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Designing beautiful artist websites – 12 tips to showcase your art

SUMMARY

Here's the scoop on what things you must know when designing a website to showcase your art, impress galleries and win over collectors. Learn how to avoid the mistakes most emerging artists make when creating their on-line portfolio.

AUTHORS

Josse Ford and Daniel Tardent provide creative services for artists including web design, artist weblogs and marketing materials at Beautiful Websites for Artists. Visit our website at <http://www.beautifulwebsitesforartists.com>

1. You need an artists website

Any artist who can classify themselves as either “emerging” or “mid-career” will definitely benefit from having their own website to promote their work. At this stage of your career it is important to be able to have a place where anyone in the world can easily access and view your work.

2. Know who you are trying to impress

Are you trying to engage a Soho gallery to sell your \$20,000 paintings or sell \$5 prints to children in Korea? That Soho gallery might not be impressed when they see your online-store selling prints and art cards – but on the other hand, you could make a very handsome living if you really knew how to market those art cards.

3. Make your website fit with your overall art marketing strategy

A website is most effective when it is part of a larger overall marketing strategy for your art. This includes mailings, lots of in-person gallery visits and presentations, regular (physical) showings of your work, and developing relationships with the art world. An effectively planned website can greatly compliment and simplify your other marketing efforts.

4. There is a real market for art on the internet

The internet is quickly becoming an accepted place to showcase your art to collectors and arts professionals. They might still want to see your work in person before they buy, but the fact remains: they saw it first on your website! Having an online art presence is very important at this time.

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5. Have your own website and a website portfolio service.

A website portfolio service (e.g. www.absolutearts.com or www.art-exchange.com) is like an online slide registry. For a fee you can upload images of your work together with a bio, artist statement, and resume. They have many visitors and are a convenient way to make your work accessible to potential clients. The down side is that they don't display your work well, and there is little flexibility in how the art is showcased.

Your own website, on the other hand will require more work to promote, but you'll be able to present the work in the most beautiful way. Remember the times you've been taken into the dimmer room in a commercial gallery? How that art which looked fairly good on the main gallery wall suddenly became something you had to take home? That's how a good artist's website should showcase your work.

We recommend both options – they are a perfect compliment.

6. Have a website that collectors and art professionals will enjoy.

Here are some common elements which most dealers and galleries would agree on for your website design:

- Keep the site simple and elegant with the focus on the art itself and don't overpower the art with a site that looks too busy
- Avoid advertising such as banner ads or sidebar ads. If you must have them, put them in a separate "resource" section
- Avoid complex effects like flash movies. In the time it takes to play your exotic entry page, your visitor may have moved on.
- Include your bio, artist statement, resume, contact information, gallery(s) of your work, contact information, and a pricelist.

7. Showcase your work beautifully.

You need to have visual design skills to create a beautiful artist website. Here are some points to get you started:

Most Important: Use high-quality, professionally-photographed images. Excellence in, excellence out!

- Keep the website simple and elegant with the focus on the art.
- Create multiple galleries to compliment the work – just as a good physical gallery would do.
- Choose colors that compliment (not overpower) the work. Think of the colors you would use in a physical gallery to showcase your work – neutral colors like crème, white, gray, and good safe choices.
- Think "minimalist" not "busy" for the layout.
- Keep your copy (text) brief. Let the art speak for itself!

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8. Bring collectors and galleries to your website.

It's no use having that stunning website sitting in hyperspace. Make it work for you! Here are the ways to bring quality visitors:

Search Engines: If your website has been well optimized for search engines, a search on your name or your style of art should bring up your website in the first few pages of results.

Letters of Introduction: A letter of introduction sent to a gallery or dealer is a very effective way to bring a qualified visitor to your website. Better still is to include a brochure or postcard of your work with the letter.

Advertising online or in magazines: For example, if your art is minimalist and modern in style, a banner ad on an interior design website focused on the same minimalist ethic could draw a lot of traffic to your site.

9. You need to be able to sell your work on the internet.

But there are many ways to do it. More important than anything is that you have clear and up-to-date contact information on your website. If a buyer likes your work enough to bring out their checkbook, they will normally be happy to call you to close the sale.

It's also handy to be able to sell directly from your website, especially if you sell lower-cost reproductions. There are simple and cost-effective ways to do this.

10. Think again before designing your own website.

Have you really added up the total cost? Here are some questions to consider before you start designing:

- Do you have visual design skills/training?
- Can you wait several months for the site to be ready?
- Can you afford to give up a month or more of your valuable artist time?
- Do you have all the computer software and the relatively-new computer needed to build a high-quality website?
- Are you fully trained in your design software?

Can you answer "Yes" to all of the above? If so, you might think about doing it yourself. Otherwise, hire a designer!

11. Choose your website-designer thoughtfully.

The most important thing here is to remember what you are trying to create – a beautiful online gallery space to elegantly show your beautiful work – this is very different from building a high-volume website selling printer ink cartridges and paper rolls!

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Look for the ability to design a space to present your work. One way to do this is to find artist websites that you like and then contact the artist to get the name of their designer.

12. Know what you should pay

Artist's website development prices range from a few hundred to tens of thousands of dollars. Typically, bigger design firms have larger overheads and will be significantly more expensive. On the other hand, Joe down the street can probably build you a website for \$200 – but you probably don't want that website!

At Beautiful Artist Websites we have packages ranging from \$700 to \$2000 for simple elegant artists websites with different levels of functionality. We can also develop fully customized sites to your specifications with prices based on requirements.

About This Report

© Josse Ford and Daniel Tardent 2005. Josse Ford and Daniel Tardent are the founders of Beautiful Artist Websites (www.beautifulartistwebsites.com.) We design cost-effective beautiful artist websites that showcase and sell your work to arts professionals. Visit our articles page for effective art marketing tips and sign up for our **free report: 6 Steps to Easy Online Art Sales**. Please feel to send this article to all of your artist friends or to place it on your website (as long as you respect the copyrights of the authors by publishing the entire article as it is with no changes, including keeping the links active and giving full author credit).