

ART INC.

The Essential Guide for Building
Your Career as an Artist

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CHRONICLE BOOKS
SAN FRANCISCO

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PREPARING YOUR PORTFOLIO

When preparing your portfolio to share with a gallery, include about twenty images that show good breadth. Make sure your work is thematically cohesive to demonstrate your readiness to exhibit. If you have two or more bodies of work, consider showcasing small selections of each and make sure the first one you share is your strongest. You might also research the tastes and interests of the gallery and show the work you think would be the best fit. The order in which your work appears should make sense, either chronologically or by evolution of the work if it has changed over time. Lastly, make sure to find out how the gallery would like to see the images of your work—in a slideshow on your laptop or iPad or printed on paper in a physical portfolio. If your work is small or on paper, they may want to see original samples as well.

YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE

A curriculum vitae, or CV, is an overview of your artistic professional history and achievements. It looks similar to a résumé. A CV is important if you are interested in breaking into the fine art world or securing representation with a gallery, but less so for illustration or licensing careers. Your CV should be neatly organized and include only information pertinent to your artistic career. If you are just starting out and have very little information to include on your CV, it's okay. Begin by writing one for where you are now and you'll learn which areas you need to build or expand on. As you develop your career, continually update your CV with new information.

Sections in a CV

1. Personal information: The first lines in your CV should include your personal information: your name, date of birth, and contact information.

Anna Johnson (b. 1980)

info@ajohnsonartist.com | <http://www.ajohnsonartist.com> | 555.555.1234

2. Education: Generally, this section relates to your formal education, specifically in the field of art, listing the school, the year that you graduated, and the degree you earned.

University of California Los Angeles, Master of Fine Arts in Painting and Drawing, 2010

California College of the Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Studies, 2003

If you do not have a degree in art, don't worry—you can list your degree or simply leave this section off of your CV. This section is not a prerequisite for gallery representation or inclusion in exhibitions. Many successful artists never went to school to study art.

3. Exhibitions: List your exhibition history with the most recent first. If you have a number of exhibitions under your belt, you can split them into two categories: solo exhibitions and group exhibitions. Artists who have done many shows often list “selected solo exhibitions” and “selected group exhibitions,” which means they are listing only the most pertinent ones. Likewise, you can weed out any exhibitions that are no longer relevant to your career.

2014 *Home on the Range*, Meyers Gallery, Austin, TX (solo exhibition)

2013 *While They Were Sleeping*, Faber Gallery, New York, NY (group exhibition)

4. Bibliography: In this section, include any articles or books in which you or your art have appeared or were reviewed. For articles, list the author, title, publication, volume, publication date, and page number.

Johanson, Mark: "This Year's Best Emerging Artists," *Art Magazine*, vol. 10, March 2011, pp. 12–14

If a discussion of your own artwork or your artwork itself appears in a book, the formatting should include the author, title, publisher, copyright date, and page number.

Abramson, Louise, *New Paintings in Neon*, Peacock Press, 2008, p. 20

5. Collections: If your work is part of a collection in any public institutions, like museums, corporate collections, municipalities or agencies, this is the section in which to list them.

The Joseph Brink Gallery, Minneapolis

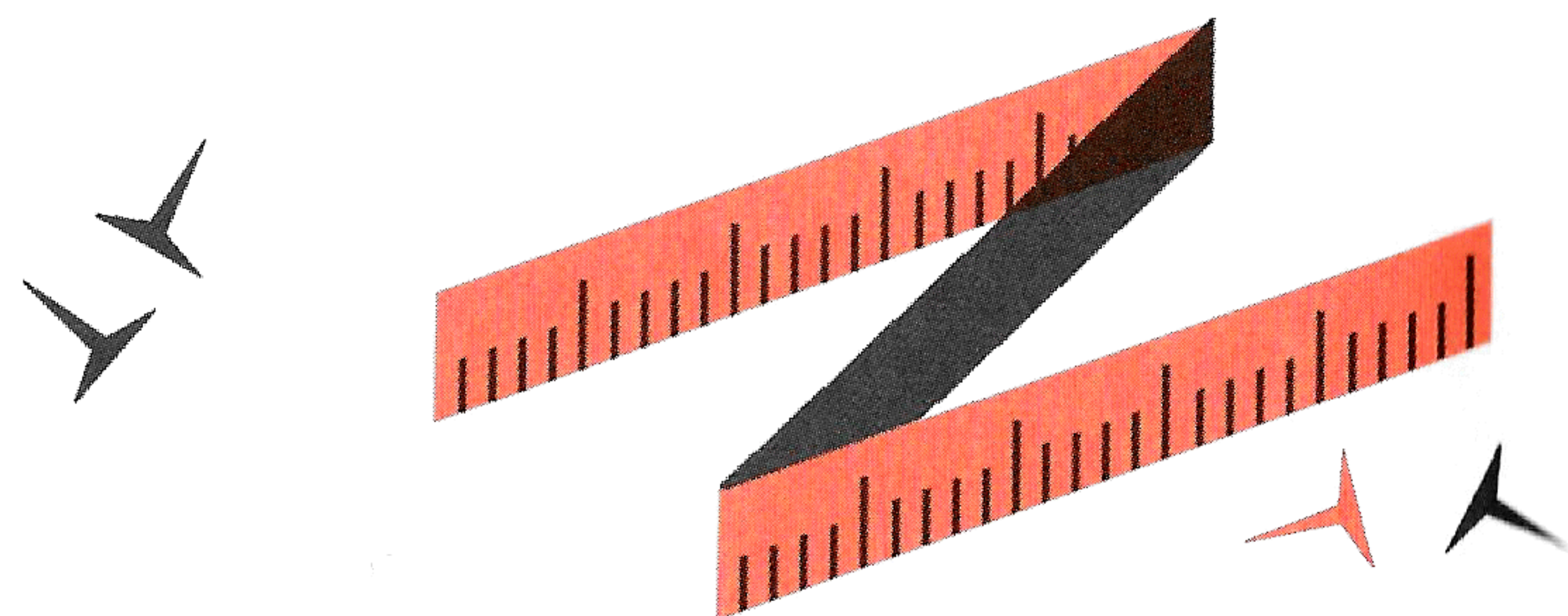
The Bean Collection, Los Angeles

6. Awards and Grants: If you received any awards and grants related to your artistic practice, note them here.

Finalist, New American Paintings, 2012

Recipient, Southwest Emerging Artist Grant, 2011

CVs can also include additional sections, for instance teaching jobs, residencies, and writing you've done about your own work.



WRITING YOUR ARTIST STATEMENT

In chapter 3, we discussed writing your bio for your website or promotional materials. While your bio is a casual description of who you are and your artistic journey, your artist statement is a more formal account of your artwork, written in the first person. Your statement is a basic introduction to your work; it shouldn't be instructions on how people viewing your work should experience it. People who look at your art will inevitably have their own opinions, but they will also have questions. When you're not there to answer them, your artist statement gives people more information about what you've created.

Your artist statement should be about two to five paragraphs long and written in simple, straightforward language. People interested in your work are not necessarily immersed in the art world or scholarship, so avoid jargon or academic language. An effective statement welcomes people to your work, no matter how little they know about art to begin with. Here are some examples of topics covered in artist statements:

- ⊗ What your work means to you
- ⊗ What materials you use
- ⊗ Your process for making your work
- ⊗ What inspires your work or your latest body of work
- ⊗ What your work represents

