AMPLIFY ARTS

Website and Social Media Resource Guide

Having and maintaining your own artist website is becoming an essential. Curators, collectors, funders, and critics use networked technology as a primary source to discover artists. A website is also an indispensable marketing tool and will showcase your work to the broadest audience possible.Your website should be easy to use, work for you, showcase your work, and give people an easy way to contact you.

THIS IS ONLY ADVICE. It is up to you to do your research, plan, and make decisions regarding what kind of online presence you want to have, and what sort of website will serve you best. The Internet is constantly changing with new programming, languages, browser requirements, and accepted rules of "good design." It is important to remember that your site should reflect the tone of your practice and that good website can be a meaningful extension of your work.

Where do you start?

Before you do anything else, you'll need a domain name. Your domain name will be the URL you give to people directing them to your site. It should be memorable, easily pronounceable, and hopefully easy to spell. If your full name is available, it's a good idea to buy that no matter what so that you won't have someone owning www.yourname.com in the future. Check right now to see if your name is available by visiting any of the hundreds of sites that provide this search capability, like http://www.checkdomain.com.

The price to register a domain ranges from $10 to $30 a year. You will want to buy yourdomainname.com AND .org. you might also consider buying .net. Anything else is really just an extra expense and you don't have to worry about people confusing it with your own website name.

Buy only your domain name. Don't bother buying any hosting services right now. That comes later and can get a little complicated. You can use any number of companies to buy your domain name. There are dozens of services out there, so remember to do your research! Some are created specifically for artists.

Ways to use a name already taken... long last name, shorten it, etc.

What do you want from a website and how do you want it to work for you?

Just like with your artist statement or portfolio, your website is all about communicating the most important aspects of your work clearly. The way others see your work, and what they want to get out of that experience depends on how you communicate it.

Consider your practice and how you want to come across to people who visit your site.

You may want to appear commercial. You may want to only show work that is available for sale. You may want to include prices, or even an auction feature. Realize how this will impact how your work is viewed, as some people in the art world might find this tacky or distracting, while others might be looking for a bargain. Whether you put prices on your website or not, if selling is your primary goal, then make sure visitors know your work is for sale.

You might want to appear experimental. Does your practice demand an extremely unconventional website, with lots of innovative features? These kinds of sites usually work for artists who make interactive, web-based work. Also, artists with more established careers tend to employ these sorts of unique, but sometimes frustrating, designs. Consider if you are willing to sacrifice usability for experience.

You may want your site to mimic the look of a "white cube" gallery, with a white background, sans-serif font text, and minimal distractions. This is the most popular design for artist websites, especially the kind of sites offered by online services providing template designs. While your site might look like everyone else's, think about how the ease of use will benefit or hinder how people see your work. Your site should be about your work, not the design on your site. But then again, your work is affected by the design of the site. Your site should be clean and concentrate on featuring the work without too many distractions.

You may decide you don't want or need a website. Some artists, especially those who built their careers during a time before the Internet, often rely on their gallery to maintain their online presence. Other artists believe a website provides a false contextualization for their work. And some artists just don't want to go through the hassle of having and maintaining a website. Before you decide to chuck the idea of a website entirely, think about the people you won't be able to reach and the opportunities that will fall by the wayside if you don't keep an online presence. Consider maintaining a limited artist website with just a few images, or just a statement, résumé, and contact information. In the end it's up to you how much of your practice you make available on your website and other social networking sites.

What should you do next?

The first thing to do is to RESEARCH RESEARCH RESEARCH. You should look at dozens, if not hundreds of artists' websites before you even begin to think about your own site. You will want to bookmark the ones you like and the ones you really dislike. Taking notes on what works and what doesn't will help you when you start to shop around for your own site.

Find five sites you really like and five sites that you don't. This will be really helpful for you as well as anyone else you work with to get your site up and running.

It's up to you whether you want to register with these sites and open your own profile, but it's a good idea to launch your own website before you register with these services.

Some basic advice and guidelines to think about when reviewing artist websites:

1. Make it ACCESSIBLE. When you go to an artist's website you should immediately see work and understand where you need to click to see more work, as well as the artist statement, résumé, contact info, and any other information vital to your practice.

