

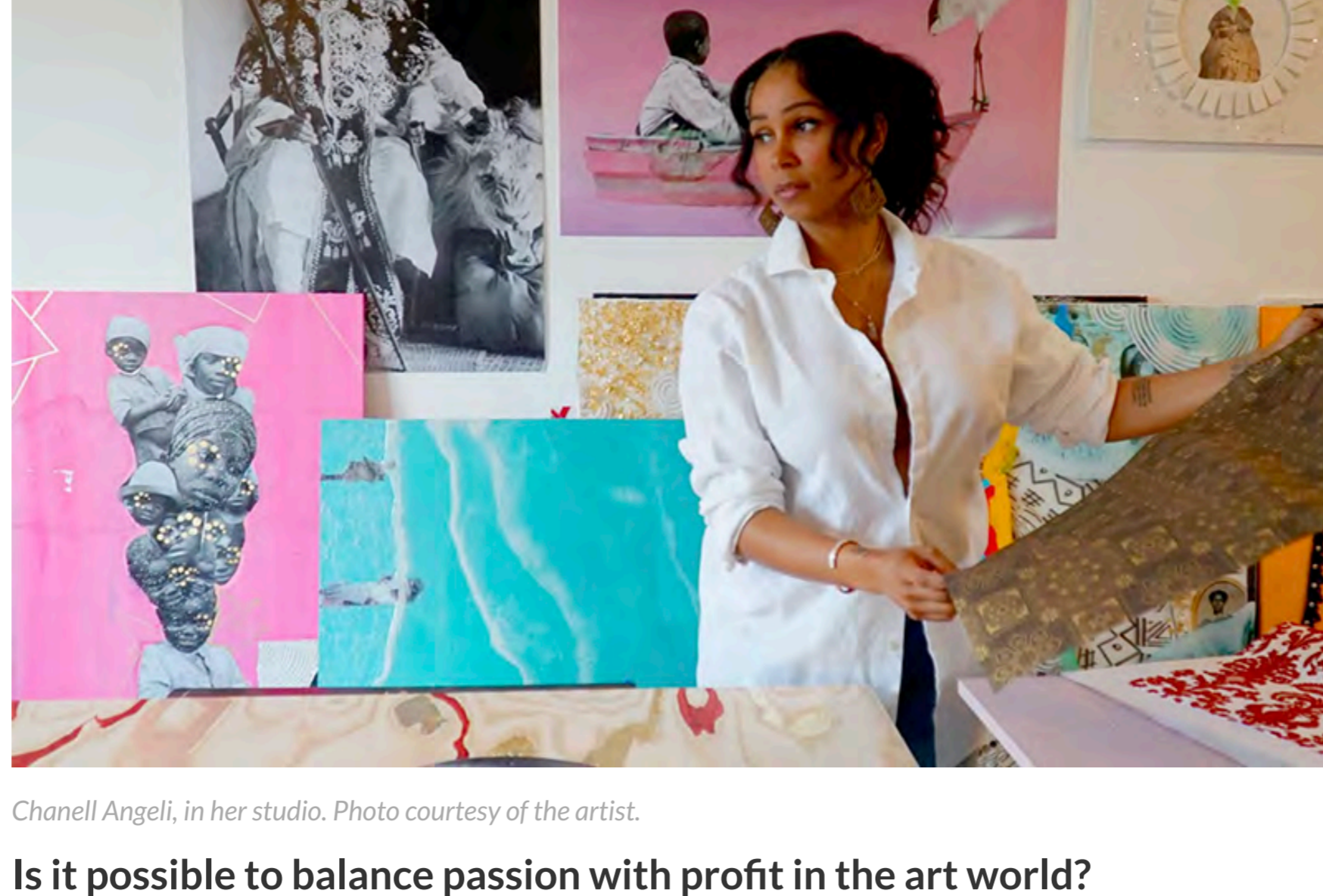
## Three Artists Share Their Strategies for Selling Art and Making a Living

Suzy Kopf | September 18, 2023

ART INTERVIEWS

ART MARKETING

BUSINESS & MONEY



Chanel Angeli, in her studio. Photo courtesy of the artist.

### Is it possible to balance passion with profit in the art world?

We talked with three Artwork Archive artists who are doing just that.

They got real about money with us and had an honest conversation about earning their income from art sales, how they price their work, what they've learned about the financial side of art, and how they use [Artwork Archive](#) to assist their businesses.

