

ART (/ART)

Homes, Memories, Livelihoods: LA's Artists on What They've Lost in the Fires

CULTURED asked Los Angeles creatives to share their personal experiences, calls for resources, and what they want the rest of the world to know about living through the wildfires.

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“When I got to my front door, it was gone.”

This is how the artist Alec Egan described an experience that many thousands of Los Angelenos now share as wildfires continue to devastate the city. Since last Tuesday, at least 24 people have died and more than 180,000 residents have been put under evacuation orders or warnings as wildfires tear through disparate neighborhoods. Governor Gavin Newsom is [already calling](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/newsom-california-wildfires-worst-natural-disaster-us-history-rcna187313) (<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/newsom-california-wildfires-worst-natural-disaster-us-history-rcna187313>) the fires one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history.

Already lost to the flames, which are still burning as of today, are homes, studios, archives, local landmarks, and any sense of the city as we have known it in recent years. Cultural histories—both widely celebrated and yet to be historicized—are now ash. Lost, too, are the small objects that make a life, a life: a painted and hand-sculpted crib, a guitar custom-made for an artist's son when he was born, a Persian carpet passed down for generations.

The multimedia artist Kathryn Andrews, who has been tracking visual artists affected by the disaster, counts more than 90 whose homes or studios have been destroyed. To offer individual perspectives on this collective upheaval, we asked a range of creatives to share their experiences, including the wave of support they've received from their communities, calls for resources, and anything else they want the rest of us to know about living through this moment.



Image courtesy of Tara Walters.

Tara Walters, painter (https://www.instagram.com/tara_walters/)

“Our hearts are broken. It has been hard to stop crying. I had so many heirlooms in my house that my great-grandmothers and grandfathers hand built—their furniture, rugs, and photos of my family from the 1800s. The last thing my grandfather gave me before he passed were these two art deco glass flower vases. Everything has now turned to ash. We were in New York when it happened and were unable to grab anything. So many memories, paintings, music equipment, our entire town—it's been so difficult to come to the realization that this is our new reality.”



Image courtesy of Eddie Rodolfo Aparicio.

Eddie Rodolfo Aparicio, multimedia artist (<https://www.instagram.com/eddierodolfoaparicio/>)

“I left my house with one mismatched pair of socks—functioning but made of two wholes torn apart and forced together. Never to rewear an old outfit to an art event again. The suitcase I never unpacked from [the New Orleans exhibition] Prospect. The bad art that was gifted to me no longer hidden in the bathrooms. Home + ADHD + fire = 100 unfinished projects and tasks I'm freed from.”



Image courtesy of Mark Whalen.

Mark Whalen, multimedia artist (https://www.instagram.com/mark_whalen/).

“It was all terrifying. We lost it all. I went back into the fires with a friend. It was so scary. Fuck, I never want to see anything like that again in my lifetime.

The past few days have been a blur. It all started Tuesday evening. My wife, Kimberly, and I were at our home in Altadena—the home we built together, our dream home after years of searching for the perfect spot in LA. We’d finally found it in this amazing community.

Around 6 p.m., we noticed the fire in the distance. At first, it seemed far off, but as the hours passed, we watched in growing horror as it crept closer and closer, consuming the mountainside. Ten hours we sat there, glued to the window and checking the news, hearts pounding, hoping that the flames would die down. But they didn't.

By 4 a.m., the evacuation order came. Smoke filled the air, and panic set in. We grabbed what we could and fled with our dog, Leon. Everything we owned, all our memories, were left behind in that house, where we were hoping to come back to.

The next morning, I couldn't stay away. My friend Luke drove me back towards the fire zone. Seeing the devastation first hand was... I don't have words. It was like the apocalypse. Our home, our safe haven, was gone—reduced to ash.

I never want to experience anything like that again. The memories still haunt me. The sight of the flames, the feeling of helplessness, the overwhelming sense of loss. It's a trauma I'll carry with me forever.”



Image courtesy of Salomon Huerta.

Salomon Huerta, painter (<https://www.instagram.com/salomonhuerta/>).

“On Wednesday the 8th, I was painting in my studio when my wife called that the fire was visible from our house. I rushed out to help her evacuate. The wind was so dramatic, it felt like the end of the world. We got what was essential but I lost my art collection, art books, archives, and our home. I’m happy we are safe.”

