

Wischful Thinking Productions
In Association with Artemis Rising Foundation, Be Forward Productions
and Iron Gate East Productions
presents

THE ART OF MAKING IT

Directed by Kelcey Edwards

Produced by Debi Wisch

USA | 94 min. | 2021

www.theartofmakingitfilm.com

PRESS CONTACT

Susan Norget Film Promotion
Susan Norget / Jared Chambers
publicity@norget.com
917-833-3056

SALES CONTACT

ro*co
Annie Roney
annie@rocofilms.com

SYNOPSIS

Focusing on a diverse group of compelling young artists at pivotal moments in their careers, **THE ART OF MAKING IT** explores the forces that thrust some into the stratosphere while leaving others struggling to survive. Who gets seen, who gets left behind, and why does it matter who is anointed to tell the stories of our time? Interweaving the voices of creative luminaries and disruptors, the film is both a cautionary tale about what America stands to lose if we don't rethink what we value and why, and a love letter to those who persevere in their artistic practice in spite of the extraordinary odds of ever achieving commercial success.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - Kelcey Edwards

Raised by a contemporary art curator/art professor, I was immersed in a world of art from a young age. Even as a child, I understood artists to be an extraordinary demographic with a special purpose: visionaries who could at once mirror our culture and challenge it. After founding my first nonprofit gallery in Austin, Texas at the age of 25, I spent the next several years creating opportunities for emerging artists who may have otherwise gone unrecognized. Many of my earliest film projects were focused on interviewing artists and documenting their practices. After receiving an MFA from Stanford University in documentary filmmaking, I moved to New York City to forge my film career and experienced firsthand the challenges MFA graduates often face: the difficulty of earning enough income to pay off student loan debt, the scarcity of teaching positions, and the amount of sacrifice required to balance “being an artist” with “making a living.”

I spent my first years in New York producing the feature documentary *Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines*, an exploration of how representations of female power have and have not changed over time. After taking a few years off to focus on motherhood (I now have three children under the age of 8), I turned my attention back to the world of emerging artists. In the years since I graduated, MFA programs had become ubiquitous and tuitions had skyrocketed. With the growth of the online marketplace and the proliferation of art fairs, the contemporary art market was experiencing seismic shifts, while smaller galleries — often the “first step” in the career of emerging artists — seemed to be shriveling on the vine. With no clear path to finding “representation,” I began to wonder how today’s artists were navigating this upended art world. Was an expensive higher education an art market prerequisite? How were artists “making it,” and what did “making it” even mean? Upon meeting producer Debi Wisch, I realized we shared a vision of a documentary that explored the cultural value of art through the world of today’s emerging artists and what their challenges could reveal about our society at large.

Working across a variety of media, the talented young artists in our film struggle to balance making art with making ends meet. They reflect on the challenges of navigating an art world ecosystem in which they are almost entirely dependent on a combination of their own fortitude, the whims of an unregulated market, and support from institutions with a history of barriers to entry based on race, gender and socio-economic class.

When we began filming in 2019, little did we know our film would literally capture the final months of the art world as we knew it. Now seen as an accelerant, COVID-19 brought the inequities of the status quo into even sharper focus. Facing mounting debt, and with little infrastructure in place to support the arts other than private philanthropy, galleries, art fairs, art schools, and even museums around the country, were forced to shut their doors. Yet amidst the fallout, our artists continue to make work, reminding us that every act of creation is an act of hope. Completing our final interview in early 2021, our film captures the rethinking of many of the art world’s most entrenched systems in real time. As historical monuments are being torn down — both literally and figuratively — it is artists who are creating more broadly representational replacements, reminding us of the power of creative acts to show us a better way into the future.

FEATURING

Felipe Baeza - Artist

A multidisciplinary artist and Yale MFA, Felipe works primarily with painting and collage. A “Dreamer” and DACA recipient born in Guanajuato, Mexico, he mounted a critically acclaimed exhibition at The Mistake Room in Los Angeles 2020-2021 drawing interest from several “mega” gallerists. He was also featured in Desert X in 2021. Felipe is now represented by Maureen Paley Gallery in London. His work is already in major museum collections including the permanent collections of LACMA and the Brooklyn Art Museum. He will be featured in the 2022 Venice Biennale.

Andrea Bowers - Artist

An internationally celebrated artist who has worked in a wide range of media including drawings, videos, paintings and installation since receiving her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 1992, Andrea has been an authentic activist incapable of separating political commitment from artistic work. Formerly a professor at the Otis College of Art and Design MFA Public Practice, she left her post in protest of what she believes is a broken education system that leaves students with massive debt. Now represented by Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco, Andrea currently has a solo exhibition survey of her work from the past 20 years at the MCA Chicago, which will travel to the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles later in 2022.

