Everything You Need to Know (and Do) As You Pursue Your Art Career

ART/WORK

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REVISED + UPDATED

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CHAPTER 4

Promotion

———— *"The reality is, as an artist, you work to develop a vocabulary. You work to develop a touch, a look, an aesthetic. That's branding. If I say Sol LeWitt, David Hammons, Andy Warhol, you have a picture in your mind of what the work looks like and how it makes you feel. Viewers, curators, dealers, critics are looking for that brand, that fingerprint."* ***Larry Ossei-Mensah, independent curator; cofounder, ARTNOIR, New York, NY***

———— *"Talking about branding doesn't have to be gross. Your personal brand is really just what you want people to know you for. You want that to be consistent and you want people to trust you. And you want to think about how you display that brand in all the places you are. That's all that it is."* ***Eleanor Williams, art dealer, independent curator, Houston, TX***

———— *"When I say the word 'marketing,' it's a shortcut for clear communication. I like to think about it as if you're a small radio station putting out a crystal clear signal at a very specific frequency. And you're looking for people who will tune into that broadcast. The problem with most marketing is that it amounts to a whole lot of noise you're just broadcasting without knowing what your goals are, who your audience is, who you're trying to reach, what you're trying to communicate about, and in general, what you're trying to accomplish. And when there's static on the radio, people turn it off."* ***Matthew Deleget, artist, curator, educator, founder, Minus Space, Brooklyn, NY***

In Chapter 2, we encouraged you to *organize* yourself as if you were running a business. In this chapter, we'll talk about promoting yourself as a business would. And yes, we know that sounds *gross* to a lot of you.

When we wrote the first edition of this book, we took great pains to avoid using words like "marketing" and "branding," because it can be disheartening—even offensive—to hear artwork talked about as if it were some random consumer product you need to advertise and promote. Art is *culture*, not a brand of toothpaste.

But here's the thing: If you want your work to be experienced by other people, then you need to understand how to reach those people. Promoting yourself, marketing your work, growing your audience—these are ultimately elements of the same endeavor.

So, over the years, we've come to realize that it's better to call this stuff what it is: When you put up a website, you're marketing your work; when you hand out business cards or post something about your studio, you're promoting yourself. And that's okay. There are many ways to get your work the attention it deserves while staying true to your core values.

As with everything else we've talked about, you can opt in or out entirely; you can (and should) approach these tactics your own way; and if something doesn't feel right, then, hey, no problem. Skip it.

WEBSITES

Most art world professionals consider it unacceptable not to have a website. Galleries, curators, collectors, the press, and the general public rely on artist websites to quickly find accurate, up-to-date information about the artists they're interested in. Unlike social media and other communication platforms, your website is a place where viewers can spend focused time, and find concrete information on your work, in your own words, in the style and format of your choice.

A basic artist website is easy to put together and cheap to maintain. It's the best way to make your work accessible to a wide audience. And it's the only place, aside from your studio, where you have total control over how people see your work. Take advantage of this opportunity to add context to your work and present it in the right way. If you have a gallery, don't just rely on its website, which likely uses the same style for every artist. Make your own.

If you don't know how to set up a website, take a class or get a friend to do it for you. Given the number of companies that provide free and inexpensive platforms to host simple sites, there's really no excuse not to have one.

Website Terms for Beginners (No Judgments)

A *domain name* is what you would say out loud if you were telling someone the name of a website, e.g. "nytimes.com" or "artsy.net."

A *URL* is the long string of letters that only your grandparents would say out loud: "https://www.artsy.net."

Domain Names and Search Engine Optimization

The first step toward a professional online presence is registering a domain name. Today, the vast majority of artists choose .com or .net domains, although with the proliferation of top-level domain extensions (including .art) we expect artists to start branching out sooner than later.

In selecting a domain name, go with something easy to say, easy to spell, and easy to find. If possible, make it easy to *remember*. And think long term. It takes time to build awareness and community around a website. Generally speaking, you probably won't want to have to change the name of your site or start a new one, losing all that momentum, because you named your first site after a specific body of work and now you've moved on to a new body of work. In most cases, your actual name will be the best option.