Asher Hartman, artist and playwright (<https://www.instagram.com/chickentasteslikewood/>).

“My apartment was totaled, so unfortunately I don’t have pictures [to share] because we’re not supposed to go back there. I had the good fortune to live in a historically Black neighborhood with wonderful neighbors and an incredible community. The loss in Altadena is truly unfathomable at this time. Of course there were a lot of creative people in the neighborhood, and we are all suffering. However, I am very grateful that I am alive and that people I know are alive and feel terribly sorry for anyone who was injured, who lost their life, or for any animals who lost their life or were injured in this horrific fire. Like everyone else, I do want to emphasize how magnificent and helpful the LA arts community has been. Such overwhelming kindness!”



Image courtesy of Seth Bogart.

Seth Bogart, artist and musician (<https://sethbogart.com/>).

“I’ve spent the last few days not knowing if my house and studio have burnt, while getting the news of countless friends who have lost their homes. My truck has been completely scorched—I really loved that truck! My home may be okay, which is a miracle, but I have no idea if it’ll be safe to live in anytime soon. My studio is in my garage, so I have no clue when and if I’ll be able to work, or if any of my art is salvageable. And even in the best case scenario if I can move back in a few weeks, I’ll be living around complete devastation. Today I was going to try to drive up to see my house but absolutely no one can get in, and the National Guard has been called in due to looters. Not to mention the gas lines spurting out gas and teetering telephone poles and extremely toxic conditions and that the city is still on fire. It’s all so insane. The day before evacuating I was going through my archives with the curators of the California Biennial, and now don’t know if any of the art / music / zines I’ve made since I was a teenager are okay or destroyed.”



Image courtesy of Rachele Sawatsky and Kate Mosher Hall.

Rachelle Sawatsky, artist and writer (https://www.instagram.com/business_risky/)

“I lost my home of nine years and my entire archive of over 20 years of work as a painter. My entire street was flattened. Even though we lost our homes and objects, we are supporting each other and those relationships aren’t over—we all want to come back.”



Image courtesy of Penelope Gazin.

Penelope Gazin, artist, musician, and designer (<https://www.instagram.com/penelopegazin/?hl=en>)

“I lost about half of my artwork collection (good news for those who own any of my originals), but I’m very sad that a lot of my grandfather Barnaby Conrad’s art burned up as well. The crib my husband carved for my son and that I painted was found safe in a storage shed that the fire did not get to. My son’s school Village Playgarden also burned down, which was a school and community filled with a lot of artists parents and started by civil rights leader Kikanza Ramsey.”



Dani Tull's studio, evacuation camping. Image courtesy of Dani Tull.

Dani Tull, painter (https://www.instagram.com/dani_tull/)

“Four days ago, I was evacuated from my home located deep in Topanga Canyon. Since then, I have been camping out with my cat in my studio located outside of the evacuation zone in Woodland Hills. At this moment, what began as the Palisades Fire is still very active in Topanga Canyon, with loss of structures and many acres of wildlife-inhabited, State Park land. The canyon itself is currently completely closed to residents, with no electricity or cell reception, making updates spotty.

The most recent news I've heard is that there is an intense effort underway to save homes in my neighborhood. When the wind allows, airdrops supplement the work of firefighters on the ground. There are also community-organized grassroots efforts and volunteer firefighters.

Topanga Canyon is a small, tight-knit community with a rich history of artists, musicians and free-spirited individualists. Over the past couple of years, I've established and run an artist residency program called Encina Artist Residency (https://www.instagram.com/encina_artist_residency/). With my partner, Jessica Gallucci (https://www.instagram.com/gallucci_tull/), I have a curatorial project under the name Gallucci Tull, which has hosted exhibitions on the property inside a 1970s-era geodesic dome.

I haven't slept in four days and I am heartbroken by the immense loss within the arts community across LA. I hope that if my home and artist residency survive, I will be able to support fellow artists and possibly exhibitions that have been displaced due to the fire."