Lisa Corinne Davis - Artist and Professor

An abstract painter exploring themes of racial, social and psychological identity, Lisa has previously taught painting at the Cooper Union School of Art and Yale University; she is currently the Interim MFA Director and Head of Painting at Hunter College in New York. Lisa has received numerous awards, including the 2001 Artist Biennial award from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, a National Endowment for the Arts’ Visual Artist Fellowship and two New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowships. She is now co-head of the painting program at Hunter College. In 2021, Lisa received a coveted award in Art from the American Arts & Letters Award and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant and in 2020. She is represented by Jenkins Johnson Gallery.

Sebastian ErraZuriz - Artist

New York-based artist, designer and entrepreneur Sebastian ErraZuriz has received international acclaim for his original and provocative work blurring the boundaries between art, technology and design. Tackling everything from giant public artwork to conceptual sculptures and experimental tech-art projects, his work invites the viewer to look again at realities that were often hidden in front of their own eyes. Sebastian’s work has been included in hundreds of exhibitions and collections internationally.

Charles Gaines - Artist and Professor

A world-renowned conceptual artist and one of the most important visual arts professors of our time, Charles Gaines was mentored by Sol LeWitt for more than 40 years and has taught and

mentored “blue-chip” artists and art professionals including Mark Bradford, Henry Taylor, Laura Owens, Gary Simmons, Andrea Bowers, Rodney McMillian, Gala Porras Kim, Lauren Halsey, David Kordansky, and countless other well-known names. He teaches at CalArts. Charles had his first solo show in Europe in 2021 at Hauser & Wirth in 2021. He has also had recent shows at DIA Beacon and an exhibition of his new work opened at SF MOMA on March 6, 2022.

César García-Alvarez - Director, The Mistake Room

César is the founder and current Director/Chief Curator of The Mistake Room, a globally focused non-profit contemporary art space in Los Angeles, where he has organized exhibitions and projects with Felipe Baeza, Vivian Suter, Ed Clark, Oscar Murillo and Tuan Andrew Nguyen, among others. He served as Associate Director and Senior Curator at LAX-ART (2007-2012) and in 2012 was one of the co-curators of the first Made in LA Biennial organized by the Hammer Museum. In 2021 he curated Desert X in Palm Springs.

Marc Glimcher - Owner, Pace Gallery

President and CEO of Pace Gallery since 2011, under Marc Glimcher’s leadership, Pace has greatly expanded the scope of its artist representation. Marc has spearheaded the gallery’s expansion both in the US and internationally, opening a Palo Alto location in 2016, a space in Geneva in 2018, two seasonal spaces in East Hampton, NY and Palm Beach, FL in 2020, a new gallery in London at Hanover Square opening in the fall of 2021 and the groundbreaking Miami experiential art space, Superblue. Pace recently signed Jeff Koons, probably the most famous artist in the world.

Michael Govan - Director, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)

Director of LACMA, Govan is often credited for bringing the LA visual arts landscape to the forefront of the global art scene. Both revered and criticized for his avant-garde outlook on the role of encyclopedic museums in contemporary culture, Michael has prioritized collaborative relationships with artists and his views on how best to share work with the public are informed by experiential relationships, art history and the misinformation inherent in the traditional white European telling of art history.

Jenna Gribbon - Artist

Growing up in the Midwest in a house with no art and only one art book, Jenna didn’t see a real painting until middle school when she begged her way onto a trip to the museum. The experience was transformative, and she dedicated the next several years to teaching herself the art of figurative painting. Since graduating with an MFA from Hunter College in 2019, Jenna’s career has soared. She has had two sold out shows at Fredericks & Freiser in New York and another at massimodecarlo in London. Her work is now in the Frick and a book on her work was recently published.

Hilde Lynn Helphenstein (aka Jerry Gogosian) - Artist and Curator

An artist, gallerist and instagram sensation otherwise known as the anonymous (until recently) Jerry Gogosian, Hilde is a post-internet “culture jammer” who uses the internet as a platform to

make socially conscious art that walks the line between conceptual art, watchdog reporting, artist advocacy and even click bait. She continues to work as a conceptual artist, curator and writer and recently launched a subscription based newsletter called Larry Saltz.

