



AN ARTIST'S GUIDE

TO STARTING AN ART BUSINESS

A R T W O R K
A R C H I V E

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BEING READY FOR A FULL-TIME ART CAREER

GET STARTED ON THE RIGHT FOOT.

Your doubts or fears shouldn't keep you from turning your art hobby into a full-time career. However, you should make sure that you are building a solid foundation for yourself before making the leap to a full-time art career.

Here are some steps to take before you decide to start a fulltime career in the arts.

Be Honest With Yourself About Why You Want to Be a Full-Time Artist

Many artists work part-time or even full-time jobs while establishing their art careers. If you have already been balancing both, you probably know how exhausting it can be. This fatigue may lead you to consider jumping in feet first to your art career.

But before you get in the deep end, ask yourself why you want to make a career out of your art.

Do you believe your work will benefit from more focused time? Do you have such a passion for your art that you can no longer see yourself doing anything else? Do you want to be famous? Do you want freedom from the 9-5?

Write this all down and reflect on where your motivations are coming from.

Take Serious Stock of Whether Or Not You Are Ready


Regardless of your motivation, transitioning into a full-time career is going to take more than just creating art. You will take on the new role of business owner and will need to take on the responsibilities that come with that if you want to make a living.

Take a good long look in the mirror, and ask yourself if you are ready to become a business owner.

There is nothing wrong with the answer to this question being "no". In fact, it could save you a lot of stress and set you up for when the answer is eventually an enthusiastic "yes!"

If you currently have a full-time job, scaling down to a part-time job or picking up freelance projects as you transition to making your hobby a full-time gig can provide the financial stability needed to take risks, invest in materials and alleviate some of the stress.

If you aren't fully ready—either financially or emotionally—you will struggle to build your empire, and you surely won't enjoy the ride.



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Develop a Business Plan You Will Stick To

When you are just starting out, you may not see the need to create a business plan for your art career. It just doesn't seem that urgent and making the work often takes precedent. But, by taking the time to thoughtfully plan out your business and get it on paper, you will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your business.

Thinking about your pricing and business expenses will be key to making sure you can support yourself before going full-time.

Write down the estimated cost of materials, business cards, marketing materials, and don't forget to include a budget for paying yourself. Once you have your business expenses laid out, you should clearly see how much you need to sell and for how much in order to make a profit.

Need a hand getting started? Check out these resources from creative business coach Jennifer Lee.

Find More Ways Than One Way Make Money

Getting gallery representation or selling at art fairs are often the first venues that come to mind when thinking considering where to make money as an artist. But, there are other ways you can make money from your work.

Licensing your work is another great way to make additional income and get your work seen by tons of people.

Also, consider the options you have to sell art online. The growth of online shopping had extended to artwork and can be a great sales platform for your business. Just make sure to pick an online platform that will work best for your art business.

If you are ready to plan your sales revenue, start with this [cheat sheet outlining the 7 ways you can increase sales](#) in your creative business from the founder of the of the Artist Entrepreneur, Catherine Orer.

Cultivate a Unique and Authentic Brand For Yourself

Developing a brand for yourself will be one of the single most important things you can do when transitioning into a full-time art career. This is also the hardest part for many artists.

Creating a brand will require some self-reflection to understand how you want people to recognize and relate to your business. Will your audience relate to you as being fun and quirky? Will they recognize your fun, bright colors? Or will they see something in nature and think of your brand?

Take some time to think about what kind of artist you are and what message you want to send to your audience. Your business name, logo, cards, website and social media presence are all ways to communicate your brand. Make sure you keep all things that your customers see consistent with your brand.

Don't Shy Away From Promoting Yourself

There are many platforms out there to help you make a professional website and online portfolio for yourself. Take advantage of them as a way to drive people to your site.

You can create a professional portfolio of all your work online using a platform like Artwork Archive.

Artists on Artwork Archive have significantly increased sales by adding a link to their public profiles on their social media pages and website.

FIRST STEPS

It's happening. After careful consideration and soul-searching, you are ready to take the leap. You have made the decision to follow your passion and become a professional artist.

Despite the excitement, your head's not in the clouds. You understand the road ahead. Establishing yourself in the artist community and making a living from your work is not going to happen overnight.

But by no means is it impossible. It will take planning, time, effort, dedication, and a devotion to lifelong learning.

Now that you've chosen to take the leap, figuring out what to do next can be the trickiest part. You can picture success in your mind, but the space between that and your current situation looks a little blank at the moment. So, where exactly do you begin? Great question. See, you're already thinking like an entrepreneur!

Follow these eight steps when starting an art business to set yourself up for success:

Plan it all out. And, we mean everything!

When many people decide to become professional artists, they don't often realize that they are actually starting their own art business. But it's true! You're selling a product (artwork) to people (collectors) who find value in it.

And, like any business starting out, a business plan can help you map out all the basics.

It sounds formal, we know, but it doesn't have to be intimidating. Grab your laptop or a notepad and start jotting down the plans you have for this new, creative career. You can even use this handy outline we made just for artists.

Start by defining your art practice.

What is your mission? How will you define success? What short- and long-term goals will help you achieve these?

Be specific, and stay true to what you want out of an art career. Every artist will have a different answer, and that's okay!

Defining and visualizing your art career in this way will help you see the natural progression of steps to take to grow your art business, not to mention alleviate the "deer in headlights" feeling that comes with taking on a big endeavor.

"YOU BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND YOUR ABILITIES, AND THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT AND IMPACTFUL FIRST STEP. "

These answers will also help you craft an artist statement later down the line, which you'll need for everything from show applications to the About section on your website.

Identify your target customer.

This is a marketing term you'll hear time and time again, but that's only because it's so important! When you figure out what your ideal client is like (the one most likely to buy your artwork), you'll start to understand how you can promote your pieces more effectively, so you actually make some money.

Ask yourself these nine questions to narrow down who your buyers are and how to win them over, like what income levels can afford your work and where do these clients tend to shop for art?

Don't be careless! Your entire marketing strategy will piggyback off these answers—from how you reach buyers to the tone of voice you use to communicate.

There are a ton of different ways to market your art—email newsletters, art fairs, social media, galleries, blogging—but not all of them might be where your customers are looking. Based on the profile of your ideal buyer, settle on a marketing strategy that complements your art business and list these outlets in your business plan.

Get a handle on the finances

Talking about finances can put anyone on edge, but it's an unavoidable step in a viable business plan and a pretty major one, too!

"By brushing off the financial side of a career in the arts, artists are practically ensuring that they will be unfulfilled personally, professionally, and financially," explains artist and financial advisor Elaine Grogan Luttrull.

When you take the guesswork out of your financial situation, you can plan ahead for how you are going to sustain your livelihood. Plus, you'll be able to set concrete goals for exactly how much you need to earn and save to cover your expenses.