Diana Thater, video and installation artist (<https://www.instagram.com/dianathaterstudio/>)

"We had a beautiful mid-century house in Altadena where we've lived for the past nine years—a house we earned with years of hard work. The 75 mph winds were howling through the house. I thought I saw lightning, but it was actually a transformer blowing up. Then the fire came. The fire was in the distance as we watched, but minutes later the whole mountain was blazing. We got out in just minutes with our three cats and a few things we grabbed while running out the door. My husband, artist T. Kelly Mason, went back (against my wishes) and filled a picnic cooler with our server and as many hard drives as he could carry. We're not sure what's been saved. Our studio with my entire video and film archive, as well as all of T. Kelly's artwork, is now a smoldering toxic pile. We sped away. It was absolute mayhem. People were fleeing in their cars, running downed traffic lights, barely avoiding fallen trees and flying past the tens of fire engines racing up the hill. On top of it all, during the windstorm a tree fell across my car. As if everything wasn't bad enough.

We met up in a parking lot and caravanned to our friends' house in Atwater [Village]. Lisa Mark, head of Public Engagement at MOCA, and artist Channing Hansen kept us and our cats safe for a few days. Now we've moved to a studio apartment at architects Alan Koch and Karen Spector's house in Mount Washington. We have so many kind and generous friends in the art world. I don't know where we'll land yet. Art people are coming together and the outpouring of offers of assistance are coming from friends all over the country, the world in fact. We've been offered places in Chicago, Milan, and Paris!

All I know is that everything we worked for our whole lives is gone. We are devastated and in shock and everything else you can imagine.

I keep thinking about what is gone—there's just so much—but oddly I have barely cried. It just hasn't sunk in yet. We both teach at [ArtCenter](https://www.artcenter.edu/) (<https://www.artcenter.edu/>) in Pasadena, where I am the chair of the Art Department, and the school has been supportive and generous to all of us. T. Kelly went back the next day to check on our house and it, along with every house on our block, was flattened. It was a street with one gorgeous mid-century house after another, and now all that architecture and all that amazing Altadena history is gone. It's unfathomable. I think people are mourning for all of us who have lost everything, but also for all the amazing architectural gems in Altadena that burned to the ground.

I've been beating the drum about the loss of nature due to human foolery and the rapid escalation of climate change for 35 years. Now I have experienced it firsthand. I consider all of us who lost everything climate refugees. I'm going to push through and keep documenting our disappearing world, but now from an even stronger place, as one who has experienced the devastation humanity has wreaked upon the world without a care."



Image courtesy of Andy Ouchi.

Andy Ouchi, multimedia artist (<https://www.instagram.com/andyouchi/>)

“I haven’t been allowed access back up to my house yet but I have two images: the above, which was taken at 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday when we left the house. Really I wanted to stay behind to keep a watch on the fire to see how close it was going to come, but they cut our power off suddenly and I had no way to keep tracking the fire, nor did I have a way to receive evacuation notice. We live in the foothills, our backyard is literally the Angeles National Forest, so there isn’t good cell service up here.



Image courtesy of Andy Ouchi.

This is the second image: not mine, but the common maxar image that has been circulating—an intensely detailed satellite image showing what was on fire in Altadena at the time. It was detailed enough I could make out our property, and at that point I knew. We lost everything. Since I thought we were leaving prematurely and out of an abundance of caution, we took nothing but a change of clothes and a toothbrush. I lost all of my archive, furniture I had made that I had hoped to pass along to my children, all my musical instruments, physical photographs pre-Internet that can't be replaced along with negatives... everything.

It effectively erased a history I wasn't aware I had an attachment to. As much as I like to think I am not that connected to material things, my children have changed an aspect of that. I had a classical guitar custom made for my oldest son when he was born, it had his name inlaid in the back of the neck. I was about to pass it along to him this year as he started his third year of guitar lessons.

Really the biggest loss of it all, though, is something that isn't specific to art making or being creative—it's the fact that our house became a quilt of memories of our children's upbringing that has now been vaporized. The house was more important as a trigger for memories than any image, even though it was an image producer by proxy. And the comfort it provided them, the familiarity since they were born, gone forever. Some day I will mourn the loss of the archive, but now it is the feelings it produced that is more missed than anything else.”



Image courtesy of Christina Quarles.

Christina Quarles, painter (<https://www.instagram.com/cequarles/>).

“Our house in Altadena had a fire last April. Last week's fires burned down everything that was still standing and all of the landscaping that had survived. It also burned down the house we owned next door and had been renovating to move into after our house fire in April. The fire also burned down the

Airbnb we've been in since our fire last year, which had all of the donations and replacement items we had acquired since the fire in April, along with the few items we had recovered from our fire last year. It's an overwhelming loss.