2. KEEP YOUR VISITOR. You don't want your website's design to encourage your visitor to leave, ever. You want your visitor to stay as long as possible. Avoid splash pages or entry portals which require the user to click on multiple pages or see an animation before getting to your site. Even though it might seem obvious that this is what you need to do to access the rest of the site, you risk confusing your visitor or having her/him simply leave your site because she/he doesn't like the one particular work on the splash page. Avoid designs requiring your visitor to download special plug-ins to view video or images. Anything like this could cause him or her to leave your site. Do not have video or audio play automatically. Keep it simple so you do not distract from your work.

3. Make it FAST. There is nothing more infuriating than visiting a website and having to wait for something to load, be it a horizontal bar, a swirling arrow, or a cute animal chasing its tail. This means that, in general, gratuitous features made using Flash are not your friend. Flash is an amazing program, but don't let it get in the way of an eager visitor trying to see your work. The longer a visitor has to wait, the more likely she/he is to leave your site. This rule doesn't necessarily apply once you are in the artist's site, as most people understand that it can take a moment to load video or images. But if it takes more than one or two seconds for something to load, you can bet you will loose visitors. Now many site templates are made for integration into mobile ready devices (your smart phone, iPad, etc.) so this might be a good choice if you want to be accessible at all times on all devices.

4. A blog is not a website. You can certainly use a blog template, like a Wordpress template to design your site, but in general, you want each work to appear on its own, above the fold (which means you shouldn't have to scroll down to see the rest of the page, unless you make it clear that there is more below the fold in the design of the page). Blogs are a great tool, as you will see later in this tutorial, but if you want a website that is easy to navigate and makes each individual work look its best, you want to avoid a blog format where you have to scroll, scroll, scroll your way down to see more work. Having a blog on your first page is not recommended, and if it is a part of your website, make sure it can be accessed by a separate page.

5. Your website should focus on your art, not pictures of your vacation with your family, not pretty pictures of sunsets, and not work by other artists you admire. Your website should only have your work, and in general should only include work you consider complete and ready for exhibition. You may want to post pictures of works in progress, studies, or preliminary plans, but be aware that you risk giving away the surprise that comes with seeing complete work. Blogs are good for these kinds of images.

6. Separate your fine art from other work. If you do work for hire, contract work, or commission work as a designer or in another field that you don't consider part of your art practice, then don't mix this work up with your art on your artist website. For example, if you are a photographer but you also take wedding photographs on the weekend to pay the rent, you might want to think twice about having those wedding photos on your site next to your fine art photography. Mixing the two could risk confusing your visitors, or worse, labeling you as unprofessional. Many artists now have hybrid careers in which their money-making job has a close relationship to their art practice, so be smart about how you represent yourself. You may be enlightened about a hybrid practice, but your view may not.

7. Do not use "cookies" (small files which attach to a visitor's hard drive to track movements around your site and collect personal data). They are an invasion of privacy and may cause you trouble. If the user blocks cookies she/he won't see your site.

8. Make sure your website looks good on different browsers, especially Safari, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Bing, or Chrome. Some people use older computers and older versions of these browsers so try to test your site using these aged computers as well.

9. Don't use too much text. You can say as much as you like with your artist statement, bio, and résumé, but don't require your visitor to read tons of text at every turn (unless, of course, the work itself is text-heavy).

10. Provide the right information. Just like your printed portfolio, you want your website to provide accurate and necessary information about each piece. This means providing the basic info for each work: Title, date, dimensions, and medium. If the work needs more explanation provide it, especially for installations and work that might not be as accessible on the Internet. Sound art, performance, video, and other kinds of projects are harder to showcase, so consider how you represent these works. They may need a lot more explanation than a still image.

11. Keep your images limited to 72 dpi. This is the standard pixel size for online images. You also don't want your images taking up the entire screen. Remember, some people use very small computer screens, smart phones, or tablets when looking at websites, and have multiple windows or tabs open at once. Depending on the constraints of your web design, you might want to limit the width of your images to 800pixels max. Also, try to limit the size of images to less than 200K, which will ensure that each page loads quickly.

12. Make sure you can easily drag and drop images directly from the site onto your desktop. This may seem like a negligible feature, but it's very important. When curators, collectors, or just interested parties are searching the web for works they like, or artists to consider for a show, they will want to simply drag images off the site into a folder on their desktop. Make sure that when you do this the corresponding file name that appears on the desktop has at least your last name as its title. Worried about people stealing your work or printing posters from your online images? Keep in mind that printing from a 72 dpi image almost always guarantees horrible image quality when printed. Plus, having your work on the Internet and copyrighted should deter anyone trying to use your work without your permission. You can also watermark your images, but this can be distracting when viewing them.