In this section of your plan, write down the costs of everything you can think of when it comes to running your art business, from supplies to renting studio space. Then make a separate list for your personal expenses—everything from house payments and groceries to date nights. You can always come back and add more as your business plan grows.

Once you've created your itemized list, you will need to for-

mulate a plan for how you are going to pay for everything while your business is still taking off. It could be savings, joint income, an artist grant, crowdfunding, selling a certain number of pieces, a part-time job, etc.

Remember, planning for financial success is the best way to make it happen.

Get a solid pricing strategy down.

Pricing can be one of the hardest things for artists to figure out. Figuring out how to make a profit can be even harder. But that's the goal of being a professional artist, right? Making a living from your art?

There's a stubborn myth that artists have to be "starving." That's simply not true. Your success all falls back on your art business strategy and a great deal can be attributed to how you price your work. While we follow these seven rules for pricing your art, a few stand out in our minds.

Here's what you need to know: First, know your costs and make sure they are covered in the price of your artwork. Costs you should remember to include (or you will have to pay for it yourself later) are your time, materials, shipping, and even framing when necessary.

Think of it like this: you have a unique skill set that people value and are willing to give you compensation in exchange for your services. Remember, you are providing a service along with a final product. Decide on a reasonable hourly wage that you would feel comfortable with and work backward. The US Department of Labor lists the average hourly wage for a fine artist as \$24.58. Use this number to help you estimate.

Then, price consistently. Long story short, it will help you maintain a more positive relationship with galleries and collectors when no one feels undercut. Get the scoop here.

Finally, consider offering artwork at multiple price points. Not all fans of your work will be able to afford a \$3000 piece. Smaller, less expensive pieces are more attainable for buyers who can't afford more costly works, and in the end, you'll be able to cast a wider net on your sea of buyers. Every sale counts!

You will also want to make your business legal, build a website and develop a way to track your artwork—all of which we will cover in the following chapters.

CHOOSING A NAME

THE DO'S AND DON'TS TO PICKING THE PERFECT BUSINESS NAME.

YOUR NAME CAN SET THE TONE FOR YOUR ENTIRE BUSINESS.

You've made the work and you're ready to start selling. The only thing holding you back from building your art business empire is choosing the right name.

You know you want it to be perfect, but do you realize just how important it can be for setting you up for success in your art career?

Choosing the right name for your art business might be simpler than you think, though. Take a look at these naming guidelines, and your dream art business will be up and running in no time.

Consider Using Your Own Name. There are a few different reasons why using your own name might be the best option, with the first being: it's original. And, what could be a better way to convey that your art is original, too?

Remember, it's all about branding. One of your biggest selling points as a fine artist is that your art isn't mass-produced, so going with your own name instead of something anyone could choose illustrates the unique value of your art.

Second, using your name for your art business puts a person behind the art, and we can't say enough about the importance of building an emotional connection with your buyers. It's a lot harder to turn away from a sale once they connect your name and art's story with the art on the table.

Finally, think about how you want to be remembered. It would have been pretty weird if Picasso went down in history as Abstract Creative, right? Famous artists are recognized by their names, so why not kill two birds with one stone and start getting your name out there.

What Else Should You Think About? Make sure to clearly identify what you do and help potential buyers find you online by adding a keyword to your name like "art", "artist", "fine art", or "studio". If you have a medium that you have developed and intend to work in for your career, consider adding that as well. But, be aware that if you add "oil painting" or "pastels" to the end of your name, it could be limiting if you ever decide to switch mediums.

If your own name is too hard to pronounce or is too common, consider the alternatives. For instance, the name you choose for your art business could be your full name with a middle initial, just your last name paired with "art", and so on.

Keep in mind not to make your business name too long, since you'll be using it for a website URL and social media accounts. People need to be able to remember it! And while you're at it, be sure that any abbreviations it forms or initials you use are appropriate. Art by Sarah Smith may be an obvious choice, but it could spell trouble in the end.

Lastly, you can always use a more creative name for services you provide, like a podcast or workshop, explains Art Biz Coach Alyson Stanfield, as long as you keep your business name close by.

Be Consistent Whatever you choose, be sure to double check—especially before you print up any marketing materials—that it's not already taken. We're sure you don't want to deal with any legal battles. Plus, you are going to need a website and social media accounts with a consistent art business name so customers can find you. So, see what's available, keep your brand in mind, and you'll be on your way to selling your art.

MAKING A BUSINESS PLAN

MAP OUT YOUR ROAD TO SUCCESS

Being a professional artist involves more than being skilled with paints or clay—you actually become a small business owner.

So, where do you begin? By creating a business plan, of course. That's why we've come up with an outline for artists to follow, so you can better understand your art business and develop a step-by-step strategy for success.

So when you are ready to carve out a half hour or so, follow along this guide (or bookmark it for when you are ready) and start writing down a plan to take your art career to the next level:

1. YOUR BUSINESS

A. Mission Statement

Figure out what your mission is by asking yourself the question, "why do you want to be a professional artist?" We doubt that it's all about the money, but be honest with yourself about what it is about. Let this answer, and the passion you feel when you write it down, drive every other aspect of developing your art business.

B. Vision Statement

Your vision statement should describe where you want to take your art business in the future. But, success means something different to each and every artist. Do you want to be famous? Leave a legacy? Change the way people interact with art? Get rich? Do you want gallery representation? The answer is up to you.

C. Goals

Now, depending on your definition of success, develop short-term and long-term goals that will keep you on track. Try to set goals for each of the following: the next three months, six months, one year, three years, and five years. (Visualizing your art career like this will help you see the natural progression of steps to take, erasing the pressure to become an overnight success!)

Take this goal-setting advice from Catherine Orer, business and PR strategist for artists: "Quitting my day job to do art full time' or 'sell my art' are not clear career goals." Instead, Catherine asks you to dig deeper: "What type of career do you want? How much do you want to earn?" Spelling out exactly what you want to do will help you take the actual steps.

2. YOUR CUSTOMER

The next step is to identify who your ideal client is so you can market your artwork in the most effective way possible. Start by answering these questions:

- What age group or income level can afford your pieces?
- What are your client's goals and how does your art help the client achieve them?
- Where do your customers buy art?
- Where do these buyers live, travel, or hang out?
- What are their hobbies? Attitudes? Style? Interests?
- What type of buyers understand your work?
- Why do your clients buy art?
- What connection can you find between you, your art, and your buyers?
- What kind of marketing would reach them best (word of mouth, email, social media)?

With these answers, you can set up a well thought out plan of attack for your art marketing strategy. You can go where your buyers go, form important relationships, and know exactly how to talk with them confidently about buying your artwork.

3. YOUR COMPETITORS

Much like understanding your target customer, you can't dive into the art business world without understanding the rest of the art market—and that means who you are competing with.

Take the time to research other artists that are similar to you. Do they have great connections in the art world? Do they need better photos of their artwork? What are their prices like? Figuring out both their strengths and weaknesses can help you develop a plan for your own art business and gain a competitive advantage.