Our daughter's preschool burned down, our entire neighborhood, all of our friends' houses, our restaurants, our parks. Altadena is such a meaningful place to call home, many of us have 'Beautiful Altadena' license plate holders. It is a community where artists are born and raised—a place of racial and economic diversity that has held artists for generations. You cherish your neighbors in Altadena, and my heart breaks for our loss. We are devastated.”



Image courtesy of Delbar Shahbaz.

Delbar Shahbaz, painter and sculptor (<https://www.instagram.com/delbarshahbaz/>)

“It’s been four days, or maybe five, since I’ve been separated from my serene sanctuary, a place where I felt reborn. No matter where I traveled, this place always called me back. As a new immigrant, the concept of home becomes complex, leading you to question your identity, origins, and destination. Under its roof, I witnessed the most beautiful skies. This was my home and my studio, where I lived and created art for the past seven years.

In the Eaton Canyon fire, I lost everything—over a hundred paintings and sculptures, all my tools, and my cherished Persian carpets, which were family heirlooms. But I might find pieces of them. I've created a new series of watercolors that I haven't documented yet. I usually don't dream, but now my dream is to gather every piece of artwork and see them together. This is my dream now."



Image courtesy of Alto Beta Gallery.

Alto Beta Gallery (https://www.instagram.com/alto_beta/)

“Everything in the gallery burned to the ground in the Eaton fire, including an exquisite, just-opened show by painter [Mary Anna Pomonis](https://www.instagram.com/maryannapomonis/) (<https://www.instagram.com/maryannapomonis/>). In the following days, we have received an astonishing amount of appreciation and support from our immediate artistic community (and beyond). Our next few shows will happen, on schedule, at art spaces that have generously offered to host them.”

[Amir Nikravan, sculptor](https://www.instagram.com/amir_nikravan/) (https://www.instagram.com/amir_nikravan/)

“While acknowledging how fortunate we were to evacuate safely, the impacts of losing everything in the fire are still crystallizing. One of the hardest parts for me has been losing such a substantial record of my own work—sculptures, paintings, drawings. Financially, I have no official retirement funds. I always chose to invest in art. The now destroyed collection I accumulated over the years—an Alan Shields fabric painting from 1983, an early Tauba Auerbach work on paper, and a tiny Richard Artschwager, to name a few—held such deep sentimental value and represented the vast majority of my assets.”

[Linda Vallejo, painter and installation artist](https://www.lindavallejoart.com/) (<https://www.lindavallejoart.com/>)

“I live in Topanga. This is our fourth fire scare in 25 years, but this is the biggest and closest it’s ever been. As we kept seeing these fire threats happening [in the past], I became more diligent about protecting the work. I have a storage unit up north for this reason. But you can’t have your house and your studio empty because people are always visiting you. We took two days and two nights to pack art. There were some large paintings I left behind because I had to, and 12 ceramics that are in process. That was very hard. I invested a lot of personal time and resources [in digitizing my archive and storage]. I hope other artists will listen to an artist who has experienced this several times. Being archived is not something that happens for everyone.”



Image courtesy of Ross Simonini.

Ross Simonini, interdisciplinary artist and musician (<https://www.instagram.com/rosssimonini/?hl=en>)

“Beyond my family's home, my studio, and my entire community, I lost nearly all the work I have ever made in the Eaton fire. That includes childhood drawings I made with my mom, the drawing that helped me believe I could be an artist, and several new bodies of work. I don't think I will ever stop grieving that loss, but the loving response from the art community has already started transforming that grief into something else: a feeling of deep, human connection that I've looked for all my life. It only took losing everything to get it.”

Susanne Vielmetter, art dealer (<https://vielmetter.com/>)

“We bought our home in Altadena in 2000. It seems a miracle our house is still standing. The entire neighborhood is burned down. My family has lost homes. We have an artist residency there that burned down. LA consists of all these little cities—this is an entire city, gone. Since the late '90s, many artists lived [in Altadena]. It is one of the oldest truly diverse neighborhoods in LA. It took decades for the infrastructure to grow. It is absolutely crucial that that continues to be supported.”



Image courtesy of Camilla Taylor.

