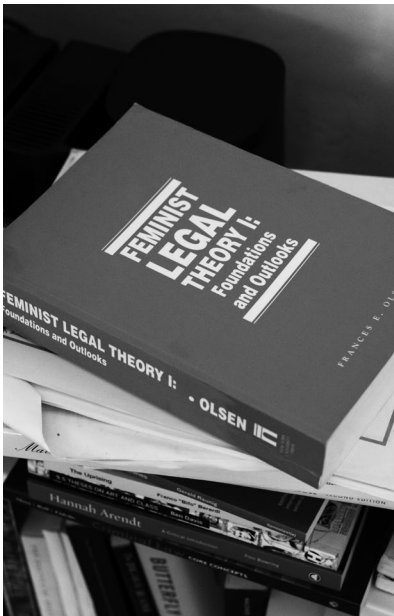


Working Artist

Featuring Ragen Moss,
Justen LeRoy, and Bari Ziperstein

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Lindsay Preston Zappas
Photos by Jeff McLane

When I tell people that I am a writer and artist in addition to the publisher and editor of this magazine, I often get confused looks or concerned questions. “Doesn’t the magazine pull you away from the studio?” people ask in horror. Of course it does, I tell them.

An artist’s life can take on many forms, and artists often blend modes of working, making, and thinking into hybrid careers that span communities and genres. The myth that an artist must commit wholly to the solitary practice of producing their own artwork day in and day out in order to be successful still persists, but is slowly shattering. Refreshingly, the genres that creative producers work within are becoming less stringent and more playful.

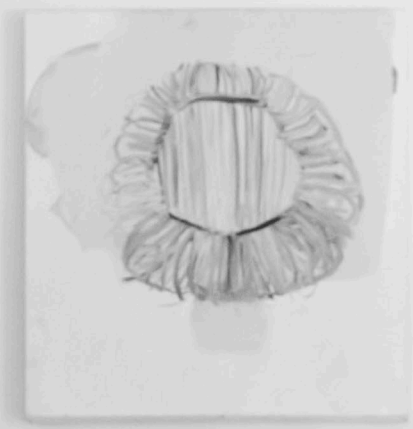
Across the next two issues of *Carla*, we will feature portraits and words by L.A.-based artists who are also highly invested in endeavors outside of the traditional art world. These artists build things, practice law, gather communities, create platforms, and push up against value, context, and utility. Their insights reveal that switching between modes of working brings rigor and variation to their creative output. As Ragen Moss puts it, “The motion of switching across disciplines is actually a fine way to get oneself to appreciate everything.”

Ragen Moss

I'm an artist, and also I'm a practicing lawyer. Being an artist and a lawyer has just made sense to me, and I experience them linked rather than compartmentalized. I'm also into both of them, at the level of genuine interest. It's rarely occurred to me internally that being both is odd although externally I'm aware that having an MFA and a JD is not the most obvious and it does make for a complex weekly rhythm—I have taken conference calls while mixing cement, which is not ideal.

Moving back-and-forth across analytic legal work and building sculptures is good mind exercise. I swim and run, and alternating across a few different areas of brain-work is not that different from physical cross-training. It's productive for me to organize the formlessness of the studio with specific, concrete thinking; and it's productive for me to upend a legal problem with the thoughtfulness inherent in making a work of art. I also really understand legal processes like a doer—like someone who hammers and saws and drills and ratchets within law—and not just someone who reads or talks or thinks about law. This makes the use of law within the artworks that I make slightly different than many artworks that have engaged with law. All to say: I less make work “about” law and more make work “with” law. That's been good for me and for the work and possibly for viewers too.

Having to answer to a client or respond to business emails is sobering and grounding. It's a clear reminder that I am not apart from or above a social-political-economic system, whether I like it or not. It also keeps me from getting too tidy or too loose in any single work pattern. I feel most alive and fresh when I am both thinking and doing, so I've been working on building a life that permits this as much as possible. Most importantly: the motion of switching across disciplines is actually a fine way to get oneself to appreciate everything. Life is (potentially) long.



FEMINIST LEGAL THEORY II - OLSEN
Foundations and Outlooks

Handwritten text on a book spine

BUTTERFLY POLITICS
THREE ARTISTS (THREE WOMEN)
FEMINISM: ART-THEORY

PROGRESS and I

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Justen LeRoy

SON. is a platform that showcases the multi-dimensional experience of the black male identity on a global scale. SON. was established to provide an innovative space in media for the creative excellence and activism of black male-identifying bodies. Our intention is to transform how these bodies view themselves, how they view women, and how they view the structures and systems that operate around them. Through music, film, art, culture, and activism, SON. aims to inspire creative leadership and contribute to a cultural shift that reframes, reenergizes, and reimagines the black male body. This fall, SON. will partner with Touched By An Angel, a barbershop founded by my father in South Central, to bring our programming directly to our core audience.

I'm super focused on world building. Developing SON. was really the first time I realized I could do it all. I could create an umbrella that housed my interests in community, identity, and art. I was able to bring people into rooms with others they may have never met and didn't know they needed. Seeing these interactions let me know I could create the world I wanted to live in.

Lately, I've been getting "what do I introduce you as?" It's hard trying to execute a lot of ideas all at once—the messages can get a little blurry. People are my priority and my work building community at The Underground Museum really helped build and communicate that interest. People have come to understand that interest, and the next step is to expand their understanding of what community and art can do together.

Barbershops and museums are some of our most important social structures.

Living in both for so many years of my life, I couldn't help but begin to develop an eye for what might happen if these elements were to meet. I'm excited by the idea of bringing emerging contemporary artists' work to the barbershop, a space for conversation that can develop so many more layers when art enters the room. Also, pushing the lines of accessibility by not only viewing galleries and museums as homes for art, but considering the everyday spaces people view as home. If art can change the world, why keep it locked away in so few places around the city?

Stick to your path! Sometimes it may seem crazy, even to you, but you're onto something. Write everything down and allow your ideas time to mature. All of your ideas represent the core of you. Show 'em all.



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Marina

So Habla
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WOMEN CUTS
CHILDREN CUTS

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SON.

LET'S BE BUILT BY
How Open

HEALTHCARE

Bari Ziperstein

I am a Los Angeles based sculptor and also the founder and creative director of BZIPPY & Co., a production pottery studio located in my 3,300 square foot East L.A. studio. The plural practice as an artist/designer has become more normalized within the design world, but in the larger framework of the art world, people don't always accept or have time for artists who have an outward plurality.

I had an art dealer in the studio a few summers ago who eloquently summed up the relationship of the design practice to my work making art. He said that the design practice is like a boxer who trains and trains for the match with discipline and craft day in and day out. The boxer only goes up for a match every so often, but it's that training

that allows him to be ready. From that perspective, the design practice helps my team and I sharpen our skills, gain dexterity with our materials, and experiment with our craft and engineering.

It all depends on who you talk to, but in general my colleagues are very proud of what I've accomplished in the arts—having a full-time studio practice is a feat in and of itself! But the things that stick to me most are when some people ask me, “Why do you work so hard?” or “Why, if you are successful in design, would you need to be successful in the art world too?” (As if I'm taking up too much space by striving for both at the same time.)

I'm not working hard to compete with anyone; I'm working hard in order to compete with myself and the visions I have for my own practices. There is plenty of room for everyone. When a female clay artist is successful in any version of the art or design world, it opens doors for the rest of us. Her success is all of our successes.

It's important to stay grounded and innovative within every step of your business and to become a mentor to your employees. They are our future. Having a child and husband only adds to the richness of my life—being grounded and loved by my little family is a place of solace amidst a busy career.