4. YOUR FINANCES

A. Expenses

Like any business, you are going to have expenses. But, they don't have to eat up your hard earned profits if you plan for them ahead of time! In this section of the art business plan, write down the costs of everything you can think of, from supplies to renting studio space.

B. Funding

Once you've created your itemized list, you will need to formulate a plan on how you are going to pay for everything at the start of your art business. Do you have savings built up? Do you need to apply for an artist grant? How many pieces do you need to sell to cover all of your costs? Is crowdfunding a good option for you?

C. Pricing

The answers to those previous questions about funding will get you thinking about how much you need to charge for each piece to actually make a living as an artist. Check out "How to Price Consistently for Art Sales Success" to learn more about different pricing methods.

5. YOUR MARKETING

A. Marketing Platforms

Based on the profile of your ideal buyer, settle on the exact marketing strategy that complements your art business. Think about which of these art marketing outlets you should use: social media, email newsletters, art fairs, galleries, blogging, etc.

B. Where to Sell

Whether you target physical galleries, sell online, network within artist associations, or rely on a mixture of opportunities, determine where your potential customers will have the most eyes on your art.

C. Your Story

The next step is to write down your story as an artist. This is one of the most important steps because it's how you can form a worthwhile connection with your possible collectors. Write your artist statement by answering these 5 questions art buyers have about you.

6. YOUR PROCESS

List out every single step of your art business workflow, from creation to sale. This will help you truly understand how long the process takes and how you should plan your schedule.

Plus, it's a handy document to refer back to it in case you get stuck on what to do next! Here's an example of what your process could look like:

- Buy supplies
- Begin piece
- Share work-in-progress pictures on social
- Finish piece
- Take photos of finished artwork
- List piece and details on [Artwork Archive](#)
- Put piece up on personal website
- Share on social media
- Email collectors
- Submit artwork to upcoming show
- Print invoice for sale
- Record sale in Artwork Archive

LEGAL STUFF

You will need to take care of all the legal stuff before building your new art business empire.

Please note: You should always seek the advice of a legal professional for specific issues. This guide should be used for educational purposes only, and should not be construed as, or serve as a substitute for, legal advice.

As a professional artists, you are required to have a registered business and tax ID number.

Decide on your business type

Do a little research and decide what type of business structure you want to become. Many artists choose to classify their business as a sole proprietorship because it's easy to set up and meets the needs of a basic studio practice.

Every state's process is different, so head over to your local Clerk of Courts website, your state's Department of Revenue site, and the IRS site to see what steps are required next.

TIP: Start a separate business checking account with your bank. That way, your business and personal expenses aren't all mixed in together when it comes time to do taxes. And, don't forget to save your business receipts!

But before you make anything official, do some digging into what is the right name for your art business with these tips. Consider using your own name with the keywords "art" or "studio" added to the end, as long as it's easy to pronounce and abbreviate.

Whatever you choose, be sure to double check that your name is not already taken! We're sure you don't want to deal with any legal battles. Plus, you are going to need a website and social media accounts with a consistent art business name so customers can find you.

Familiarize yourself with copyright law

The moment you make an original artwork, you become the owner of its copyright. This copyright gives you the exclusive privilege to control the use, production, and modification of your work.

However, having a registered copyright enables you to pursue statutory damages, which can range from \$750 to \$150,000. Without a registered copyright, you may only be able to recover actual damages such as lost profits and a licensing fee.

The Copyright Office offers three options for registration of images: Single image, a collection of unpublished images, or a group of published images. [You can learn more here.](#)

File your taxes on time

When it comes to deciding if you need to file taxes as an artist, the IRS draws the line between whether you define your practice as a "hobby," or a "business."

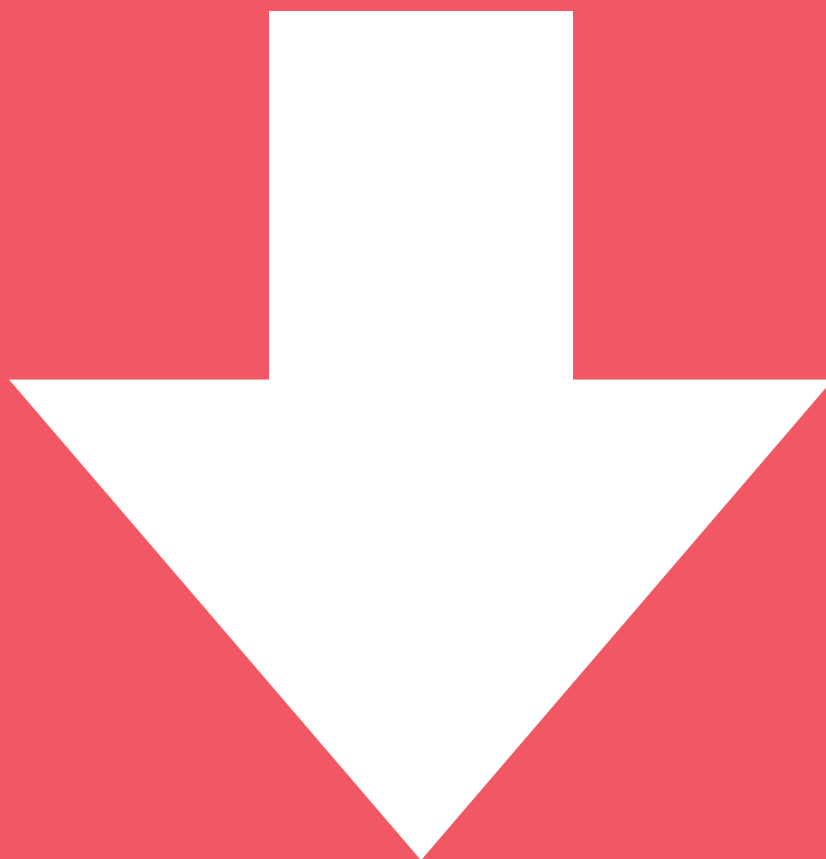
If you are a sole proprietorship you will record all your sales as general income and you will deduct your expenses.

If you are like most artists making a living from your artwork, you will probably have a few other income sources from your gallery or a side gig. If this is the case, make sure you get a 1099-MISC from each different income source that you received over \$600 annually and file this as along with your sales income.

There are many facets of the art world, and each one has an expert. If you have any questions about filing your taxes, always consult a tax expert. It will end up saving you money in the long run.

Before consulting an accountant, make sure to have copies of your receipts, invoices, sales reports and expense reports from your [Artwork Archive](#) account. These documents will be your first resource when assessing your tax filing.

BUILDING A WEBSITE & WHAT SHOULD GO ON IT



There are some common sayings; If a tree falls in a forest and nobody is around to hear it, does it make a sound? Or more timely perhaps: If you go on vacation, but you don't post your photos on Instagram, were you even on vacation?