Camilla Taylor, multimedia artist (<https://www.instagram.com/camillataylor/>)

“I can't absorb the information. I keep thinking, *I'm so tired, I'm ready to go home*. I can't hold in my mind the magnitude of what is gone, instead I think of individual small things like my favorite mug, handmade for me by a student, or my favorite carving knife that I've made every sculpture with, like picking them up one by one in my mind as they evaporate.”

Alec Egan, painter (<https://anatebgi.com/artists/alec-egan/>).

“The fire started on my street. My wife was taking a shower, and I was sitting in our room. I saw a little plume of smoke on the hill. By the time she got out of the shower, it had grown to the size of 20 football fields. Within an hour, the whole sky was black. Within two hours, we were evacuating. Nobody knew what the fuck was going on. No one showed up. No one told us to leave. It was absolute pandemonium. I saw people abandoning their cars. I saw cars melted to the street.

We relocated to a hotel. The next day, I woke up and told my wife I had to try to go back and see if our house was okay. It was total chaos—police fleeing, fire departments fleeing, fires everywhere. When I made it to our street, it was just decimated. When I got to our front door, it was gone.

The fucking ironic, crazy, shitty, funny part of all this is that I paint interiors. The whole show [previously scheduled at Anat Ebgi, with work stored in the home studio that burned down] was done. There was another show for Charles Moffett for FOG art fair that was done, and there were paintings in progress for a solo museum survey. It was the most work I've ever had in there. It was almost bizarre because usually I'm like, 'Come pick it up right away,' for some reason I was hanging on to everything.

It's too early in the game to know how people can really help, but support art. *[All proceeds from the sale of Alec Egan poster (<https://shop.anatebgi.com/products/alec-egan-poster>) with Anat Ebgi will go to support the artist's family.]* All the collectors, the viewers who follow artists, write them, help them. That's what's needed right now.”



Image courtesy of John Knuth.

John Knuth, artist (<https://www.instagram.com/knuthstudio/>).

“This is a stack of three flat files. You cannot see the bottom because of the ashes of 25 years of archives and artwork. I lost hundreds of works on paper.



Image courtesy of John Knuth.

This is an Adrian Paules sculpture in my backyard.



Image courtesy of John Knuth.

You can see a Jeffrey Mitchell sculpture that survived the fire that was in my dining room.



Image courtesy of John Knuth.

This toy fire truck was in our yard and survived. It was a gift to my five-year-old son Mateo from artist Bret Nicely and Jill Spector's 12-year-old son Luke.

This week, five artists on my street lost their homes. A week ago, we all imagined that the rest of our lives would be on Mariposa Street in Altadena. Today, none of us know what our future looks like. The energy and support of the artist and community is overwhelming. My heart broke on Tuesday, but those pieces are mending because of the incredible, unstoppable community we have. I have been an artist, curator, and gallerist at different times in the past 23 years in LA and have never felt more connected to all of the artists here than I do today. I love this town. I love everyone in it. This is the finest place in America."



Image courtesy of Sunny Mills.

Sunny Mills, photographer (https://www.instagram.com/sunshine_acid/)

“The night of the windstorm, our power went out, and we had no warning about any evacuation. I had only received a phone call from a friend that a fire had broken out on the other side of Altadena. We went outside and, sure enough, could see it ourselves, starting up the side of the mountain. So, my roommate and I started packing as best we could in the dark with failing headlamps. We thought surely it would never reach us because if it did, it would be catastrophic, as our home was nestled deep in the neighborhood. We took just our most basic essentials, leaving behind so much that I recall thinking,

this will all be annoying to put away tomorrow when we return. So we left for a friend's house, and after a night of restless sleep, I decided to try and go back to see if our house was ok. I tried driving home but was blocked by barricades about a mile away when, at that moment, I got a call from a neighbor who said our home was gone. I fell into complete shock, tunnel vision, and nausea.

The thoughts of what I didn't grab broke my heart. Everything I've collected, created, worked for my whole life, reused to ash. I was a working artist and tintype photographer, an avid vintage collector with priceless family heirlooms left behind. Yes, I had gotten my two kitties out, and my roommate and I were safe, so I have so much to be thankful for, and I will hold onto the memories of what was lost forever. Then to learn that nearly the whole neighborhood was erased. It's the most devastating and heartbreaking thing I can imagine—all my neighbors who lost it all, too. My heart breaks for them every day. This has been a living nightmare, but there has been a huge outpouring of love from the community, and if it wasn't for that, I don't know how I'd move forward.”



