

ARTS

Artists under siege

Performers, directors and visual artists on coping with quarantine

By Marty Fugate
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Artists create art because they have to. Their art could be paint on canvas, chords on a guitar or a performance on stage — but it's the work they're born to do. Is their work essential? Artists would tell you it is. The Invisible Hand of the marketplace might disagree. Like servers, hair stylists, and personal trainers, artists of all descriptions often struggle to make a living. Thanks to the coronavirus, their struggle just got harder. Like many of us, artists are under siege. How are they holding out? Here is what five area-based creators told us.

'Alone and together'

Eliza Ladd is an associate professor of movement and dance at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Her own art pushes the boundaries of physical theater in ensemble and solo performances.

Before and after: Ladd's "Open Movement Class" was coming down the home stretch. She planned to devote the last four weeks to ensemble practice and audience awareness. In a normal year, her second-year conservatory students would put theory into practice in a performance in the final class. The pandemic emptied Ladd's classroom, but school wasn't out.



Eliza Ladd, associate professor of movement and dance at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, has shifted to teaching classes online and reflecting on nature in ways that may someday factor into her creative output.

[COURTESY PHOTO]

Creative response: "Like every college professor in America, I shifted my teaching over to Zoom. My students are creating improvisations and solo movement videos. We'll watch each other's performances and

give feedback — then stitch it all together in an ensemble piece. It's a weird kind of long distance choreography — I call it being alone and together. Performance is so dependent on audience. Now the performers themselves are the only audience, and we're not even in the same room together. But we're making it work."

Financial fallout: "Ask again later. Who knows how long this could last?"

Gut feeling: "I'm in survival mode. For now, my own art is on hold. I'm taking long walks and observing nature. Lots of sensory input, and internal creative stirring — no output yet! Maybe my brain will do something with it eventually, who knows? Right now, I'm living day to day — and grateful for every day."