If you make art but you don't have a website, are you even an artist?

Of course, this is a tongue-in-cheek, but it does bring us to an important point in today's world.

People expect you to have a portfolio online.

They expect to be able to research your background, see samples of your work and read about your credentials.

We work with artists every day on how to present their work online and to galleries and from those questions we came up with a list of the most asked questions that artists should be answering before building their website.

Start by clearly identifying the answers to the following questions for yourself.

What are your goals for the site?

What do you want to accomplish with your website? Who do you want to speak directly to? What goals do you have for your site? What is your "why"?

Do you want to document your process, record your archive of artworks, have your available works up for sale?

Your website should work for your goals. Your goals can be broad like displaying your best and most recent works for general visibility or specific, like making a certain amount of income from your website to support your practice.

Defining your goal, regardless of what it is, will help you to build a roadmap to building your site—just like goals are helpful in your own creative practice. You will more quickly be able to weed out the things you don't need to add and stay on a path toward what you want to create.

Who is this site for (who is the audience)?

What are they expecting to find/experience?

This could be collectors, grant-givers, grad school admissions boards, other artists, your parents, yourself, your friends, your pets, whatever it is, define it and write it down.

Being specific about who comprises your audience will help you narrow in on what type of content your website will be made up of when it gets to that point.

Once you have defined your audience you will want to define their motivations for visiting your site. This can be summed up as the "user experience" of your artist website.

If they are a potential client, they probably want to read briefly about your artwork, background and process. They then, most importantly, need a clear way to get to available work and a simple way to purchase that information or inquire with you about the artwork.

If they are a grant-giving institution or a grad school panel, they will most likely want to read your artist statement and see a portfolio of your strongest works. If they are other artists and peers, they will probably be looking for when you have upcoming shows to attend or insights into your process.

By defining the motivations of your audience, you can extrapolate what they want to see when they visit your site and better understand how to structure your website.

You can even borrow a tactic widely used by companies and marketers and come up with a visitor profile for your website. A customer profile or visitor profile helps you keep that person in mind when you are making decisions along the way. Once you have built out that character's age, income, background, and other demographics and even given them a name, you can ask yourself what "Jerry" would want to read in this section, etc.

What websites do I personally enjoy visiting? What do I enjoy about them?

Like most people in this decade, you've probably spent a fair deal of time on the internet.

There are most likely sites that stick out in your head as being a favorable visit. When you come across sites that you like to bookmark them in your browser under a "website inspiration" tab.

Just like you might keep folders of inspiration for your artwork, keep folders or Pinterest boards of inspiration for your website.

Do this for a week or so before you start sketching out the flow of your own site. What did you enjoy about your visit to these sites? What made the experience easy for you as a visitor? What made it fun? Did you get the information you were looking for right away or were you able to navigate to the answer quickly? Did you get frustrated ever? What, specifically, was frustrating?

Keep a little notebook of what you enjoyed and see if there are commonalities. Most often, the overlapping factors will be ease of use, navigability, and functionality based, but see what pops out for you.

There will be two buckets for these features. One will be functionality—the UX of the site like navigation, content, page structure and buttons. The second will be the user interface features (UI) that include features like graphic design elements, gifs, colors, and copy—all of which are important as well to the overall "vibe" or brand of your site.

What pages will I have on my site?

The content of your site is anything that you will upload and share on your website. The scope of your site is completely up to you. However, most successful artist sites include the following sections:

Portfolio of your artworks: This one goes without saying. You will need to show off your portfolio. The question you need to ask yourself is if you will want to publish an entire archive of your work or select collections.

About page: People visiting your site will want to know a little bit of context about who you are—who the face behind the artwork is. It doesn't have to be lengthy, but it should cover a little about your background and why, what, how, and maybe where you make. You can also include here a link to your resume or CV to show your past credentials, education, exhibition history and so forth.

A contact page: So, someone came to your site and they love your work. They will need a way to message you. Make sure that you have your email or a "contact me" section of your site. A bonus is to add your social media links like Instagram, Facebook, external profiles and email clients.

News: A lot of artists choose to incorporate a news section into their website. If you are planning on letting your viewers know about upcoming exhibitions, openings, new processes or sales, a news section is a good idea.

Collections of your work: It can be overwhelming to try and fit all of your work into one portfolio. You most likely have a large inventory of artworks spanning many years, many styles and many changes. A good way to making your artwork more digestible to viewers is to build out collections of your artwork. This could be collections by year, by medium, by theme or by whatever else groups your work together logically.

Will you build the website out yourself or choose a portfolio site?

Now that you have decided what's going on your site, you will need to decide how to make those plans into reality.

There are a lot of template-based and drag-and-drop options that make building an artist website much easier and less time consuming than coding one from the ground up today. There are also online portfolio platforms that allow you to easily update and build all of the pages mentioned above like the about page, portfolio, contact, news, and collections—all while managing your inventory on the “back-end” of the website.

The top web-building platforms tend to be Wordpress, Squarespace, Wix, and Weebly. There are also portfolio sites specifically for artists like FASO, Format, Behance and [Artwork Archive](#). These sites offer simple and easy-to-use portfolios to upload and share your work without building out an entire site.

Platforms like Artwork Archive also allow you to embed your portfolio directly onto your own custom site, so that you can manage and archive your artwork from a private account—deciding what information to publish, while having all of the details on hand, without all the constant coding and updating.

A word to the wise

The best way to get started is to have your files already organized on a cataloging system like that you can quickly pull the information and different sized images from—you will need small resolution images at 72 dpi for your website. However, you will always want to keep a high-resolution of you images on file for press and printing.

Another thing to note is that site-builders like Wordpress, Wix, and Squarespace are continually being updated and it may affect your site structure and even images and information with updates. Make sure that you have backed up your information into an external drive or even better, on a cloud-based program that specializes in data storage to ensure that your artwork is safe.

It can feel as though your website is going to last forever, but years down the road when themes get outdated or sites are unsupported you will thank yourself for cataloging your art separately.

With an art inventory system like [Artwork Archive](#), you can both preserve your archive of artworks and organize all of your information and images so that managing the content of your website is a breeze.

So, you chose the right domain name, hosted your site, built out the pages and hit publish—congrats! It's now time to share your work online.

Hopefully, your pages contain enough SEO to direct people to your work online, but it's not enough to create a website and just let it sit. The more you are active in sharing and promoting your site, the more page views you will get and the higher your website with rank on Google.

You can start by sharing your website on your social media groups, your newsletter, facebook groups that allow self-promotion and adding your URL to all your marketing materials like your business card for events—anything that feels natural to your art business and personality and gets the word out.

AN INVENTORY SYSTEM CAN HELP BACKUP AND STREAMLINE YOUR WEBSITE PROCESS

FINDING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

The best customers are not just the ones who buy your artwork once, they are the ones who will continue to buy your artwork for years to come. But, how do you reach more of these die-hard customers if you do not know who they are yet?