By an "easy to find" domain name, we mean one that will show up in search results, which as you probably know is a very tall order. Some ways to improve search results: Choose a domain name that matches what you think people will put into the search bar ("key words") when looking for you or the categories of art your work falls into; use many key words in the text and metadata of your site; make your headings searchable; label all the images on your site with additional key words; link to

———— *"Having a website now is a must, not only for artists but really for any professional working independently in the field. Being social-media savvy is also mandatory. Instagram, in particular, can initiate sales and other projects. I keep hearing the same feedback from artists at any point in their careers. An artist cannot rely on anyone else to feature his or her work."* ***Micaela Giovannotti, curator, consultant, New York, NY***

———— *"If I talk to five curators in Texas, for example, and they give me names of artists unfamiliar to me, I need something to reference. Ideally I would get packages from everyone, but with the kind of severely limited time we are often subjected to, it's rarely possible. So websites can be—and are becoming ever more—useful."* ***Shamim Momin, director/curator, LAND, Los Angeles, CA; former curator, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY***

———— *"I will not entertain an actual portfolio from a walk-in. Leave your stuff in the car and let's go through your website. I keep it under ten minutes. If you don't have a website, build one and send it to me."* ***Eleanor Williams, art dealer, independent curator, Houston, TX***

———— *"It's very helpful for me now, while I'm working independently, to go directly to an artist's website and review all of their material there, without having to search through various exhibitors sites (which are often older, clunky, and more corporate)."* ***Ben Heywood, independent consultant, Seattle, WA; former director, Soap Factory, Minneapolis, MN***

other sites that you can get to link back to you; and update your content regularly (even if it's just adding or editing text). Keep in mind that search engines cannot read text that is photographed, i.e., within an image file (at least not in mid 2017; that could change by the time you read this chapter).

What Goes on the Site

You don't know who's going to look at your website and therefore can't tailor it the way you would, say, a gallery submission. So choose content you would be comfortable showing anyone.

Think seriously about your artwork before you design your site. What colors and layouts are best suited to what you do as an artist? Minimal art, for example, lends itself to a minimal site. If your work is heavily informed by a theory or movement or era, maybe your site should be, too. Check out the sites of artists, galleries, and nonprofits you admire and see what works and what doesn't. Explore website builders on Squarespace, Weebly, Wix, WordPress, OtherPeoplesPixels, Indexhibit, and other sites that offer templates. See which ones offer a "mobile friendly" option, since a lot of people will end up looking at your site on their phones. Even if you plan to build your own site, check out what options already exist and think about what bells and whistles you want to add.

Many website-building platforms offer e-commerce options. So if you plan on selling your work directly (or selling anything else on your site), compare those features before deciding which platform works best for you.

Make your site easy to navigate. You want your visitors focusing on whatever it is they're looking for, not on the difficulty they're having finding it.

Keep your site up to date—not just your CV, but *everything:* images, press, shows, bio, contact. Listing an "upcoming show" that ended two years ago looks unprofessional. And it can give someone the impression you aren't working on anything now.

Keep unrelated commercial work off your artist website. Many artists—particularly illustrators and photographers—have "day jobs" making commercial artwork. If you fall in this category, keep that work on a separate website that isn't easily

mistaken for your artist website. We know a painter, for example, who does commercial portraits on the side; she uses her maiden name for her artist website and her married name for her commercial site. Using a company name for your commercial site also does the trick.

That said, plenty of artists purposefully blur the line between commercial and fine art (à la Murakami) or reject that distinction altogether (like Warhol). If you're one of them, there's no need to separate your commercial work from your fine art—and doing so could actually undermine your message.

Home Page

This is your first impression, so make it count—in whatever way you want it to. The home page should include your name, an image (of your work—not you!) (unless your work is self-portraiture!), and navigational buttons for the other pages.

It's also a good idea to use your home page to announce upcoming shows, post recent press, and link to any social-networking pages, blogs, or other online projects you want to highlight. Still, keep it clean. If you have a ton of news and upcoming events, either put that info in a dropdown menu or mouse-over, or just build a "news" page.

Images and Clips

Your artwork, of course, is the most important part of your website, so use your best images. And don't post everything you've ever done—curate your site the way you'd curate a studio visit. Put some thought into how you want people to experience your work for the first time. Do you want them to see one work at a time? Multiple works at once? Current work in one section and past work in another?

