

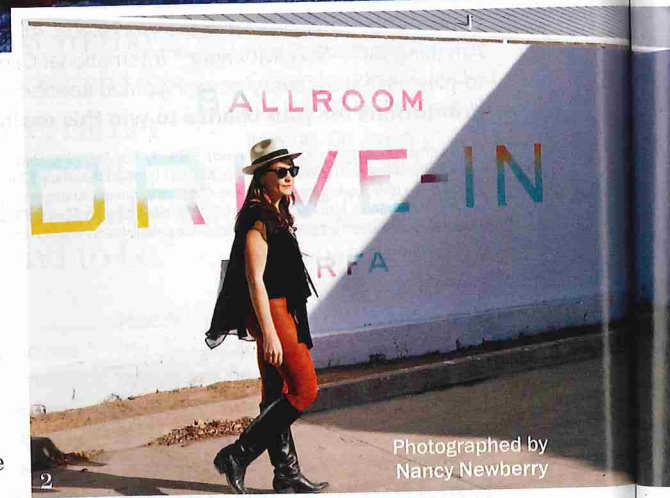


# What It Costs to Be ME

**▲ The Bohemian**  
**Melissa McDonnell, 32**  
 Marfa, Texas  
 Occupation: Director of external affairs for Ballroom Marfa, a nonprofit, and adjunct professor at the Texas Tech School of Architecture  
 Annual income: \$65,000 (combined)

You talk about everything else: relationships, family, work. But money—what you make, what you spend—remains a secret topic among friends. *MC* rounded up five career women across the country and surveyed their salaries, savings, and splurges

1. McDonnell at Tienda M, a local store selling Mexican and South American crafts. 2. At Ballroom Marfa, McDonnell oversees the building of a drive-in movie theater. 3. The Marfa Book Company hosts free author readings.



Photographed by Nancy Newberry

**Home, sweet home:** “Marfa’s a tiny town—population 2,000—known for art and design. I went to graduate school for architecture at Rice University, and I spent time on a project here. I loved it enough to move! My boyfriend, Carlos, and I split the \$800 rent on a one-story house.”

**Bills, bills, bills:** “Gas, water, and trash service cost \$120 a month, electricity is \$40, and wireless is \$30. I put \$500 in my savings account, send \$700 to my grad-student loan

plan, and pay \$102 for iPhone service, plus \$520 for my car loan. Gas is \$65 a tank; I fill up every week when I head to the university in El Paso where I teach. Ballroom Marfa, the nonprofit where I work, covers my health care.”

**Meal plan:** “Carlos and I make omelets first thing. He works nights at a bistró in town, so we meet up again for lunch at the Food Shark, a local food truck. For dinner, I get a salad or gnocchi and wine at his bistro, about \$40.”

**The weekender:** “Saturday, I’ll take a yoga class, and then around 5 p.m., I walk to the Marfa Book Company for a reading and catered reception, which doubles as a free dinner. On Sunday,



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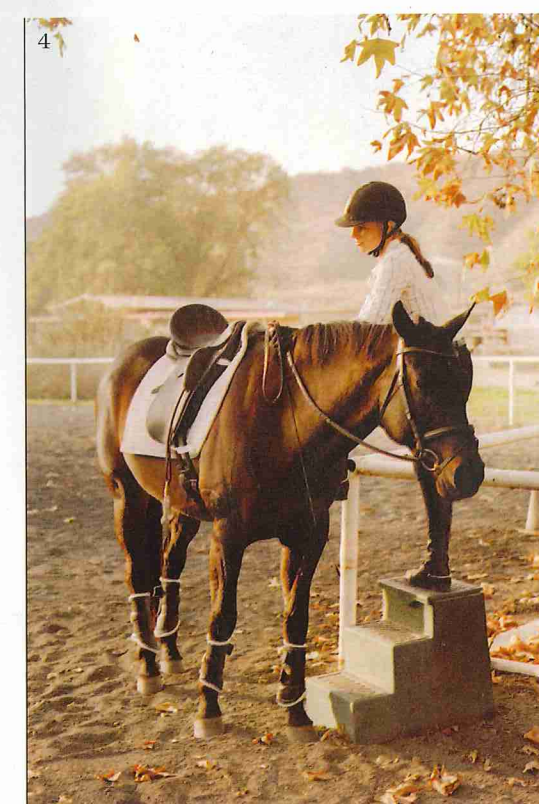
we drive 60 miles to Ojinaga, Mexico, to shop at El Super, a big grocery store. Just \$40 gets you a full cart and a bottle of tequila.”

**Only in Marfa:** “We’re an arts community, so a lot of renowned artists come through. Feist played recently—tickets were \$30. Other small towns don’t have that kind of cultural programming. In a big city, it would cost more.”

**Big splurge:** “Hair and beauty products. The nearest pharmacy is 50 miles away, so I love browsing sephora.com and bumbleandbumble.com. I spend \$60 to \$75 a month on products.”

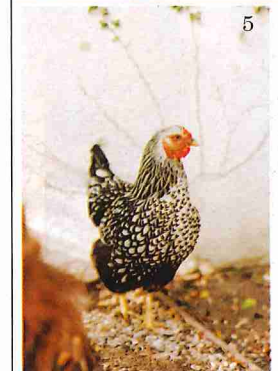
**The shoe index:** “We have a lot of gravel and dirt roads here, so everyone wears boots. I spent \$400 on riding boots from Barneys.”

**The view from the ground:** “At Ballroom Marfa, our funding is based on individual giving and grants from groups like the National Endowment for the Arts, so we’re very aware of the economic mood. Right now visitors and giving are high, but we’re not sure how the end of the Bush tax cuts could affect us.” —Whitney Joiner



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**◀ The Serial Entrepreneur**  
**Jen Boulden, 39**  
 Los Angeles, California  
 Occupation: Entrepreneur, green-living consultant  
 Annual income: More than \$200,000



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Photographed by Daniel Seung Lee

**Home, sweet home:** “I live in Silver Lake, the hipster area, in a three-bedroom house that I bought in 2009. When I renovated, I spent an obscene amount—\$400,000, four times my budget! I was able to cash in some investments to cover it. Now my home office overlooks my chicken coop in the backyard.”

**Bills, bills, bills:** “I pay \$120 a month for my cell phone, \$150 for cable, and \$400 for a housekeeper. I’ve owned my Volkswagon Jetta since 2006; it gets 44 miles per gallon, so I go weeks without filling up.”

**Meal plan:** “I have eggs from my chickens for breakfast and a smoothie for lunch. I go to an organic salad bar, about \$12, for dinner.”

**The weekender:** “I entertain a lot. On Saturday, I’m throwing a potluck dinner for one of my best friends. The guests will bring the food, I’ll get the alcohol: 10 bottles of wine for about \$100.”

**Only in Los Angeles:** “Water’s expensive here, and I wanted to reduce my consumption for environmental reasons. Xeriscaping, which uses native plants and drought-tolerant landscaping, cut my water bill 70 percent, to \$75 a month.” >>

4. Boulden with her horse, Lou, an Appendix she boards locally for \$1,250 a month. The cost includes a trainer. 5. One of Boulden’s free-range chickens, which live in a coop in her backyard.