Reaching the right collectors at the right time is key to the success of any business. As a professional artist, finding your ideal customer is key to effectively promoting your work. Here are three steps to finding your ideal customer — and keeping them.

Create Work With Someone Specific in Mind

Who are you making work for? If you have probably been asked about your target audience at some point and maybe even done some audience building where you created a list of characteristics where your potential buyer is an affluent female between the ages of 30 and 65, owns a home in the city, etc., etc., etc ...

Ditch the imaginary audience.

Think of one specific person that you are creating this work for. What are they struggling with right now? What keeps them up at night? What do they find side-splittingly, absurdly funny? What have they gone through recently that they might need some comforting about?

Ask yourself these questions and then pick one to address in your work.

The beautiful thing about being human is that we all share certain commonalities. It might not resonate deeply with everyone, but if someone feels it strongly, chances are, there is a whole group out there who is also going to feel it strongly.

Make this Person Your Customer Profile

Creating a customer persona is a tactic most sales and marketing professionals frequently use.

A buyer persona is a fictional customer you create using what you know about your previous buyers and your best guesses. Using the answers from the first section, build out this persona based on your real life example.

Extrapolate your answers from the real person and build out a new fictionalized person. What is their name? Where do they live? What do they do for work? What about for fun? How much money do they make? What do they read? How much education do they have? The more details, the better.

If you are active on social media already, take a look at the insights about your followers. Is there a trend? Are they mostly women? What age are they? Most social media platforms have insights as part of their business account — take advantage of it.



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Create a persona that matches that trend closely. Kevan Lee, Director of Marketing at Buffer, shared a great guide to creating buyer personas on their blog.

Cultivate Personal Connections to Your Artwork

Now that you have an image of your ideal customer, how do you connect with them and attract more?

Start by making real connections with your buyers. You might not care if people personally like you or not, but connections mean more than just a sale. These interactions lead to repeat purchases. Plus, these are the fans that will often praise and spread the word about you and stick around in those times when your creativity slumps.

Connect with your customers by sharing things about your inspirations and creative process or things going on in your world. If you have done a good job in creating your ideal customer, the content you share should align with the things they would be interested in.

Luckily, the internet makes connecting with and targeting your customers easy once you have defined them. Stay up to date with your social media, build out targeted ads based on your audience profile, and engage online with your customers. Find out what social media outlets your buyer persona prefers and connect with them there.

Don't Try to Be Everything Everyone

By creating a strong and consistent brand for yourself, you will become recognizable to your buyers and stand out from your competition. Part of having a strong brand is having a consistent look and feel to your website, materials, and social media posts. People like familiarity and will be more likely to connect with you if they know what to expect. This does not mean your creativity and work can't have variety, but try to promote them in a similar fashion and style.

The main point here is that you don't need to please everyone with your artwork. If you try and sell to everyone, you waste your energy and time on a large group of people who may never be in the place to buy your artwork, no matter how great you are. Focus on your buyer persona, do the work to reach them, and stay on their radar.

**MANAGE YOUR
ART BUSINESS**

with

ARTWORK ARCHIVE

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COMMISSIONS & CONTRACTS

With so much going on in your art business, things can get confusing and you will want to make sure you have your bases covered. Your reputation and livelihood are put on the line, and when misunderstandings happen, it's usually your art business that takes the hit.

There's a way to protect your art and business from these kinds of problems. The solution? A contract.

Whether it's a gallery showing, commission, consignment, or licensing deal, a contract helps everyone understand their responsibilities. Plus, it's something official you can turn to if anything goes wrong.

It doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, the more clear and concise the contract is, the better! To help you get started, take a look at a few basic components to include in your contract so you can better protect your art business.

1. Client Info

Begin your contract with each parties' name, business, address, email, and phone number to make it clear who is involved and how you can get in touch.

2. Project Info and Terms

Next, explain exactly what the project is and

what each person is responsible for. Whether it's a contract for new gallery representation or a commissioned piece, this is where it pays to be extremely clear and detailed.

Think about every aspect of the project from start to finish, and answer these questions: What is involved? Who will be in charge of getting it done? When? How?

Dig deeper to determine exact details like:

Who is responsible for the costs and actions of shipping, framing, insuring, and storing the artwork? Who pays for damaged work?

How involved can the client be in the commission process? What is the process for revisions? How many times do you need to meet with the client?

If you're working with a gallery, who determines prices and how are records kept of your sales? How many pieces does a show require, who determines the layout, and who will physically be setting up the displays?

Who is responsible for marketing your pieces or gallery show? Does this restrict what you can post on social media or online? Who has the right to use images of your art?

CONTRACTS HELP EVERYONE UNDERSTAND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Is the art being consigned? What is a gallery or retailer allowed to sell and for how long? Do they have exclusive selling rights? How long will your art be in their possession before you can reclaim it?

TIP: These questions are a great starting point, but should not be used as a complete list. Make sure you really think through the terms for your specific art business project and consider consulting a lawyer.

3. Project Timeline

Whether you create an entire section dedicated to the project's timeline or include it in the terms above, it's important to spell out the time expectations for the project.

Both parties will have duties that need to be completed by a certain time or date in order for the project to be finished successfully. This section of the contract should also state the ramifications if one party fails to deliver.

An artist, for instance, shouldn't be held accountable for a delayed finish date on a commission if the client did not provide the agreed-upon feedback in time. But, neither can a gallery, if an artist does not deliver their work on time.

4. Costs and Payment Terms

Include a section where you name the price and costs of the project. Be sure to pinpoint who is responsible for paying what, including any hidden fees or taxes, and set specific due dates and processes for the payment.

Will you require a deposit up front, payments throughout, and a final payment? Will you accept credit, cash, or check? What percentages will wholesalers, galleries, or other agents take?

Cover the money-related terms extensively early on, so you can focus on the art process.

5. Itemization

It may not be necessary for every contract, but if you are consigning your artwork to a gallery or retailer, you will want to go the extra mile to protect your art business by including an itemized list of the pieces you'll be turning over to them.

This list can include images and details like title, dimension, medium, description, price, and so on. And, you can easily make a professional-looking list for your clients with Artwork Archive. Just select what pieces and details you are including from your inventory, and voilà!

6. Artist's Rights

This section doesn't have to be extensive, it can be a simple statement about retaining the copyrights to your artwork.

7. Cancellation Terms

As an added protection, include who is responsible if the contract is canceled and what the next steps would be. So as not to be left without payment for the time and effort you spent before the project was canceled, consider making your client's initial deposit non-refundable.

8. Acceptance of Agreement

To finalize the contract, include an agreed upon statement that includes the terms of the contract, followed by the names, signatures, and the date to be signed by both parties.

Protect your art business.

