

Rug Merchant, Tango Dancer, Lawyer: 6 Artists Share Their Surprising Side Hustles **Brian Boucher** **July 8, 2023**

It's widely known that many renowned artists had day jobs before they hit it big: Jeff Koons was a Wall Street commodities broker, Mark Rothko was a schoolteacher, Barbara Kruger was a graphic designer, and Cindy Sherman was a receptionist at New York arts venue Artists Space.

But it's not just a historical phenomenon. Some artists find second passions that actually turn into businesses, and even fairly successful artists today sometimes have a non-art second job to make ends meet (to say nothing of the legions of artists who teach in art schools).

That may be increasingly the case, given high inflation and a possible economic downturn. A [recent survey by Bankrate](#) found that nearly two in five Americans have a side hustle, and that among them, one in three say they need the money to pay the bills. It's a worldwide phenomenon, too: a recent global survey of 10,000 workers by marketing data and analytics company [Kantar](#) shows that 30% of the workforce has a second job due to economic concerns.

As it happens, artists' other occupations, both historical and current, are the subject of the show "[Day Jobs](#)" at the Blanton Museum of Art, in Austin, Texas. The show "proves that even some of the world's most successful artists have relied on other jobs to make ends meet—and that those day jobs can sometimes prove key to their central practice, rather than distractions from their primary calling," [wrote Artnet News' Sarah Cascone](#).

Here are 6 artists who ply a whole other job from what they do in the studio.

Katherine Bernhardt: Berber Rug Merchant

Christopher Chiappa: Designer/Installer

Christopher Chiappa's work in an assortment of mediums has been on exhibit at venues like the Savannah College of Art and Design's SCAD Museum, in Georgia, and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, in North Adams. It has garnered him coverage in the pages of the *New York Times* and *Artforum*. (For the record, I bought one of the life-size sculptures of fried eggs that got him a mention in the *Times*.) Chiappa is also a design-centered contractor, running the New York shop Full Wolf.

After starting out working in Jeff Koons' studio, Chiappa did some contracting work on the side, building storage space for painter Donald Baechler, and then met entrepreneur Murray Moss and ended up building the Moss stores. "None of this would have been possible without him," say Moss and Franklin Getchell in their book *Please Do Not Touch*. These days, Full Wolf helps furniture and design company Herman Miller realize its showrooms and is the East Coast installer for Vitsø shelving. "It's an artist-centric model," Chiappa tells Artnet News. Artists including Joseph Buckley, Benny Merris, and Luis Salas Porras have been on the payroll. "You're supposed to be able to have the flexibility to do a residency at [Skowhegan](#) or prepare for a show."

Cary Leibowitz (aka Candyass): Auction House Executive

Nicole Mazza: Tango Dancer

Virginia L. Montgomery: Graphic Facilitator

Ragen Moss: Lawyer