Gordon Knox - Former President, San Francisco Art Institute

Previous to his role at SFAI, Gordon Knox was the Director of the Arizona State University Art Museum and worked at the Stanford Humanities Lab and Lucas Artists Programs where he developed international projects that connected artists with scientists and technologists to develop contexts that expanded the circulation of ideas and advanced social justice

Gisela McDaniel - Artist

A Chamorro artist who fuses audiovisual representations and motion sensor technology to make paintings about women who have survived sexual assault, Gisela's work primarily features subjects who identify as indigenous, multi-racial, immigrant and of color, who she transforms into "deities." She holds a BFA from the University of Michigan and lives and works in Detroit. Gisela has had two solo exhibitions at Pilar Corrias in London in 2020 and 2022 and a solo show at The Mistake Room in Los Angeles in 2022. Her work has also been featured in many group shows and she has been featured in 2021 articles in Art News and artnet.

Helen Molesworth - Curator

Formerly the Chief Curator at Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Helen Molesworth is a writer and a curator who recently hosted a podcast series called "Recording Artists" with the Getty Museum. She is the author of numerous catalogue essays and her writing has appeared in Artforum, Art Journal, Documents, and October. The recipient of the 2011 Bard Center for Curatorial Studies Award for Curatorial Excellence, Helen serves as the Curator-in-Residence for the Anderson Ranch in Aspen. In 2021, she received the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation award and in 2022 she received the esteemed Clark Prize for Excellence in Arts Writing.

Anne Pasternak - Director, The Brooklyn Museum

Anne Pasternak has served as the Director of the Brooklyn Museum since 2015, after acting as the director of Creative Time, an organization that supports and has collaborated with hundreds of artists. During her tenure at the Brooklyn Museum, she has championed projects that demonstrate the crucial links between art and social justice and has bolstered the institution's focus on visual art, bringing the institution into the 21st century.

Jerry Saltz - Art Critic

Since 2006, Jerry Saltz has been senior art critic and columnist for New York magazine. Formerly the senior art critic for The Village Voice, he received the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 2018. Saltz served as a visiting critic at School of Visual Arts, Columbia University, Yale University, and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and was the sole advisor for the 1995 Whitney Biennial. He is the recipient of three honorary doctorates, including from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2008.

Stefan Simchowitz - Art Dealer and Collector

A vocal proponent of social media as a legitimate way of discovering and promoting artists, supporters see Stefan Simchowitz's method as diversifying the number of systems which recognize and produce credible artists. Critics are concerned that his penchant for promoting young, undiscovered artists destabilizes established workings of the art world — a long-standing and tight network of critics, universities, museums and galleries that collectively define the nature of “good” art.

Chris Watts - Artist

A multimedia artist and Muay Thai martial artist, Chris was dismissed from the MFA program at Yale after completing a year of studies. Saddled with debt and with limited career options, he moved to New York City to make art. His first solo show opened in September 2020 in the former Monica King Gallery in Tribeca.

FILM TEAM

Kelcey Edwards - Director

An award-winning filmmaker, author and curator, Kelcey received an MFA in Documentary Film from Stanford University. As a director, her short documentaries have screened at SXSW (*Letter*), Silverdocs AFI/Discovery Channel Film Festival (*Gentle Creatures*), and True/False (*Ghost in the Material*). In 2012, she produced *Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines* (SXSW premiere, Independent Lens broadcast). Kelcey's fiction writing has appeared in *storySouth* and *Border Crossing*; her art writing has been published by *Hamptons Art Hub*, *Portray Magazine* and *Salomon Contemporary*, and her nonfiction has been published in *New Voices from Stanford* (Stanford University Press) and *Persistence of Vision* (Austin Film Society). Kelcey has served as a lecturer and panelist at several colleges and universities, including Pratt, Barnard, The New School and NYU Tisch. She also runs *Iron Gate East*, an exhibition series based in the Hamptons, inspired by her pioneering gallery, *Iron Gate Studios*, which she co-founded in Austin in 2003.

Debi Wisch - Producer

Debi's producing credits include the Emmy-award nominated documentary *The Price of Everything*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018, sold to HBO and received distribution around the world, and *Love, Cecil*, which premiered at the Telluride Film Festival in 2017. She is currently in post-production on *A Test of Civilization* with the multi-award winning Film Manufacturers Inc. Debi serves on the Advisory Boards of the Cantor Art Museum at Stanford University and Hunter College's Arts Advisory. She also serves on the board of Film at Lincoln Center, as well as the board of governors of the American Jewish Committee. She is on the National Council of Artadia and Anderson Ranch, and a member of MoMA PS1's Greater New Yorkers. Debi has mentored high school and college students for many years. Prior to becoming a filmmaker, she worked in marketing and public relations for 20 years in the U.S. and Asia.