When it comes to an effective art business contract, the devil is in the details. There can be so many responsibilities to keep track of that it just makes sense to spell out who's in charge of what and when. In the end, you'll avoid any misunderstandings, help the process go more smoothly, and protect your art business with a solid contract to look back on.

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

METHODS TO GAIN MORE FANS AND BUYERS

It isn't surprising then how powerful it can be to have a strong presence as an artist online. Social media, in particular, is bridging the gap between artists and buyers.

The way you go about marketing your artwork to an audience determines their success in maintaining a fan base and establishing new ones.

Here are six tips to help artists get started in the rapidly expanding online visual art market.

Test Your Options, But Narrow Your Focus.

Social media is a powerful instrument to gain popularity for your work. You have probably heard that you should be setting up accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter, and staying active by interacting with fans.

The only problem with this is that it often turns into a full-time job. And, what's worse is that unanswered messages and abandoned accounts can often have a negative impact on your art business.

If you aren't sure which channel is right for you, commit to one or two and do them well. Instagram has become the top choice for many artists as it is the easiest way to post progress photos, show a glimpse into your life as an artist and connect with collectors.

Setting up a professional portfolio of your work online is also a great way to share a polished and comprehensive body of work with your social audiences. You can do this at the click of a button on sites like Artwork Archive. You should be showcasing your professionalism as well as connecting with your fans.

Encourage User-Generated Content

User-generated content is defined as content that has been created by a customer of your product that is publicly available to other potential customers. In this context, it can mean clients promoting your artwork through pictures, testimonials, tweets, blog posts, hashtags etc. to encourage prospective clients into browsing through your art.

According to Easil, 92% of customers worldwide say they trust word of mouth more than advertising.

With this in mind, try asking clients to write reviews of your work and share them on your site or social media accounts. You can also run a contest on Instagram that requires users to repost an image of your artwork with one lucky winner getting to take home that piece. This is a great and low-cost way of getting fans to genuinely interact with your brand and share your artwork in their networks.

You may see other ways that people do this online. Alex Pardee is a hugely popular artist on Instagram. In one of his posts, he mentions fellow artist Greg Aronowitz's work and speaks very highly of his creation. So, don't just make it all about you all the time! Participate in the community and give a little back. You have to give a little to get a little. Good karma goes a long way.

Plus, it's a fun way to engage with other artists and take some of the pressure off of always feeling the marketing stress of having to post "on brand."

Share Special Offers and Promotions

Special offers and promotions are a tried and true way to ramp up your sales and acquire new artwork enthusiasts. You could try posting a limited discount code, having a one-day online auction for a new piece, or asking people to share a screenshot of your work for sweepstakes. These are all effective ways to draw in clients.

The key is to sprinkle these into your regular mix. You don't want to diminish the value of your work by constantly discounting it. But, finding fun ways to get people excited about a deal or a new limited edition print or product.

Use live features and engage on stories

If you are going to an event, sharing your process, or doing an artwork reveal, it helps to post content updates of a live event or over stories. This allows you to start conversations around the event and provides a response to your work.

Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat all have live options for creating instant content. This type of interaction is seen as authentic and behind the scenes and helps you can stay connected with your virtual audience.

Make tutorials and show your process

If you aren't into using the live features and want something that will have a longer shelf life, consider making YouTube tutorials or having a section in your Instagram bio dedicated to tutorial or process stories. This can be an especially good option if you have a highly developed skill or unique technique.

A short tutorial on how to make an intricate piece of art, with the processes you use to create it, will keep your audience involved and curious about the final outcome. This raises the bar for you as an artist as you are willing to share your creativity with a wide variety of people.

Share your content

Another great way to share techniques and your experiences as an artist is through a blog. Just like videos, you will get the attention of people online looking for tutorials, art advice, and anything else related to your art practice.

If a reader is able to connect with the story behind the piece of art he is more likely to purchase it. A story always makes art more relatable and popular.

You don't need to do it all. You do need to do it well.

Use these ideas as a jumping off point for building your audience online. If you feel more excited about one platform than another, start there—it's a good measure of how dedicated you will be to the process. Don't feel like you need to do everything, but rather focus on what you think you can do well.

Create a persona that matches that trend closely. Kevan Lee, Director of Marketing at Buffer, shared a great guide to creating buyer personas on their blog.

**A CRUCIAL PART OF
BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS IS
LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA,
NOT ONLY TO GROW YOUR
AUDIENCE, BUT ALSO TO
CONNECT WITH CLIENTS AND
OTHER ARTISTS.**

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CREATING A BUSINESS WORKFLOW

A “workflow” is just another way of saying that you are developing a routine for productivity. It’s about taking care of the business side of your art career efficiently so that you can save time and spend more time in the studio and less time on administrative tasks.

The best way to tackle your workflow isn’t by reinventing the wheel (remember, we’re trying to save you time here!).

Created specifically for artists, [Artwork Archive](#) leads you step-by-step in managing the information you will most certainly need to manage and grow your art career.

If you’re ready to supercharge your art business workflow, see how easy it can be with these five steps:

First, record new works right away

Your art business workflow starts by updating your art inventory records with every new work you create in the studio.

That means taking high-quality pictures of each piece (learn how here), and then recording the details you’ll need to keep those pieces organized—the same details you’ll need to know in order to persuade collectors to write that check!

Here’s how to get started. On [Artwork Archive](#), upload the picture of your piece and input information like the title, medium, price, subject, dimensions, inventory number, and

even notes about the work that collectors will want to hear.

It’s best to do this as you create and finish each work, while the piece is in front of you. That way, you’ll don’t run the risk of forgetting this essential information later down the road when the piece is out of the studio or buried deep in the storage closet.

The details you save to your account are stored in the cloud (and downloadable at any time), so you can look them up on any device connected to the internet. It’s a real lifesaver when you’re face to face with collectors ready to buy!

Keep your contacts up to date

Your artwork has been flying off the easel—fantastic! But to keep the business side of your art organized, that means you need an easy way to keep track of where it is and who’s in possession of it at all times.

That’s why the very next step of your art business workflow should be using Artwork Archive to manage the galleries, collectors, interior designers, consultants, consignment shops, and any other clients you work with.

You’ll be able to include simple details like their email, phone number, and address, but also other helpful information like their website and a profile image so you can recall their face in person.

Next, add the specific locations your art business works with, complete with address and contact information. You can even link these locations to specific clients in your contact list!

Get in the habit of adding these contacts in Artwork Archive as soon as you start working with them. Read on to see just how crucial this step will become for you.

Know where your artwork is going and coming from, always.

Cut the chaos from your art business with this next step: Wherever your artwork goes, record it.

Is a collection being sent off for a two-month show? Do you have one piece on display at that shop downtown? Did you submit a few works for a juried show? When do you need to pick up your unsold work from the gallery?

Artwork will come in and out of the studio like air. So, as soon as an artwork is on the move, assign it to its new location on Artwork Archive.

Since you already have the locations you work recorded, all you need to do is select the right one drop-down menu and add the dates it will be out of your inventory.

