

## Prep to Use

notes

### On the Web

Entering juried exhibitions and art fairs is an important step toward increasing your visibility as an artist and raising the awareness of your artwork. But juried shows alone are not enough. You also need to get your art—on the web.

### Why Online?

As an artist in the 21st century, it is mandatory that you have a presence online. It's today's version of a printed business card, only better. Why?

First, having your art online is a low-cost way to showcase it for prospective buyers and gallery owners. There are many tools available—some free—that let you present a portfolio of your work online where it can be seen.

Second, what's the first thing you do when you hear about something new? That's right—you "Google it" to learn more. When your artwork is online, people can find it when they search because it will be indexed and appear in search results.

Being online also provides an easy way for you to tell your story as an artist—which lets you connect with potential buyers and galleries whom you've not met.

"Do you have a website where I can see more of your work?" It's a question that will be asked increasingly as you exhibit your work, and having your art online gives you an answer to what would otherwise be an awkward question.

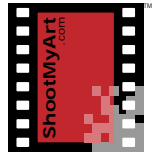
Are you convinced? OK then, let's talk about how you get your art online?

### A Website

The first way to put your art online is with a website. And there are several tools that let you easily design a website yourself and have it hosted for free.

Wordpress is arguably the most widely used—it powers about 25% of all web sites—and there is a free version with many excellent templates available and a wide range of features. Weebly and Wix also offer free plans that can get just about any artist online quickly and easily.

Any list of the most important features for an artist's website starts with an image gallery. You need a place to display images of your artwork—the walls of your online gallery, so to speak. You also need to create pages with an artist's statement about the work, as well as for your resume, a biography, and a list of current exhibitions. And you want to be able to write about your art in a blog that can establish a more personal connection with visitors to your website. Finally, get a personalized web



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address that makes finding your website easier and starts to establish your “brand” as an artist.

### Best Practices

Now let’s talk about best practices—the things that make for an excellent website. If you’re just getting started, keep these in mind as you put yours together. If you already have a website, then use this as a checklist.

First and foremost is easy navigation. That means the menu is simple and well organized so a visitor can easily explore your site and quickly find what they want to see.

The next is tightly edited text. Anything a visitor will read—like your bio—should be short and to the point. Avoid long, rambling text because most people won’t read beyond the first 100 words.

The images in your online gallery should display quickly. In this regard, think about your own experience...do you stay on a web page if the images don’t display immediately? No one else does either! Use small JPEG images (up to 1200 pixels) and the medium quality setting when saving the files. And avoid fancy gallery slideshows if they slow it down.

There should be nothing on your website that will distract the visitor from viewing your art and learning more about you. That means no ads, no links to your favorite art websites, and no background music. And don’t “watermark” the images—it’s hard to do well without ruining the appearance of the artwork.

And check to be sure that your website looks as good on a mobile device as it does on a computer. More than half of all visits to websites now are made on a phone or tablet—making the organization, content, and speed of your website that much more important.

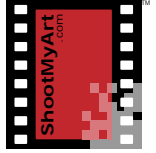
Finally, take the time to update your website frequently with new artwork and new exhibitions. Visitors can easily spot a website that hasn’t been kept current, and they likely won’t return. Don’t lose your audience by neglecting to update your website.

### Social Media

Social media sites, like Facebook or Pinterest, are a second way for you to get your artwork online and connect with prospective buyers.

Importantly, though, social media is not a substitute for a website. You certainly can post images of your art and provide information about yourself, but social media sites are designed to do something else.

Social media provides a way for you to network with your audience and connect with prospective buyers through others who have an interest in your art. It’s an audience building tool, more than an information tool, and



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it has a place in your efforts to market and sell your art.

Now for some advice. There are a lot of social media sites out there, so pick just one or two sites that you use often. If you use Facebook to stay in touch with family and friends, then use Facebook for your art. If you use Pinterest, then use it. Posting on a site with which you're already familiar makes the work of communicating about your art easier. And learning to use one site well takes less time than learning to use many. After all, you still need time to create art.

And keep your art postings separate from your personal ones by using a different page on the site or a second account. No one who's a prospective buyer of your artwork is interested in what you did on vacation. Enough said.

### Getting Online

1. Do you have a website now?  Yes  No
2. If you answered yes, then congratulations. Now check your website against the list of best practices. If you answer no to any of these items, describe what you need to change?
  - Easy navigation?  Yes  No
  - Tightly edited text?  Yes  No
  - Images display quickly?  Yes  No
  - Nothing distracting?  Yes  No
  - Looks good on mobile devices?  Yes  No
3. If you don't yet have a website, let's get started—keeping in mind the best practices listed above.
  - Visit WordPress.com, Weebly.com or Wix.com and sign up.
  - Pick a theme or template that includes an image gallery.
  - Set up the welcome page with a large image of one of your best pieces, an artist statement, and contact information.
  - Add pages for exhibitions, a biography, and a resume.
  - Upload as many as 20 images of your best work to the gallery.
  - Now publish your website. Your art is online!
4. Do you use a social media site for your art?  Yes  No
5. If you answered yes, are postings about your artwork on a different page or account than your personal ones?  Yes  No
6. If you don't use a social media site for your art, do you use one to connect with friends and family?  Yes  No If yes, then set up a new page or account and start posting about your art.
7. If you don't use social media, ask your artist friends what they use.