Image courtesy of Kevin Cooley.

Kevin Cooley, artist and photographer (https://www.instagram.com/kevincooley_/)

“Waking up last Tuesday to no power and the sound of howling wind, I had a sinking feeling it was going to be a tough day—but I never could have imagined just how devastating it would become. I spent most of the day photographing the Palisades Fire, unaware of how personal the day's events would become. That changed the moment I got a panicked call from my wife, sending me rushing back home to Altadena.

I managed to get my family out safely but couldn't save our home. Standing there, I documented its destruction alongside the devastation of the neighborhood I love so much.

With everything gone, I find myself reflecting on life as I approach my 50th birthday this April. This tragedy is beckoning me to reevaluate what truly matters and to break the cycle of endless accumulation of material possessions—the very things that, in part, fuel the increasing severity of

these wildfires.”





Image courtesy of Joy Wong.

Joy Wong, photographer (<https://www.instagram.com/joy.wong/?hl=en>)

“You always think, *Oh it won't be me*, and then it is. We have lost everything, our home, possessions—both sentimental and practical—but also the studio where I have hosted countless photoshoots. It's an extremely trying and devastating time for so many people here in LA, and it has been my biggest heartbreak.”



Image courtesy of Brian Lee Clements

Brian Lee Clements, printer, woodworker, and collector
(https://www.instagram.com/_notthisorthat_/)

“This was my street when I tried to return in the morning to retrieve my camera and letterpress equipment before it went up in flames. My home is about 1.5 blocks into that black smoke. Getting to this point, I had to pass through a few miles of residential neighborhoods completely decimated. Most streets were reduced to ash, with only chimneys marking where a home once stood. Other homes were actively burning, as you see in the photo above. Tremendous heat everywhere.



Image courtesy of Brian Lee Clements

This is what I came home to. My home was filled with musical instruments (piano and guitars), camera equipment from Hasselblad 501cm, several lenses, a letterpress studio with antique type cabinets, wood and metal type, a vintage Showcard press, and a woodshop in the backyard with antique turn of the century hand tools where I made custom walnut furniture and art frames



Image courtesy of Brian Lee Clements

The letterpress studio that also had a closet which housed all camera equipment (hasselblad, digital SLR, and multiple lenses for both systems). The metal box in the foreground was used to house ink, brayers, and paper products. The walls were adorned with other printers work. You can see the press in the center, if you zoom in (antique iron).

A library of hundreds of books collected over decades. Lost. A collection of over 100 vinyl records. Lost. Artwork collected over decades that I lovingly protected in custom maple and walnut frames. Lost. The loss is so big—it's incomprehensible. My ex-wife and mother of my 9-year-old daughter

started a [GoFundMe \(https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-violet-brian-rebuild-their-lives-after-the-eaton-fire?attribution_id=sl:bfefc413-27e1-4245-8792-225bdecfd0&utm_campaign=man_sharesheet_dash&utm_medium=customer&utm_source=copy_link\)](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-violet-brian-rebuild-their-lives-after-the-eaton-fire?attribution_id=sl:bfefc413-27e1-4245-8792-225bdecfd0&utm_campaign=man_sharesheet_dash&utm_medium=customer&utm_source=copy_link) with a small but helpful goal. Funds are trickling in through that avenue, and I'm very grateful."



Image courtesy of Caroline Zorthian

Caroline Zorthian, artist (<https://www.instagram.com/zorthianranch/>)

"I've been living and working at the ranch since I was 21. The layers this fire touches on run so deep it's difficult to even convey... We returned the next day to see the fire had swept and destroyed almost everything. Miraculously, three structures survived. However, the cellar where all the artwork had been placed was an inferno burning in flames. All the artwork, history, and heritage, gone. In flames. It felt like staring into the eyes of a wrathful god. All the work of the past 80 years of the ranch's existence is gone.

It was the thing that united us, the thing we were working towards sharing with the world. We never had the resources or the funding to go through it before, but we had built some good momentum to finally start digitizing and sharing with the world.

We've fostered a strong, interdependent community for the past 10 years, united by ideas like sustainability and growing food. Our community has a lot of love for each other, which remains at the core. We don't know what the future looks like, but we're committed to the foundational aspects of which Jirayr built the ranch when we can."