13. Make sure visitors can contact you directly. Your site should have a contact page with your email listed. Some people prefer not to fill out forms, so you want to have some way for them to click on your email and contact you through their computer's email program. There are ways to use html to hide your actual email address from spammers in a way that will still let visitors email you. And, of course, don't list personal information like street address or phone number, unless you want everyone in the world to have that information.

14. Avoid having links that go to someone else's site from yours. Have those links open in another window instead, so your site remains accessible.

15. Keep ads off your site. Your website is the best advertisement for your work. Why would you want to clutter it with ads for other people's stuff? If you want to make money from ad space, do it with a blog, not with your website.

16. Share the love. Make sure your site includes a links page where you can provide a list of links to your artist friends, colleagues, institutions you support, and artists you admire. Sharing links is not only a great way to show support, it also generates web traffic and can help your site climb higher in Internet search engine results.

17. QR codes (short for Quick Response Code) are being used as a way to help get people to your site and are often used on printed materials as well as websites, products etc. This code can be generated by QR software and used for multiple purposes. It can be scanned by electronic devices and include multiple kinds of information, such as a link to your website.

After you have bought your domain name, done your research, bookmarked some sites you like and a few you don't, what do you do next?

Your next step will be to start thinking about hosting options. There are many options available to you when creating a web presence. First we should address the whole notion of "free hosting."

1. Free hosting: Nothing is ever "Free." Free websites, demo websites, and websites run by online arts organizations make money by planting ad space on your site or profile page. (Not your best option). You can register with these sites as a way to network with other artists but you should keep a few things in mind:

   a. Your website will have the company's name in it, unless you have the option. So, if you give this site out as your official website it will be forever tied to that company, leaving visitors to wonder why you do not have a professional website.

   b. You will be a nobody, a small fish in a big pond with hundreds, sometimes thousands of artists competing for viewers. You can use them to direct traffic to your own website, but we recommend that you do not use this as your primary worksite.

   c. Ads will clutter the site's design and distract from your work.

   d. Some of these sites have horrible designs and can make even great work look terrible.

   e. The chance of actually selling work using these sites is miniscule. At the end of the day the people really making money are the people running the site.

   f. It can be difficult or impossible to remove yourself from these sites AND, if they have a lot of artists on their site, your name, your hosted page could come up high in Google search results. This means that even if you have your own website, this site might appear before it when Google runs a search. You want people to visit YOUR site, not some company's site hosting your profile.

   g. Take a few minutes to peruse the artists websites offered by these services and ask yourself if that is the ideal way you want people to view your work.

What other options are available?

1. **Hire someone to do it for you.** Paying a designer to create your website from the bottom up can be a fantastic experience, resulting in an amazing website, or it can be an infuriating struggle culminating in a mediocre site.

   Designers can charge anywhere from $15 to over $100 an hour. As with almost everything else in the world, you get what you pay for. So if you want a site with a lot of bells and whistles, be prepared to pay for it.

   Some designers can try to charge you every time you need to update your site. This can mean hundreds, if not thousands of dollars down the road. So make sure you work out the details of how you will update your site ahead of time, and make sure that you will have access to your site for updating yourself. You should own your own site fully once it is completed. Make sure this is in the contract. If you are going to hire a designer you should make sure to do the following:

   a. Do your research. Look at his or hers past work, see if it fits the look you are going for with your site. If the designer specializes in designing for corporations, like banks or shopping centers, make sure she/he has also made websites for artists. You don't want to be her/his first artist client. In fact, it's a good idea to go with someone who specializes in designing artist websites because she/he will know how users navigate artist websites, she/he will know how the site should flow from page to page and the subtleties of making artwork look good on the Internet.

   b. Understand the difference between a designer and a programmer. A designer will actually create the look of the website, where text goes, where images go, etc. A programmer actually writes code and makes the design a workable reality. Sometimes designers are also programmers, but not always. If you just work with a programmer, she/he will expect you to design the work and you will get exactly what you ask for, which, in the end, might not be what you want. It is always important to talk with a designer.