You *must* include your most recent work. Whether you include older work is a case-by-case question. Most artists present several bodies of work, clearly organized by medium, series, year, or some other heading specific to the work, but not *all* their work since forever. If you find yourself posting images from decades ago, or images you're not confident about, ask yourself why. How does that work inform what you're doing today? Is it truly necessary to include every piece you've ever made, or would

——— *"Having a website is like breathing. I would always tell someone to privilege having a website over having an Instagram account, because a website is such a different experience that suggests a more serious take on one's career."* ***Jamillah James, curator, ICA LA, Los Angeles, CA***

———— *"You still need a website. If I'm working on a project and I'm doing some quick research and I need a quote or information from the artist, social media's not going to give me that."* ***Larry Ossei-Mensah, independent curator; cofounder, ARTNOIR, New York, NY***

— *"The worst thing a gallery or an artist could do is not update their website. That's the worst. 'Oh Look! 2006!' "* ***Kelly Klaasmeyer, artist, writer, critic,*** **Houston Press;** ***former editor of glasstire.com, Houston, TX***

it be more appropriate to put older work in an "archive" section of your site, or leave them off altogether? Can you tell that that's a leading question by the way we're asking it?

Arts professionals appreciate the ability to edit, to cull, to curate. Show them you know how to edit your own work, that you understand when less is more.

We recommend allowing viewers to enlarge your images so they can see as much detail and texture as possible. Just use low-resolution JPEGs for the site (72 dpi) so the pages load quickly. Many galleries like to make high-resolution images available on their sites in addition to the low-res ones (as opposed to saying "high-resolution images available on request").

Include the same information for your images that you did for your submissions: title, year, medium, dimensions or duration, and edition (if applicable). This is also where you can add a brief description to any images you think need one.

A lot of artists post installation shots in a separate section, or disperse them appropriately, since they give visitors a sense of scale. It doesn't matter whether the photos are from your studio or an exhibition; use the ones that look the best.

For videos and performances, we recommend posting clips rather than complete works. Invite people to contact you for the full-length version; this gives you some control over where your videos go and how they're viewed. It also boosts your email list. If you have trouble posting video to your site, embed the video using a video-hosting website. Vimeo, for instance, has clear instructions on how to do this.

What's a watermark?

A watermark is a transparent symbol or word that appears on an image indicating that the image is protected by copyright. It discourages people from using the image since they can only copy it with the compromising watermark. You can find watermarking software online or use Photoshop to create one. Look into this only if you're very worried about people stealing your images. Most artists are not.

Contact

Make it easy for people to get in touch with you. List your gallery's contact information if you are represented and ask them to do the same. If you are not represented, provide the quickest way for visitors to contact you directly (email, mobile, whatever you're comfortable putting out there for the world to know). You should also link to your social media profiles and any other sites and apps within your professional capacity.

If you fear spamming bots, post a picture of your email address or spell it out. For example: artworkbook [at] gmail.com. Avoid contact forms, which can come across as impersonal and

off-putting. If you don't want to hand out your main email address to strangers, create a separate email account just for your website.

Set up a way for people to join your mailing list. This is where a form is fine (and standard practice).

The idea behind your contact page is to connect personally with your audience. Remember how we just told you not to put a picture of yourself on the homepage? You can put one here—of yourself, your studio, you *in* your studio, or maybe something more personal like a pet. Whatever works for you.

CV/Bio

Place your narrative biography at the top of the page, with your CV below. Everything we talked about in chapter 3 concerning your bio and résumé applies here, except that for your website you can post a CV—meaning it's fine to include more information

——— *"I think the Web makes it easier for people to make their own choices and make their own judgments about somebody's work. Presenting something that is clean, a dot over the top, funny, interesting or quirky conveys a point-of-view. It conveys who you are as a person and an artist."* ***Kelly Klaasmeyer, artist, writer, critic,*** **Houston Press;** ***former editor of glasstire.com, Houston, TX***

——————— *"No one's work is made for the general public. No artist I know reaches 100% of the people in the art world. Instead you want to try and seek out and find the tribe that you belong to as an artist."* ***Matthew Deleget, artist, curator, educator, founder, Minus Space, Brooklyn, NY***

on this version than you might when sending a submission. But you still need to edit. And you still need to keep your nonart jobs outta there! The only exception is if you're applying to teach art, in which case you'll want to list past teaching positions under "Work Experience," toward the end of your CV.