With this simple step as part of your workflow, you'll never lose track of your artwork, never double sell a piece, and never forget to pick up your work from a gallery again.

Keep track of your art sales and get paid faster

Keep the productivity party going. The next step in your workflow comes when you sell a piece of your artwork.

After you do a happy dance, of course, log the sale and generate an invoice.

You can enter the final sale price, a sales tax percentage, the date of the sale, and any notes you might want to jot down, along with linking it to the client and location it was purchased from.

This is also a great time to generate an invoice and a

Certificate of Authenticity right from [Artwork Archive](#), ready to send to the collector!

When you take the time to register your art sales, you'll have exact records of what happened to each piece, track your art business income with ease, and develop important insights about your sales strategy—not to mention, ensure that you get paid for your artwork on time.

Track your expenses

Okay, bookkeeping probably isn't the most exciting part of being a creative entrepreneur, but nothing helps more than keeping all of your financial records organized.

By staying on top of your income and expenses, only then can you get an accurate picture of your art business. Know where all of your sources of income are generated, where your money is going, and what you can write off with our Expense Tracking feature. More than that, you can tie your expense records to a client within the database, gain insight into how much you are spending in certain categories, and get one-click expense reports.

Update your online portfolio

The final step of your art business workflow when using Artwork Archive? Managing your Public Profile Page.

The best part is that for this sleek online art portfolio, all you have to do is decide which pieces in your inventory you want to be shown! And when you integrate your Public Page on your own artist website, you'll appear more professional and skip that endless double data entry!

The details from your inventory are already linked, which means anything you update will be shown on your Public Page and website, including when you mark a piece as sold.

You'll keep your online presence strong, collectors will be able to see your most up-to-date and available works, and you'll boost your brand as a successful artist by displaying works that have sold.

LESSONS YOU WILL LEARN

TEN THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE FIRST YEAR OF RUNNING AN ART BUSINESS

**YOU HAVE THE VISION.
YOU HAVE THE DRIVE. BUT,
YOU HAVEN'T DONE THIS
BEFORE.**

So, you are ready to make the leap that you've been daydreaming about for years.

After working a day job in an office, bar, coffee shop or just totally unrelated field, you are ready to make your passion your full-time gig. For years you have spent your evenings and weekends painting, sculpting and dreaming away long into the night. You know you can do it.

You know that there will be long hours and it will be a struggle at first. You know this is all part of the process. You've read business books, saved up some money to finance your studio, and you have a plan.

But, you haven't ever done this before and don't know exactly what to expect. After all, it is a leap of faith. Here are 10 lessons that you can expect to learn in your first year of becoming a full-time artist.

Your work/life balance will be out of whack for a long while.

You will work long hours. Sometimes because you are so excited and inspired that you lose track of time and realize at nearly midnight that you have been in the studio for almost 18 hours. Other times it will be because you were overly optimistic about a deadline and promised one of your first big collectors a piece that you are now scrambling to complete.

There will be no one to tell you to take a break. No supervisor to congratulate you on a job well done. No punch card or vacation time.

You will feel guilty when you aren't working, so you will work all the time. Because you changed your whole life to pursue this dream, because so many people have supported you, because you have something to prove and somewhere to go, you will work all the time. All. the. Time.

This means being clear with yourself and your loved ones about the end goal and knowing that this is a phase during the "startup" season. It also means being intentional about setting aside some time each day for your partner, family members or friends. Whether that be for a meal, a coffee date, or a walk in the park, make sure to plan in your social activities as if they are part of your business plan—they are part of your long-term "happiness success plan" and you need to make sure not to let them go by the wayside and sacrifice your relationships for your new career.

Your mindset will shift from "art practice" to "art business".

Before you decided to go full-time, you practiced your craft in your spare time to experiment, express yourself, and grow. And, don't get us wrong, you should always approach your artwork in this manner.

However, when you decide to turn your art into a career, you will begin to see your artwork as an asset in a business.

It is the way to bring in money, support yourself and support your future dreams. Artists often don't want to talk about money, but it's essential to be able to keep doing what you love to do and it's a critical component of your art practice.

In order to stay on track and stay focused on your artwork, you need to have systems and tools in place to help you manage the business side of your new art career. Tools like [Artwork Archive](#) help you manage the administrative side of your art business by streamlining the cataloging, invoicing, and tracking where artworks are coming and going. Plus they offer insights to your sales by location and genre, which can be super helpful when you are just starting out.

You will see the benefit of surrounding yourself with advisors, mentors & peers.

It's a well-known fact in the business world to surround yourself with people that know more than you, so they can guide you in the right direction. By selecting trusted advisors, you get insights into areas that you might not be an expert in quite yet. Plus, the truth is, artists need to be an expert in a lot of areas.

No one can be an expert in marketing, painting, sales, accounting, legal, shipping and business. It's just too much for one person. That's why you need to find the right people to put on your team.

Beyond that, it's equally as important to align yourself with artists who are at the same stage as you. Finding a gang of like-minded artists who are on a similar career path will help you work through ideas, empathize with your setbacks, share in your celebration of success, and find humor in the day to day shared experiences of being an artist.

The thing that most people don't tell you about being an artist is that it can be extremely lonely.

Having a group or just one or two close friends to go through the process with will make all of you stronger, happier, and more content with your journey.

You will (perhaps begrudgingly) learn to gracefully accept and welcome feedback.

There is no way around it, your work is going to be critiqued.

When you make the choice to make a living from your work, you're going to have to put it out there for the world to see—and judge. And, that means you'll inevitably run into feedback, and sometimes harsh feedback, of your work.

And we're not going to lie, it often hurts. You put your emotions, real personal experiences, closest ideas—your whole self—into your work. And that's why criticism can cut deep.

The fastest way around this is to take in criticism and actually listen to the core of it to fuel your growth. The more you listen, the more you tweak, improve, become more efficient, more profitable. You can ultimately build a better business by truly listening and absorbing your feedback and applying it to your business.

If you run your art business in a vacuum and only listen to positive reviews, your business will always remain stagnant. The more you can embrace a “what could I be doing better” mindset, the faster your business will grow and the happier your customers will be. Don't be afraid to even reach out to collectors or clients you recently worked with and ask them about their experience. Where can you improve, what worked, what didn't, what were the areas that caused friction or anxiety with the client? How can you work on that in the next order? Criticism is hard to swallow for just about everyone, but those who actually listen to it are better business owners for it.

Perfection is the enemy of progress.

At the core of perfectionism is fear. Fear of failure. Fear of rejection. Fear of not measuring up to expectations.

This fear can be crippling, especially in a creative field that requires us to constantly be producing and putting our whole selves on the line. That vulnerability has the ability to stop a perfectionist in their tracks, making it nearly impossible to make anything at all.