   c. Request at least three references you can contact. This means people you can actually talk to on the phone. You'll want to ask them about their experience working with the designer. Did the designer meet their expectations? Did they do what they said they were going to do? Were deadlines met? Did the designer stick to the budget?

   d. Never underestimate the power of references. First send the word out to your artist friends that you are looking for a designer. Ask around and see if you know any designers you can work with one-on-one. Who knows, you might be able to have them design the site for you in-trade for artwork.

   e. Try and find a designer that will write code allowing you to easily update your site yourself. This will save you money because you won't have to pay a programmer to do it for you.

   f. When you have decided on a web designer, you will need to draw up a very simple contract stating when certain steps in the project need to be completed and when payment is due. It's a good idea to reserve your final payment (usually half of the total estimate) for when the site is entirely finished. Never pay the final payment until you have a copy of the site on a CD (etc). This will be a single folder with many folders nested within it. The reason you want this file is because with it you can alter the code, and change and update the website yourself, should you decide to do so, or should you want to switch to another designer.

2. **Do it yourself.** Designing your own website can be a great learning experience. When you're done you will not only have built your site on your own terms, but you will have also learned a valuable skill that you can, perhaps, turn around and use to help other artists.

   That said, learning how to build a website can be a daunting experience depending on the kind of site you want to build and how you want your site to function. Before you decide to go it alone you need to ask yourself a few questions:

   a. How much time do I have to devote to designing my site?

   b. Do I trust my skills as a designer enough to believe that I will create a professional looking website?

   c. How much money am I willing to invest in software and classes that will help me design the site I want?

   d. Am I willing to learn programming languages like HTML, XHTML, CSS, PHP and programs like Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Flash, etc? or Wordpress and template sites, Tumbler

   e. Am I willing to keep up with changes in these programming languages and adapt my site accordingly?

   f. Am I willing to invest in this design for the long-run? The web changes at a rapid pace and eventually you will have to redesign your site (probably in the next two years, if you want to stay up-to-date). Will you be willing to put in this effort?

   After answering these questions you should have a pretty good idea of your abilities and commitment to designing your own site. If you are unsure whether or not you are up to the challenge, if you doubt your ability to put in the time, money and effort, or if you have no idea what HTML, PHP, Photoshop, or 72dpi even mean, you might want to consider going with a company that specializes in pre-fab artist websites.

   Still on the fence? Read on and see what it takes to create your own website. Once again, please understand that this is a very rudimentary overview of how to craft your own website. Doing this yourself will take lots of time and diligence. The payoff comes in developing a new skill set and having total control of your site.

   a. Make a plan. You should always plan a website on paper (electronic paper) first before you begin even gathering together your website images and text. Look at other artists' sites and consider the features that you feel you need. Most important, consider the objective and the audience for your site. Do you want to sell work on the site? Do you want to keep your site simple so that everyone, including those who still have slow connections, can see it?

      Good design is important and the site should be easy to use. While researching other sites, pay attention to details such as the navigation of the site, download times, the structure of the site, how each page looks, and the accessibility of the site (i.e.. plug-ins, browser, platform and operating system). Some people go overboard with special animated flash content, and it drives visitors crazy, since they spend too much time waiting for a site to open and move on. You do NOT want your audience to move on. Never use Flash on your website if you want it to be accessible to all viewers.

Get a stack of blank note cards and draw out a very rough sketch of what you want your homepage to look like. Then draw out what the Works page will look like, the résumé page, the artist statement page, etc. Next, lay these pages out and connect them with lines or string, showing how each page will link to another. The layout should look quite simple when it's finished. You will want to document how this layout looks for incorporating it later into your websites' overall design. Look at multiple navigation models and see which one fits your needs.

b. Start working on content. You might want to break up your site into a number of categories, which can be accessed from a contents page on the first page of your site. Some examples include: exhibitions, résumé, artist statement, curatorial projects, public art, press, lectures and panels, or any of the other categories you may currently list on your résumé. You may also have a news section for upcoming events, PR, or a place to sign up for your email list. Carefully plan out just how you want your site to work, and begin collecting content for the site.