Take advantage of the website format by creating links from the items in your CV to other pages with more information. For past group shows, for example, see if the gallery still has a live page with installation shots and link to it from that line in your CV. If you have press, link from the articles listed in your CV to the actual articles on your press page with the full text. Just remember to keep the links current, and make sure they open a new window. You never want to take people away from your site entirely.

Make sure your CV is visible on the screen. Also create a link so that someone can download the document and print it cleanly—a PDF is best.

Text Is the New Press

A lot of artists title their press-clips page "text" because it's a broader term than "press." Under "text," you can list excerpts from a catalog or press release, post your own writing about the work, and include any press or reviews you like.

Obviously you'll want to post any positive articles or reviews that focus on you. For pieces that only mention you briefly, such as group-show reviews, you can just post the excerpt that talks about you as long as you link to the full article. Remember to credit the article and the author the same way you do in your résumé and press clippings.

If you have a lot of press, there's no need to post all of it. List your most glowing reviews and most impressive publications. Keep it clean and easy to read.

Again, check that everything prints well.

Artist Statement (Optional)

While plenty of artists choose to post their artist statements, we only recommend doing so when it is integral to understanding your work (for example, conceptual work or a unique process may require explanation). That's because you will write your strongest artist statement when you have a goal in mind and you know whom you're writing to, such as when you apply for a grant. It is harder to come up with an effective statement when you're addressing the world at large. And most people go to your website to look at your work and CV, anyway. Those who want to read your artist statement are typically people who will ask for it as part of an application or submission.

That said, you can add plenty of background information about your work throughout your site, which, done well, can achieve the same goal as an artist statement. Think short, project-specific statements that clarify and inform your work. You don't need to tell people *what* they can already see for themselves; instead explain the "why" (or the "how," if that's relevant).

Links (Optional)

Another way to reveal yourself to your visitors and add context to your work is through a list of links, which creates an impression the same way a "favorite books" list does. Link to artists you love; galleries you admire; venues you've shown in; magazines and blogs you read. Get reciprocal links whenever you can.

Password-Protected Areas (Optional)

Galleries and art advisors usually set up password-protected areas on their sites where their clients can access confidential information, see works not available to the general public, or look up prices. This could make sense for you if you find yourself emailing the same thing again and again but wouldn't want to make it available on your site for just anyone to see (directions to your studio, say, or high-res images, or pricing information).

Sticky Marketing

Think about the apps you check *every* day. What about the ones you only look at once or twice a month. What's the difference?

An app or site or blog that people check all the time, or stay on for long periods, is "sticky."

Sticky marketing refers to the broad set of principles and tactics companies implement to turn a digital venue people don't visit often into their daily routine. How to do that is the subject of many books, and beyond the scope of ours. In the most general sense, it's about content that is *new* (i.e., continuously updating, refreshing your site); *unique* (otherwise why would someone need to come to *your* site); *compelling* (i.e., that resonates with visitors at a deep emotional level); *shareable* (let them spread the word for you). And a site that is *interactive* (find a way to engage with your visitors, or provide a forum for them to engage with each other) and *clear* (make it easy for visitors to understand what they're looking at, how to navigate, etc.).

The concept doesn't just apply to your website. Artists have given away artwork to the winners of digital scavenger hunts they created, or to their thousandth Instagram follower. One artist we know designed her business card as a punch card: after you see her ten times, she takes you out for coffee.

Additional Ideas

We highly encourage you to think about other information or context that a viewer may like. We've seen headings on websites such as "Mistakes," "Nostalgia," "Grandma," and "Theory." None of those referred to a specific body of work. Instead, they informed the reading of the site as a whole. Do what works for you.

The Price Isn't Right

Rather than list prices on your website, say something like "contact me (or my gallery) for price information." There are a couple reasons for this.

Galleries expect pricing to be collaborative and it's easier to raise (or lower) your prices if you haven't already announced to the world what you intend to charge for your work. And when you have a gallery, you do not want to create the impression that people can buy directly from you.