Allison Berg - Co-Producer

Allison is a Los Angeles-based writer and editor specifically focused on culture and contemporary art. A lawyer by training, she is the executive editor for LALA Magazine and has contributed to Cultured, Design LA, Hamptons, Gotham, and C magazines. Allison is known for getting below the surface to present a greater understanding of the creative process and illuminating the artists behind the work. A Trustee with the Boards of LACMA, American Friends of the Israel Museum and The Los Angeles Football Club Foundation, she is on leadership councils including The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, DIA, The Perez Art Museum Miami, and the Cedars Sinai Advisory Council for The Arts.

Susan Norget - Co-Producer

Susan is a veteran of the independent film world where she has worked in marketing and publicity with a focus on documentaries and international cinema. Her company represents films at major festivals and has spearheaded hundreds of release campaigns. Projects she has promoted have been honored with four Best Documentary Feature Oscars (and 23 nominations), 95 Independent Spirit awards and nominations and dozens of top Cannes and Sundance awards. Susan works regularly with producers seeking distribution for their projects and offers strategic advice and creative gameplans to help successfully bring their films to the marketplace. She has recently served in producerial roles on the documentaries *Born to Be* (Kino Lorber, 2021 News & Docs Emmy nominee, Best Documentary), *The Viewing Booth* (Berlinale, True/False), and *The Meaning of Hitler* (IFC Films). Susan is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Regina K. Scully - Executive Producer

Regina is the founder and CEO of Artemis Rising, a foundation dedicated to supporting media projects that transform our culture and challenge the status quo and champions powerful stories about some of the most challenging social justice issues of our time including gender bias, healing, trauma, mental health, addiction, and empowerment. She has helped produce hundreds of the most impactful documentary films of the past decade including *The Invisible War*, *The Hunting Ground*, *Ms. Representation* and *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* Her films have inspired meaningful policy change to legislation, education, corporate protocol and cultural norms and many have received Peabody, Emmy and Academy Awards. In addition to documentaries, Artemis Rising Foundation supports narrative film, television, theater, education, and social programs.

Mara Burros Sandler - Executive Producer

Founder of Be Forward Productions, an organization dedicated to the power of storytelling as a galvanizing force for public awareness and action around issues of national and global concern, Mara offers support to bold creative endeavors that not only shine a light on these critical issues, but also respond to them with a forward-thinking vision. Her film credits include *Killer Bees*, *Lessons from a School Shooting*, *Newtown*, and *Unrest*.

Andrew Mer - Executive Producer

A twenty-year veteran of the independent film community, both as a producer and acquisitions and business development executive, Andrew is a staunch ally to many producers and recently co-produced and co-wrote on *The Remix: Hip Hop X Fashion* for Tribeca Studios and MCM. He was an executive producer on Larry Fessenden's *Depraved*, which was released by IFC in 2019. As SVP Acquisitions and Business Development, he was an integral part of the pioneering team that launched SnagFilms and was instrumental in building the SnagFilms library of over 7000 documentary and independent fiction films from many of the most respected distributors and broadcasters including Lionsgate, National Geographic, Kino Lorber, and VICE. He is a New York City-based attorney who originally moved to the city to work in the art world.

George Wells - Executive Producer

George is Chairman of Wells Group of New York, a 10-person management consulting firm based in New York City that specializes in working with high-growth businesses in the consumer internet, healthcare, technology, and contemporary arts spaces. George also serves as the acting CFO of quip, an oral care startup and interim CFO of Maisonette, a children's luxury goods marketplace; he has also served as interim CFO of Draper James, a lifestyle clothing brand founded by Reese Witherspoon, and interim COO/CFO of Lehmann Maupin, one of the top ten art galleries in the world. In addition, the firm recently launched its artist management practice having signed Mickalene Thomas as its anchor client. George received a BA in Finance and Accounting from Morehouse College and MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Nyneve Laura Minnear - Editor

Nyneve recently edited HBO's 9-part documentary series, *The Vow*, with Oscar-nominated directors Jehane Noujaim and Karim Amer. Her film work includes *306 Hollywood*, the first documentary to premiere in the NEXT section for Innovative Filmmaking at Sundance 2018; *(T)ERROR*, winner of an Emmy, a Sundance 2015 Special Jury Award, a Full Frame Grand Jury Award and an Independent Spirit Award nomination; *Girl With Black Balloons*, winner of a Grand Jury Prize at DOC NYC and chosen "Best of Fest" at its Edinburgh Film Festival premiere. Based in New York, Nyneve was an editor/producer for the Emmy award-winning investigative news magazine series Dan Rather Reports for three years, has been a fellow at the Sundance Documentary Edit Lab and two IFP Edit Labs, and is on the Steering Committee for the newly formed Alliance of Documentary Editors.