Meagan Boyd, painter (<https://www.instagram.com/yinshadowz/>)

"On the evening the fires started, I was returning home from a Trader Joe's haul. My power was out, so I figured I'd have a romantic evening in candlelight and make dinner. I texted the mother of my daughter's best friend, whose birthday was on January 8th, planning a slumber party for the girls. Their home burnt down later that night.

Since I've lived in California, there's been plenty of wildfires, and I just thought, well, if I'm not in that evacuation zone, then why leave?

I took a bath, charged my phone at my friend's place down the street, and came home. I fell asleep and woke around 5 am from the window in my room bursting open. My house was filling up with smoke. I started gagging on the smoke a bit because it was hard to breathe. Then, a siren on my phone said I needed to leave immediately.

The air was horrible. It was hard to breathe. Almost everyone lost their homes and my daughter's school burnt down. Just devastating. However, I feel lucky we have a place to go home to. We were lucky."



Image courtesy of Adam Ross

Adam Ross, painter (<https://www.instagram.com/therealadamrossaltadena/>)

"This was my studio, designed by Primitivo Suarez and built in 2010. Notice the skylight. I worked for years to build that structure. It is all gone now. I have no words to describe this loss."



Image courtesy of Cleon Peterson

Cleon Peterson, artist (<https://www.instagram.com/cleonpeterson/>)

"We drove home to find flames rising over the ridge near our house. In that moment, it was clear we couldn't stay. I took the kids; my wife ran inside to grab the dog. Thankfully, a friend secured a place for us in Burbank, and we left immediately. We were safe and soon learned that the house had been lost in the fire.

The fire has left us stranded between what was and what comes next. It's a limbo we rarely notice—until a disaster forces us to see it. Everything behind us is gone: the photos that once proved our experiences were real, the objects that marked our family history held meaning beyond their physical form. My grandfather's hat. My father-in-law's gold watch. My daughter's sculpture, my son's trophies and stuffed foxes, and my own artwork and my friends' artwork.

These weren't just possessions but anchors that connected us to our world.

Now, we're unmoored. It's unsettling to realize how much we relied on these things to feel secure. The future looms like a monster, threatening to be endless and cold. When you survive something like a fire, you feel the fear burn through you again and again, as if staying anxious is your only protection. What comes next? Right now, I don't have a grand plan. I only know we do what we've always done: take it one day at a time.

I choose creation over destruction. I think of my creative work as an example. When I start a new project, I'm often unsure what it will become. But if I keep showing up, eventually, I will see the final piece. Over time, the confusion, sorrow, joy, and even terror crystallize into something tangible—like a

small diamond that holds all those experiences in a form I can share.”

Sma Litzsinger, artist and curator (<https://www.instagram.com/smalitz/>).

"I had left for my partner's house Tuesday morning before the fire just to escape the wind. I didn't take anything with me. I woke up from a nap to the news, and by Wednesday morning, I was told my house was gone—all of my art, my clothing, and my boss's home, as she was my neighbor. My partner and I drove up the morning after to see, and driving through my town was horrific. Every building was gone, still smoldering or on fire, I watched a house adjacent to mine burn down. Altadena was a beautiful and vibrant town, and our community was tight-knit and loving. Altadena will never be the same, but there will be an Altadena again. I will be there, and we will get through this."


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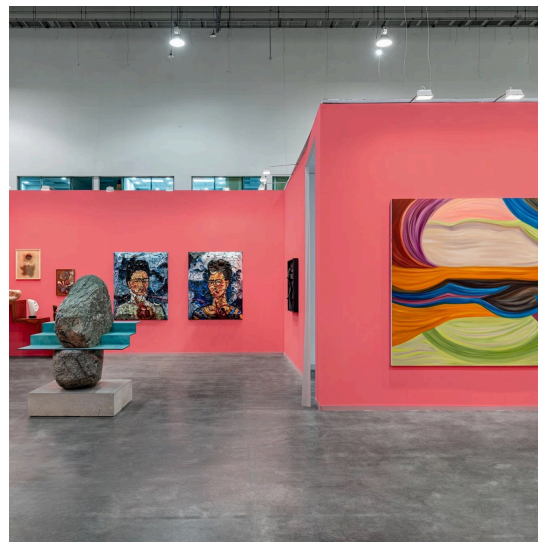
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