Content for the site should include any text-based files you have (artist statement, résumé, work descriptions, bio) as well as images. The two most common image file formats for websites are JPEG, PGN and GIF. Use JPEGs for images of artwork, and GIFs for buttons and other graphic elements. PGN files for those which need clear backgrounds. The resolution of these image files on the web should be no larger than 72 dpi. Any files with a larger dpi will increase the download time for your images. You can also include attachments that can be downloaded such as a pdf (best) or a word file. This is great for artist statements or a résumé.

After you have created your site, imported images, text, and linked up all your pages, make sure to have a few other people go over the design, especially the text, to spot any mistakes. You don't want to publish your site with any grammatical errors or misspelled words. And you want to make sure that your visitors can get from page to page easily. Some fonts do not show up on other computers, or change from PC to Mac, so be sure to test them if you are not using standard web fonts.

c. Find a host. A site host or provider is where the files of your website reside on the Internet. Many companies can provide you with both a domain name and web hosting for one fee. Generally, the fee for web hosting is based on the space or file size that your website will occupy on the company's server, in addition to services such as email accounts, password protected pages, etc.

You need to decide early on if you want your site to include video, multiple email accounts, lots of images, large images, a blog, a discussion forum, or any number of functions because these capabilities will influence how much your hosting costs.

A lot of people have hosting space that they do not even know about, as many companies provide a small hosting account that comes with an email account. Most Internet Service Providers offer their customers limited website space as part of their email service package. Usually this space is adequate for a basic artist website, although if you don't have your own domain name, often the website addresses these companies assign are complicated. One way to get around this is to go ahead and purchase a domain name and then have the company that is providing the domain name reroute visitors to the address where your site is hosted. Otherwise your website address might include the name of the hosting company, which is distracting to those looking for your domain name. Advertising for another company does not look professional.

Make sure that when you purchase your hosting package you know what you are paying for. Many services try to sell you functions and space you simply don't need. Its worth the time and effort to call the hosting company and speak to someone directly who can walk you through the process. Also you might want to consult with a web designer, or another artist who's dealt with this process ahead of time and ask what services you should purchase. There are now many services that cater specifically to artists and other creatives with templates that are good for the presentation of artwork. More are coming online every month, so ask other artists for a recommendation.

d. Assess your software needs. If the hosting company has a do it yourself web design software, you might be able to do everything via that site. If not, and you decide to design your website yourself, you will need a software program such as Dreamweaver or other software, some of which you can find free on the internet.

You might also decide to go with a web template that is recognized by blogging sites, like Wordpress. There are literally thousands of templates out there. The trick is to find one that works for you. If you find one you are happy with, you might have to pay the original designer a fee to use it. This can be much cheaper than hiring someone to design an entirely new site for you. But keep in mind that if you want to change the style of the template, meaning colors or any other design elements, you may have to learn PHP, HTML, XHTML, or other programming languages. This can take time and money.

e. Publish your site. Once your site has been created, it needs to be uploaded/published. This will be an ongoing process in the life of your site. The main method of publishing a web site is to use a FTP (file transfer protocol) program. This type of program enables you to transfer files from your development site to a live server. There are plenty of good freeware FTP programs out there so do some research. Most will meet the needs and size of an artist's web site so find one that works for you. Some hosting companies will take you through the process, or provide an easy way to publish through their website.

f. Another aspect of creating a website is making sure that web users can easily find your website. Search engines literally search a database of indexed sites by seeking keywords or phrases. However, in the case of crawler-based services such as Google, or in the case of user-powered directory-based services like Yahoo, you don't need to submit your site because they have their own site bots (things that search the web for content). Search engine optimization is a science in itself. For more information on how search engines work, visit SearchEngineWatch.com. Browsers are always changing the way they find content, so keeping up with SEO or Search Engine Optimization is smart.

Do NOT pay for services that promise to send your site to search engines or increase traffic to your site, as the search engines will find your site anyway. There is nothing they can do for you that you cannot do yourself.

Create reasons for viewers to come back to your site. Upload new work, information, or projects regularly, and inform your audience that the site has new content. Always have news and events info that is up-to-date.

g. Protect your work. Guarding against unauthorized use of your online images is difficult if not impossible. Exercise due diligence and do what you can to make sure your images are not used without your permission, but never use concerns over copyright infringement as an excuse for not showing your art online or anywhere else, as your work is already in the public domain. Remember that your art is your business card—your single best means of advertising. The more people who see your art, whether in person or online, the greater your chances for exposure. Once your work has been published (this includes showing in a gallery or publishing to a website), your work is then copyrighted.