So, how are they navigating the financial side of creativity? And, what advice do they have for other artists looking to make a living from their artwork? Find out below.

### Three Artists' Financial Journeys

[Randy L. Purcell](#), known for his intricate collages featuring buildings and bees preserved in beeswax, resides in the greater Nashville, TN area. Each year, his goal is to generate enough income from his art sales to cover his studio expenses.

Before the pandemic, Randy was earning nearly \$30,000 from his art sales. However, during the pandemic, this figure dropped to \$9,000. He's currently in the process of gradually increasing his art sales revenue, aiming to reach the \$30,000 mark again. In 2022, he managed to achieve \$27,000 in sales. He also told us that he feels fortunate that his wife's income takes care of their living expenses.

[Bao-Khang Luu](#), based in the San Francisco Bay Area, has a strong focus on process and pattern in his artwork. He creates sculptures and paintings that blend natural and man-made materials. Currently, his art sales generate an annual income of approximately \$30,000. This, when combined with his husband's earnings and investments, allows them to afford living in the costly region.

Looking ahead, Bao-Khang is determined to fully dedicate himself to achieving a sustainable income solely through his art.

[Chanel Angeli](#), a resident of the Atlanta area, earns a yearly income of \$130,000. She breaks down her income as follows: approximately \$80,000 from her fine art sales, \$10,000 from grants and awards, and \$40,000 from her floral design studio. Her artistic work involves using a variety of materials, such as floral elements and archival images, to explore themes related to the divine feminine and the African Diaspora in her collages and assemblages. It's important to note that her income is not dependent on any financial contributions from a partner.



Randy L. Purcell, "Bee-70," 6 x 8 x 2 in

### What are the financial challenges and aspirations?

Despite regularly selling work, all three artists would like to earn more income from their art sales in a way that feels sustainable. Angeli would like to be able to focus entirely on her artistic practice instead of pursuing several ventures to make ends meet.

Angeli identifies her biggest challenge as representation. She told Artwork Archive that, "Women, and specifically women of color, are underrepresented and underpaid in the art world. We need more inclusive opportunities to show and present our work." Angeli believes that this will help establish it as valued and worthy of collection. Despite this limitation, she says that, "As a self-taught artist often having feelings of imposter syndrome, it's very validating to know that I can make a living from my creations."

For Luu and Purcell, the primary struggle is finding enough time to create work. Luu reports that because his current series is extremely labor and time-intensive, the challenge is "finding the time and energy to produce enough work while concurrently developing new series. Balancing a growing family and an art career is no joke," he says.

Purcell is also seeking to find enough time in the studio, cutting back on some of the volunteering work he has been committed to over the last twelve years to grow his studio practice.

"I'm ready to focus more on studio time so I can take advantage of all the connections I've made through the years," he said. "The time I spend volunteering could have been used in [an income-earning job] or in studio time, but I feel it is an investment in the future of my career and community. The payoff comes long after the work."

#### Artwork Archive Tip:

You can learn more about each of the artist's studio practices and how they manage their art businesses below.

**Randy Purcell:** [The Un-bee-lievable Artwork of Randy L. Purcell](#)

**Bao-Khang Luu:** [This Artist Turns Mundane Discarded Objects Into Works of Art](#)

**Chanel Angeli:** [Chanel Angeli Investigates the Veil Between the Physical and Spiritual World](#)

### How do these artists think about pricing their artwork?

When creating their art, all three creatives keep their pricing structure and audience in mind—but all three use different pricing strategies.

Purcell draws a mental line between artwork for himself and artwork for an art fair audience.

To avoid emotional pricing, Luu uses a size-dependent pricing formula and sells predominately through his website which has an [Artwork Archive Public Profile embed](#).

"While sales and marketing are essential to think about, I would never let them dictate the foundation of my work," Luu explained. "The core of my work must remain genuine to my vision and message as an artist; otherwise, I'm negating my efforts to be the type of artist I want to be."

Angeli also considers size and complexity when pricing her work, but she acknowledges this can be tricky when she is trying a new technique. Recently, she added assemblage and mosaics to her collage practice which increased both her time and material costs, so she consulted with some galleries to advise her on how much more to charge.

### Advice for other artists who want to get started selling their artwork.

Navigating the art world's pricing complexities, these three artists emphasize just how important market research, consistent pricing, and embracing your network are to making sales.