Equally important, the point of your website is to expose people to your work. You want visitors to understand your art, to learn more about you, to come to a show. Prices are distracting. They pull your visitors away from appreciating your art for its own sake and force them to think about whether they want to buy it.

That said, feel free to list prices if you're selling directly and not interested in gallery representation, or you're selling other related items such as T-shirts, cards, or totes.

BLOGS

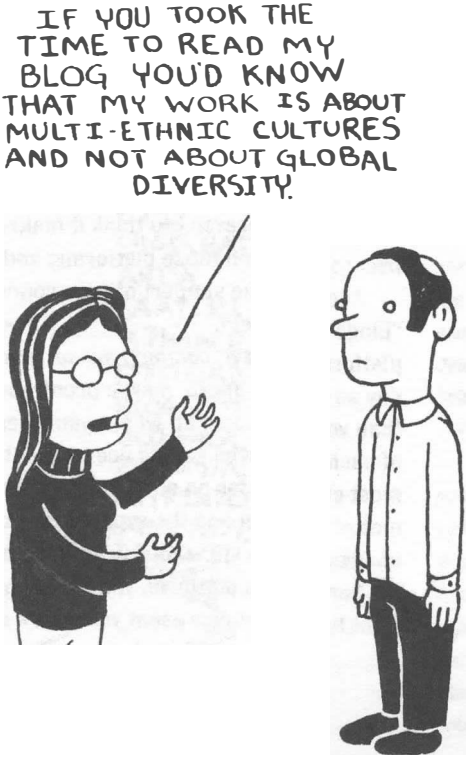
Artist blogs are almost as popular as artist websites and often act as the perfect compliment to a site. They're easier to launch because there is no specific protocol or expectation of content and so many companies provide free (or inexpensive) templates.

Not all art "needs" a blog, obviously, so you shouldn't feel compelled to start one, especially if you work in a more traditional medium. They are particularly effective for process-oriented, time-based, and community-based art—or anything where images alone cannot convey the full scope of the concept.

Keep these points in mind if you decide to go blogging:

—People are going to look at this. (We know, who woulda thought?) Don't upload anything that could embarrass you later. And don't badmouth anyone. Gossip travels fast enough in the art world without you going on the record that so and-so is a sleaze. Vent to your friends in private, not to the world on your blog.

—Proofread before you post. Just because a blog is informal doesn't mean people stop caring whether you spell their names right. Some people even care whether you spell regular words right, too.



——— *"There's something to be said about having a website and a comprehensive presentation of your work. But social media has viable platforms where dealers, collectors, and curators are searching for artists because the reality is you can't be everywhere. You can't go to every art fair, every MFA open studio—it's just impossible. Social Media is also how I keep up with what's happening in the rest of the world. I'm lucky that I can travel sometimes, but most of the time these tools equip me with the necessary information to understand what's happening in those spaces and why artists are choosing to do certain projects.*

"Social media should only be an introduction. It's what's going to entice people to want to learn more about what you're doing as an artist." ***Larry Ossei-Mensah, independent curator; cofounder, ARTNOIR, New York, NY***

——————— *"We're very, very active in social media, and indeed do find artists and what artists are interested in via social media almost as much as we do via offline conversations with artists, dealers, and collectors."* ***Edward Winkleman, cofounder, Moving Image Art Fair; author, former director, Winkleman Gallery, New York, NY***

——————— *"Social media plays a big role in my work—from communicating about works-in-progress and events, to soliciting feedback or engaging people in a process. I also find it useful for research and connecting with influencers who can help affect and promote my work."* ***Eve Mosher, artist, Brooklyn, NY***

—You don't have to blog every day, though to keep visitors coming back there should probably be some method to the madness so they know when to expect more.

—You don't have to use words. Pictures are worth . . . well, you know.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER DIGITAL PLATFORMS

We have no idea which site or app will be *the* place to show your work by the time you read this book. As we finish the second edition in mid 2017, the most popular apps for artists to connect and promote their work are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. LinkedIn is effective for basic networking and landing important introductions to people you might otherwise never reach. And it feels like everyone under thirty uses Snapchat, although its ephemeral, video-centric model isn't ideal for presenting most types of artwork.