Sebastian Lasaosa Rogers - Director of Photography

This is Sebastian's first feature film. Over the last few years he has helped shoot an experimental non-fiction film in the -35°F winter of interior Alaska, produced videos for the "Show Me \$15" fight to raise the wages of fast food workers, directed and shot a film for the Southern Environmental Law Center, DP'd a short doc about wetland restoration in Louisiana, filmed on the road with country singer Dierks Bentley, documented oral histories of Afro-descendant Panamanian millennials, and produced, directed and shot a film for Metro Nashville Public Schools about the experiences of LGBT teachers and students to be used in LGBT trainings for teachers and counselors.

Troy Herion - Composer

Troy is an Emmy award-winning composer who writes music for film, theater, dance, and experimental arts. His eclectic style spans orchestral and electronic music, with a love for unusual combinations of instruments and colors. Film scores include *306 Hollywood*, *The Hottest August*, *Bulletproof*, *Born to Be*, *The Disrupted*, *The Dog*, and *Mountain Fire Personnel*, which have premiered at major festivals including Sundance, Toronto, SXSW, Hot Docs, Tribeca, New York Film Festival, and True/False.

Zachary McMillan - Music Producer and Musician

A songwriter and music producer working and living between Minneapolis and New York City, Zach graduated from the Gallatin school at NYU in 2008. He has toured and made records for several bands, including Baby Alpaca. He has been writing music for commercial projects, as well as doing the sound design and original score for the dramatic feature *In Echo Park*. Currently, he is producing the first full-length record for Brooklyn-based artist J Hoard. He also produced, directed and scored the documentary *Invisible Valley*.

CREDITS

Directed by	Kelcey Edwards
Produced by	Debi Wisch
Co-Producers	Allison Berg Susan Norget
Executive Producers	Regina K. Scully Mara Burros Sandler Andrew Mer George Wells
Contributing Producers	Emily Blavatnik Ghada Dergham
Consulting Producers	Jenni Monet Jessica Ann Peavy
Associate Producers	Suzanne Deal Booth Joanne Leonhardt Cassullo Megan Green Pamela Miller Hornik Stacey R. Lane Kathleen Irvin Loughlin Ellen Lowey Anne Huntington Sharma Leily Soleimani Jackie Miller Stewart Malissa & Josh Young
Editor	Nyneve Laura Minnear
Cinematographer	Sebastian Lasaosa Rogers
Co-Editor	Inés Vogelfang
Title Design & Animation	Colton Fordyce
Composer	Troy Herion
Music Producer	Zachary McMillan

FEATURING

Felipe Baeza - Artist
Andrea Bowers - Artist
Valerie Cassel Oliver - Curator, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Garth Clark - Curator
Nicholas Cueva - Artist
Lisa Corinne Davis - Artist and Professor
Sebastian ErraZuriz - Artist
Dr. Lara M. Evans - Curator
Jessica Fredericks - Art Dealer
Andrew Freiser - Art Dealer
David B. Frye - Artist
Charles Gaines - Artist and Professor
César García-Alvarez - Director, The Mistake Room
Christoph Gerozissis - Art Dealer
Marc Glimcher - Owner, Pace Gallery
Andrew Gori - Co-Director of Spring/Break Art Fair
Michael Govan - Director, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)
Jenna Gribbon - Artist
Hammer - Bushwick resident
Hilde Lynn Helphenstein (aka Jerry Gogosian) - Artist and Curator
Dave Hickey - Art Critic
Ambre Kelly - Artist, Co-Director of Spring/Break Art Fair
Anton Kern - Owner, Anton Kern Gallery
Christina Y. Kim - Curator, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)
Gordon Knox - Former President, San Francisco Art Institute
Tatiana Lomahaftewa-Singer - Curator
Cristóbal Martínez - Artist
Gisela McDaniel - Artist
Helen Molesworth - Curator
Anne Pasternak - Director, The Brooklyn Museum
Joachim Pissarro - Art Historian and Curator
James Salomon - Curator
Jerry Saltz - Art Critic
Stefan Simchowitz - Art Dealer and Collector
Chris Watts - Artist
Almond Zigmund - Artist