Angeli and Luu emphasized doing market research to understand what artists whose work is of similar size and expertise sell their work for. You can use [Artwork Archive's Discovery Platform](#) to search by material, price, and size.

Angeli also encourages artists to keep consistent pricing, pointing out that, "If you sell a price for \$1,000 but then next week sell a similar work for \$500, you could offend a valuable collector and also devalue your work. A rule of thumb is to set your price and stay there for a while if the works are moving. Let demand drive the price up."

"Don't be ashamed of sales to friends and family. A sale is a sale," Luu told us. "It might indicate the size and reach of your network but not the quality of your work or its market viability."

Artists also find valuable support in tools like [Artwork Archive](#), streamlining art business management with features like inventory tracking and expense management.

"I wish I had integrated Artwork Archive into my art practice sooner," said Luu. "Artwork Archive has many features that make running an organized art business much smoother—keeping track of your inventory, having all your pricing quickly and easily accessible, maintaining records of your sales and collectors, etc."

Luu also emphasized the importance of keeping detailed expense records to inform your pricing. "It may sound boring, but my favorite feature is expense tracking! The feature can help you determine how much each piece costs to create and makes tax season a cinch."

#### Artwork Archive Tip:

Want to learn how to keep track of all your art-related income and expenses in one place?

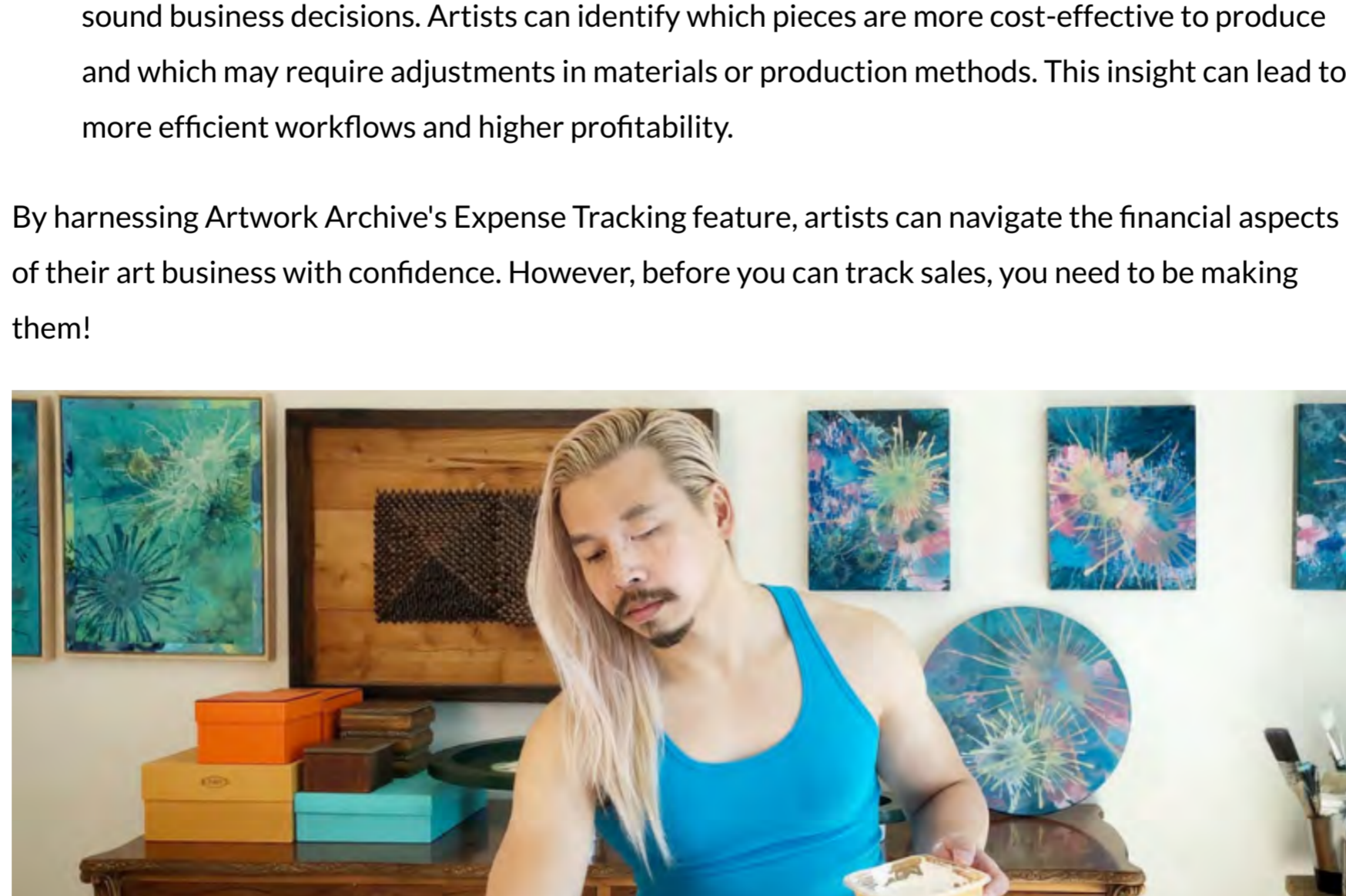
Watch [this virtual training session](#) showing you how to manage your art income and expenses in Artwork Archive.

