

## **Artists in the Workforce: Employment and Earnings 1970-1990**

This report, commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) documents the employment and earnings of authors, visual artists, performing artists and architecture and design occupations. Joan Jeffri and Robert Greenblatt wrote the section on Artists Who Work With Their Hands which studies painters, sculptors, craft artists and artist printmakers who comprise one occupational category of the U.S. census.

Artists in the Workforce discusses the limitations of data from the U.S. Census and other governmental sources, and describes the challenges in studying artists including issues of occupation versus career, professional versus amateur, geographic attitudes, and multi-job holding.

The census data reveal that in 1970 there were 102,000 painters/craft artists and that by 1990, the number rose to 191,160 or 13 percent of all artists. By 1990 there was also a larger proportion of women visual artists, with few living in urban areas. They had a higher median income than all artists in the general labor force, but were closer in median age to professionals. More visual artists were self-employed, with percentages much higher than other kinds of artists; in fact, the data seem to indicate that part-year female painters and craft artists earned more than their full-year counterparts.

Comparing census data with other discrete surveys, including those from the Research Center for Arts and Culture, the analysis shows that independent surveys of artists capture the multi-job characteristic, rely on self-definition and indicate an extremely high level of both university and graduate education as compared with the general public.