Whatever the trend, whatever the technological innovation, whatever the buzzy label, our advice is ultimately the same: build a presence wherever you think it makes sense to; engage with the community on those platforms; and nurture your network by reciprocating the support of your connections (followers, fans, friends, whatever).

And, you know, *common sense*. Take our suggestions in the "Blogs" section above: maybe proofreading isn't as critical for a platform like Snapchat, where your message disappears the next day anyway; maybe you *do* need to post more often on Twitter than you would for an old-fashioned blog. Understand the norms of each platform and the expectations of its users, so you can most effectively show your work and connect with others. (No matter what the platform, you should only post high-quality images that best represent your work or the story you're telling.)

Some things to think about when you're deciding where you want to be active on social media, and in what way:

Advantages

—Free marketing!

—You control the message, the timing, how you and your work appear.

—Easier to reach a wider audience, more quickly, than anything you could do in person.

—Lots of opportunities to support friends and grow a community.

—Designed to announce, activate, show, and sell.

———— *"I posted a Photoshopped mock-up image on social media about a 'dream project' I would love to make. Shortly after, a curator I had met contacted me, asking about the possibility of making a similar piece in a space she was curating in Texas. The project took shape and I designed, created, and installed what I now see as my first step at making work at human scale and in the public realm."* ***Ann Tarantino, artist, State College, PA***

"Instagram, more so than Facebook and Twitter, can be a really good tool for artists and a really, really good way to get their work out. I know artist friends who post work in progress photos of their studio and what they're doing and that can be really fun. 'This piece is going to be in the show in two months.' Stuff like that can be really successful." ***Benjamin Sutton, news editor, Hyperallergic***

— *"I don't see anything productive coming from generic 'bulk' relationships. It's great to have those huge numbers of followers on social media, but if you're not communicating with them in a ongoing, meaningful, and personalized way, I don't think it's going to matter if you have ten or ten thousand followers. If you have ten or fifteen or twenty-five meaningful and committed relationships, you're going to get a lot farther with your work."* ***Matthew Deleget, artist, curator, educator, founder, Minus Space, Brooklyn, NY***

"With art, it's not really about the number of followers, but the quality of followers. So it's about how connected those people are, how much they come back, how much they think about it, and if they are in a position to make projects happen. So, I think the art world is very different from popular culture because you can be very obscure and still be successful." ***Rafaël Rozendaal, artist, New York, NY***

———— *"LinkedIn has become an essential part of the career strategies we provide to artists and designers. Many fine artists don't realize the depth of contacts that exist in this resource from gallery owners and curators to directors of arts organizations and even MacArthur Fellows from the fine arts."* ***Kevin Jankowski, director, Career Center, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI***

— *"So much of the art world and the market is geared toward a cycle where every year and a half/two years you have a solo show. Social media really disrupts that. Now you see one work at a time, or a couple of works at a time. Whatever the artist's pace."* ***Benjamin Sutton, news editor, Hyperallergic***

Challenges

—"Easy for you" means easy for everyone else; there's a lot of noise and clutter to break through; and everyone will be competing with you for attention.

—Informal, casual environment can lull you into doing and saying unprofessional things, which are then out there for all to see.

—Massive time suck, if you're not careful about managing your schedule.

—Takes a good deal of strategy and upkeep to be effective.

Ideal frequency and volume—how much to post, how often—depends as much on your personality and the type of art you make as it does on the platform you're using. Rough guidelines for the biggest platforms you might be using in 2017: Instagram—one pic a day; Twitter—several tweets a day; Facebook—at least three or four posts per week; Snapchat and Instagram stories—really varies based on what you're sharing about your day and what type of audience you're trying to build. ***When*** you post matters, too. Is your audience in London and you're in LA? Save your posts for when they're awake.

Your posts should convey a distinct point of view. Not sure what to put out there? Start with what you know: What would you tell someone about yourself at a party? What would you show a curator who dropped by your studio? Where would you take friends or relatives visiting from out of town? Maybe you post a step-by-step account of your creative process in the studio; or a catalog of all the art in your region; or you take your followers with you on a gallery crawl (or just a pub crawl). Interview all your artist friends, or your old professors, or your mentors, and post a new Q&A each week. If all those ideas sound cheesy to you, ***great***! Do something else entirely. (Or nothing at all, which is always an option.)