### Using Expense Tracking in Artwork Archive to Boost Art Sales

For artists striving to generate income from their practice, managing the financial aspects of their art business becomes crucial. One powerful tool that can aid in this endeavor is Artwork Archive's [expense tracking feature](#). Here's how artists can leverage this tool to sell more artwork and foster the growth of their art businesses:

- Financial clarity & informed pricing:** [Expense tracking](#) in Artwork Archive allows artists to gain a comprehensive understanding of their art business's financial health. By recording expenses related to materials, framing, photography, or other necessary costs, artists can track the true cost of creating each piece of artwork. Armed with a clear view of their expenses, artists can make informed pricing decisions. They can set prices that not only cover their costs but also ensure a reasonable profit margin. This eliminates the guesswork and emotional pricing that can often lead to undervaluing or overpricing artwork.
- Tax season ease:** Keeping precise expense records [simplifies tax season](#) and makes it easy to work with an accountant or do your own taxes as an artist. Artists can easily access all the necessary financial information, streamlining the process and reducing stress during tax time.
- Better business decisions:** Expense tracking isn't just about pricing; it's also about making sound business decisions. Artists can identify which pieces are more cost-effective to produce and which may require adjustments in materials or production methods. This insight can lead to more efficient workflows and higher profitability.

By harnessing Artwork Archive's Expense Tracking feature, artists can navigate the financial aspects of their art business with confidence. However, before you can track sales, you need to be making them!



Bao-Khang Luu in the studio. Photo courtesy of the artist.

### You can make more art sales using Artwork Archive invoices, Purchase Requests, and Public Profile.

Artwork Archive provides artists with a robust set of features that not only help manage the financial aspects of their art business but also enhance their ability to sell artwork effectively.

Artwork Archive's invoicing and purchase request capabilities empower artists to streamline the sales process and maintain professionalism in their transactions. Here's how:

- Professional Invoices:** Creating professional, customizable invoices through Artwork Archive allows artists to present their work and pricing in a clear and organized manner. This not only enhances the buying experience for collectors but also helps artists maintain a consistent and polished image.
- Secure Purchase Requests:** Collectors and buyers can send secure purchase requests to artists directly through Artwork Archive on the Discovery Platform or in Private Rooms. This feature enables artists to initiate sales discussions with interested parties, ensuring a seamless and secure communication channel. It also simplifies the process of negotiating prices, terms and shipping.
- Tracking Sales:** By using these tools, artists can easily track their sales, ensuring that all transactions are recorded and documented. This not only helps with financial management but also builds trust with collectors, as it demonstrates professionalism and transparency.
- Reach a larger audience:** [Your Public Profile](#) acts as a digital portfolio where you can display your artwork, providing potential buyers with a visually appealing and organized presentation of your portfolio. It's a convenient way for collectors to learn about you, your artistic journey, and your body of work, which can instill confidence in potential buyers. Plus, buyers can directly contact you and kick off the sales process. This direct communication channel can facilitate quick and efficient sales transactions.

Incorporating these tools and features into your art business strategy can help you sell more artwork and further your career as an artist. From managing finances to presenting your work professionally, Artwork Archive equips artists with the resources they need to thrive in the art world.

And while it's important to consider the financial side of an art career, Purcell also reminds us of how important it is to be a citizen of your larger community. He urges artists to get involved in not just the arts but other fields as well because he says that, "The reward for giving back is huge."

Feeling a part of something larger than yourself will surely aid your practice in the future in more than just monetary ways.