Practice accepting where you are currently with your work. It can be difficult when you first start out (or really at any stage) to accept the gap between where you are and where you want to be. You have a vision for your work, but your skills just aren't taking you there ... yet.

Focus on making more work, more sketches, more models, instead of endlessly picking apart one project.

Realize that you don't have to create a masterpiece every time you enter the studio. If you go in and fingerpaint and it feels good, you learn something, you stretch yourself, and enjoy the process, that is a success.

You don't have to say something huge with every artwork that you make. Take the pressure off and you will enjoy yourself along the way.

Getting organized from the start saves you a ton of stress.

There is nothing worse than spending your time looking for files, contact information, images or details

WHEN YOU DECIDE TO TURN YOUR ART INTO A CAREER, YOU WILL BEGIN TO SEE YOUR ARTWORK AS AN ASSET IN A BUSINESS.

about an artwork when you should be in the studio. You already have so much to do and hunting down or mentally keeping track of what gallery which artwork is at and when it needs to come back is not where you need to be spending your energy.

The reality is, staying organized is a daily struggle for a lot of artists.

However, having an organized art business from the start can save you a ton of stress and put you in a better place to scale your art business more quickly.

Being organized is what helps you get paid on time, gets you bigger opportunities and lets you present yourself with ease and professionalism.

You should be spending less time searching for files, formatting PDFs and combing through endless spreadsheets. That's why products that were made specifically for artists like Artwork Archive are critical for organizing, sharing and running your art business. Five minutes could save you hours of frustration and stress.

It's not like what you see on Instagram.

Not all days are sun-lit studios and gallery openings. As anyone who has spent more than five minutes scrolling through social media has noticed, there are a lot of idyllic posts from artists and entrepreneurs out there that can be both inspiring and, at the same time, discouraging.

An endless feed of successful artists traveling the world, making a what you perceive to be a great living can be fuel and also make you believe that they too don't do the hard work behind those pretty pictures. Don't compare your journey to what you see on social media. Comparison is the thief of joy and vision.

You will (and should) say yes to all opportunities ... at first.

In your first year, the more opportunities you say "yes" to, the more opportunities will come your way. You will meet new connections at gallery openings, hear about new funding or shows to apply to at an open critique, find collaboration and business buddies at a local creatives night. Putting yourself out there not only creates more opportunities, but it also gives you a community that will be critical for your success.

Instead of approaching galleries cold, apply to as many juried shows as you can.

If your artwork is accepted and sells in a juried show, it's not uncommon for a gallery to ask for more work. It's almost like a trial period where a gallery can see how your work is received by the public and what you are like to work as an artist.

When they do ask, be prepared to present them with professional tear sheets or consignment sheets with the work that you deliver. You will not only make a great first impression, but they will also be more likely to want to keep working with you in the future.

Of course, you can't keep saying yes forever or you will burn out. Over the first year as a full-time artist you will learn what opportunities are worth saying "yes" to and which are better to say "no, thanks". Keeping track of your shows and sales will help you get insights into what opportunities to invest in the following years.

You can (and should) stay firm on your pricing

You need to have your work at competitive market prices and charge at your skill level, but working endless hours for an unfair wage will only lead to massive stress. In your first year, you will be tempted to make a sale no matter what. You will lower your prices, give discounts and agree to unadvisable terms.

What you will learn is that you are in charge of the wages that you make.

You can set your prices and people will still agree to them, but you have to learn to treat yourself with the respect you would treat a hardworking employee. You will also learn that some people might not agree to these terms or prices and that's their choice. There will be clients that will.

However, consider the value and demand for your work as well. If you quickly and continually sell out of your \$250 dollar works, it's time to increase prices.

You will regret not documenting and cataloging your artwork in the future.

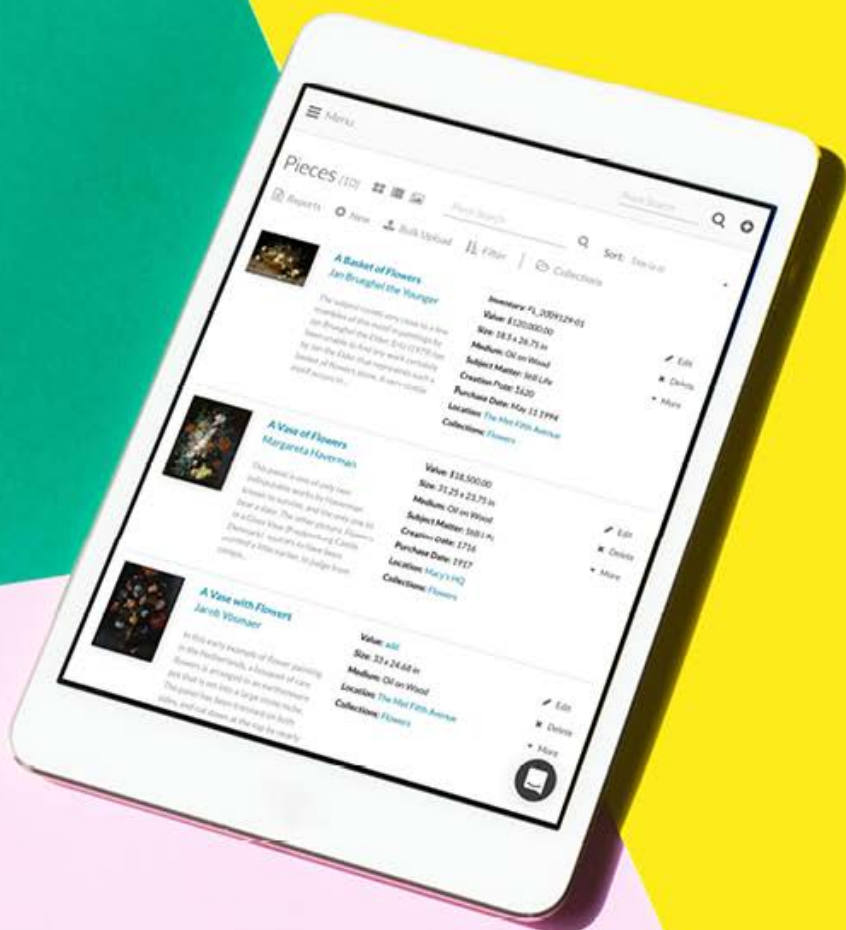
In your excitement to make a sale, you might be tempted to skip documenting and cataloging your artwork. However, you will find that this is of the most essential parts of the process as the photographs will act as your portfolio for future sales.

Inventorizing your artwork ensures your legacy as an artist and helps establish your credibility. It also helps to organize, strengthen, and streamline your art business.

Creating an inventory of your work doesn't have to be the daunting task that we make it out to be—especially with so many easy-to-use and intuitive art inventory programs out there.

That is why online art inventory management systems like Artwork Archive exist ... to keep track of the massive amount of details on your hands.

See how you can get organized in just a few minutes each week with [Artwork Archive](#).



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with

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