Finally, "share and share alike." Social media is not a one-directional endeavor. Friend, follow, heart, like, retweet, repost, react, etc., all the people out there you respect. Support the organizations, artists, and administrators you admire. You get a front-row seat to everything ***they're*** talking about and doing, and, you never know, they might just reciprocate.

PAID ADVERTISING (ALSO CALLED "PAID MEDIA")

Promote your post! Get more followers! All it takes is a small fee!

This is *#NotWorthIt* for individual artists, most of the time. Like 95% of the time. You're better off spending your money on materials, travel to art fairs, web hosting, business and show cards, etc.

Venues, on the other hand, buy print and online ads; paying to boost social media posts is just another part of a multiplatform advertising plan. If you're working with a venue on a show or project, ask what their "paid media" budget is and whether it includes anything on social media. See where your own social media presence might plug into it and how you can coordinate messaging across your various accounts.

MAILING LISTS

For now, email is the most appropriate and professional way to communicate with your audience. Social media invites and announcements are equally important, and often more effective for reaching friends and colleagues, but the fact remains that email is the cornerstone of business communication, and you're running a business.

Use email to personally thank visitors for coming to your studio, to respond promptly when a curator or collector asks you for something, to reach out to someone if you have a question, etc. For larger-scale outreach, show announcements, and other genuinely big news, consider using a bulk email marketing service. While the original setup can be time-consuming, it's a huge time saver overall. Many services offer a free version of their software that is probably robust enough for your needs: designing a template with text and images or video, scheduling future emails, tracking "open rates" and "click-through rates," and making it simple for people to unsubscribe. (You *know* how annoying it is when a company spams you and won't let you unsubscribe easily—so don't do that unto others.) One way to avoid being spammy and triggering a lot of "unsubscribes" is to limit your blasts to four to six times a year.

There are dozens of companies providing these services. A few we happen to like are Emma, TinyLetter, MailChimp, iContact,

——— *"The squeaky wheel gets the most attention. Whether they are annoying you or not, they get the most attention. I am not telling artists to bother me because I do shut down at a certain point (there is a balance to it), but what I really like are artists who have control of their careers and send out a quarterly update. I love it. I love hearing what they are doing—for example, 'I did this residency last month and here are a few images.' I don't want a novel, just something I can read in a few minutes."*
Eleanor Williams, art dealer, independent curator, Houston, TX

——— *"There are certain artists who may not fit or artists who I like and think—God, if there's ever a chance. I enjoy it when those artists put together really nice, thoughtful, newslettery-type emails. Those are great.*

"You never know. You don't want to lose track of certain people. You really like their work, but there's just not a good spot in the rotation. But if they're in a local show, you'll be thrilled for the gallery and you'll want to go to keep track of their career."
Steve Zavattero, cofounder/director, stARTup Art Fair; former gallery owner, San Francisco, CA

——— *"Say 'thank you' often and to many. It reveals your worth and how you value others."*
Bonnie Collura, artist, Bellefonte, PA

Mad Mimi, Cakemail, Sailthru; even Google has its own app that integrates with your Gmail contacts. Each has its own pros and cons, so take the time to read up on the different features and decide what you need; read reviews of them; practice using them before you go all-in. Once you load all your contacts and set up your templates and invest all the time in learning a service's interface, you will *really* not want to start all over if you end up disliking a feature or wishing it could do something it can't.

A lot of artists think tiny cards are cute. They're not. They're annoying, because they're easy to lose, because they're tiny.

All that said, don't underestimate the power of snail mail. Sending a hand-written thank-you note or a lovingly crafted card will surely get attention and often gratitude. It's more personal, and the effort it takes makes a real impression. Some galleries talk about "going retro" and sending paper packages and invites to important curators or press, to stand out from all the digital noise.

BUSINESS CARDS

Gallerists and curators agree that business cards are a necessity. This makes sense: They help people remember your name, your next show, and where to find your work online without having to memorize anything. And you look more professional when you hand out a card than if you have to enter your info on their phone. Your card should be the size of a traditional business card, with your name and website on it. If you are active and professional on social media, you should also include those handles. And if you really want to make an impression, use a detail from one of your works on the back of the card. Some companies will let you run a variety of images in a "deck" of business cards.

If you don't have a business card, use a show announcement. Or, what the hell, use a napkin—just have your info printed on it ahead of time.

APPROACHING PRESS

Media attention can have a major impact on your career. A thoughtful review, or even a short mention in a magazine, can push traffic to your shows, your website, your social media accounts, your studio. Getting critics and art bloggers to notice

——————— "I'm a big fan of business cards. If I go to an artist's studio and they have a business card or postcard with their name, representative image, and contact info, it's so much easier to remember the person and the work, and to stay in touch."

Melissa Levin, vice president, Artists Estates and Foundations, Art Agency, Partners, New York, NY; former vice president, cultural programs, LMCC

you is tough, and whether they choose to write about you is out of your hands. There are a few things you can do to increase your chances of someone actually reading your press release.

1. Gather email addresses and social media handles of every writer you *think* would like your work (digital, print, freelance, all of 'em). Not editors in chief, unless you know them personally, but managing editors, content editors, and writers are all fair game.

2. Get to know them (from afar). Follow all of their social media accounts. Read everything they've written about other artists, the art world, and whatever topics are relevant to your practice. Yeah, we know, that's a lot! The more familiar you are with a writer's style and taste, the better you will be at tailoring your message to him or her. Doesn't hurt to share their articles with your followers, either.

3. When you have something to announce, such as an exhibition or event, write a press release. See the box in the margin for tips on how to do that. If the venue will write its own press release, use that; don't write another one for the same show.

4. Email the press release to your press list. Include a personal note when you email any press person you've met, or who has written about you before, or who you *really* hope attends the show. You can use your email marketing service to send out one blast to the rest of your list. "Long lead" press, such as glossy magazines, need at least three months heads-up; print publications, newspapers, and blogs should get about six weeks; and you'll want to send out reminders to blogs and other digital platforms about two weeks before the event.

5. Post your press release on your website, your social media accounts, and anywhere you have a digital presence. Ask your friends, especially your art world colleagues, to post it as well.

There is a fine line between persistent and pushy. Stay on the persistent side. And always write a thank-you note when someone mentions you.

Writing a press release

This shouldn't be daunting. Pretend you run into some old friend and want to invite them to your show. What do they *need* to know? Anything else you *want* them to know?

—Name of the show, location, dates, specific time of opening party, if there is one.

—A little more detail about the theme of the show, how much work of yours is in it, what your work is about. Be clear and concise and don't use jargon. Assume your friend did not go to art school.

—A little background on you and your work over the last few years. Most releases end with a narrative bio (discussed in chapter 3).

—Your contact info, which can be at the top or the bottom, as long as it's in bold and easy to find at a glance.

The text should be half a page max. Make it easy to read on a mobile device. Don't worry about making it "look" like a press release, because that *look* is from before the Internet existed. Add a compelling image at the top, and feel free to add more images after the text.

——— *"If it's somebody that I've never heard of, showing in a gallery I've never heard of, often it's the image that hooks me in and gets me reading the press release. I like a header image and then more images just below the text, in a press-release format."* ***Benjamin Sutton, news editor, Hyperallergic***

CHECKLIST: PROMOTION

—WEBSITE
—Social media PROFILE
—MAILING LIST MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
—BUSINESS CARD
—PRESS LIST

———— *"Hyperallergic, in general, and I, specifically, are aware of the outsized noise that certain sectors of the art community make, so we're generally trying to look beyond the big galleries and cover artistrun spaces and places outside of Chelsea or outside of New York."* ***Benjamin Sutton, news editor, Hyperallergic***

——— *"The one thing that always gets me is when an artist proves they read my publication and values what I do. If they mention a specific article, what it means to them, and it doesn't come off as total bullshit, I am much more likely to make an attempt to cover their project, even if I don't love the work."* ***Cara Ober, artist, editor, bmoreart.com, Baltimore, MD***

———— *"If I don't get a press release, there is no way for me to know about whatever it is. Somebody has to tell me about it."* ***Paddy Johnson, founder, Artfcity.com***

———— *"There's definitely still something to be said for mailing a postcard or a press release, now that so few galleries do that. I think that we've reached that point where email has so surpassed physical mail that physical mail is kind of exciting."* ***Benjamin Sutton, news editor, Hyperallergic***