Always give proper credit to photographers who photograph your work. They need to be recognized and protected too.

h. If you decide to sell your work (artwork, books, editions) online think long and hard about how this will influence how visitors will regard your work. If you've looked at many artists websites you'll notice that most of them do not offer their work for sale directly through their website. There are many reasons for this. First of all, many artists go through galleries or dealers or sell their work directly out of exhibitions or their studios. This establishes a collector-base sprouted from face-to-face contact. But with the Internet changing how people view artwork, more and more sales are happening online. It is up to you to decide if you want to sell work through the net. Most artwork is hard to experience on the web, so most collectors don't buy expensive work without seeing it first hand.

If you sell work through your site you will have to work through Paypal, Ebay, Etsy, or other shopping carts. These services will take a percentage of the sale or charge a fee for each transaction. Contacting these providers and setting up a payment and sales system is relatively easy. Just make sure your website can handle the programming/coding issues that come with making online sales. There are many third party sites to help you sell work which have created the back end for you. If you are selling things at fairs or other public sites, consider using Square or other credit card processing for your phone or tablet.

If your work is for sale, you should consider how you price your work. Make sure work that is for sale is labeled accordingly and make sure that viewers can understand your pricing structure as well.

Offer approval, return, and refund policies. Online shoppers often want to see art on approval first, and be able to return it for a complete refund if it does not look like what they saw on your website. Without this, you may not get many sales. Also remember that the computer screen/image changes the way work looks, so someone might buy your art and demand a refund when, say, the blue color in a painting appears different in-person versus how it looks on the internet. Be prepared to receive returned work.

Once a work has sold take it off your sales page, or put it in another section such as the history of your work. Keeping sold works on your sales page can be confusing. It's like visiting a store, but everything is already sold, which makes for a frustrating shopping experience. Or if it is an important work, make a different section for that work.

3. **Pay a company for a site template and hosting.** In the past few years, dozens of successful web companies have begun marketing pre-made website templates to artists. These companies have done all the work of designing artists websites and some of them look quite good, others have problems. These companies make money by charging a sign up fee and monthly or yearly fees ranging anywhere from $15 - $100 a month, depending on the kind of site you want.

   There are pros and cons that come with subscribing to one of these services. The best thing about going with one of these services is that they have done a lot of the work for you. They've designed the front end, which is how the site appears when you view it on an Internet browser. They've researched what makes a successful artist website and hopefully incorporated good design into their product. They've considered how visitors navigate the site, made it compatible with all browsers, and they work to fix bugs and solve problems. Most importantly for you, they've designed the back end, which is the program you use to upload content to your site.

   When selecting one of these services you want to follow protocol similar to hiring a private web designer. Get referrals, research their client base, look at the sites they provide and review them accordingly. See if you can talk with the people who actually designed the service. Test how quickly they return emails. If your having problems with your site in the future, you'll want to be dealing with someone who gets back to you quickly and fixes problems even quicker.

   On top of researching the website templates they make available on the web, ask to see the back end, the interface their subscribers use to upload new content to their sites. See if they offer a trial period where you can get used to uploading your files. When viewing and using the back end, ask yourself the following questions:

   a. Is the interface intuitive?

   b. Will I need lots of assistance to figure out how to get my information onto my site?

   c. Does the interface allow for me to customize my page?

   d. Is it easy to change font size, color, and add new content sections?

   e. How flexible is the layout and how much power do I have to change it?

   f. How much do they charge for minor customization?

   g. Does the upload feature shut down when I try to upload images?

   h. What size files will the back end allow me to upload?

   i. Am I limited when it comes to the orientation of images or where they appear on the page?

   j. Can I back-up my website on my own computer or a back-up drive or cloud?

   k. Will I be able to find and alter old files easily?

   l. Is there a search feature?

What should you think about before sending an email blast or email newsletter?

Using proper email etiquette can mean the difference between cultivating meaningful support, or birthing angry enemies. Make sure you learn to use email correctly.

1. First of all you might want to purchase or secure a personalized email address connected to your website. This can be mail@yourwebsite.com, your name@yourwebsite.com, etc. Having this email makes you appear professional and looks much better than yourname12345@hotmail.com or gmail.

    If you are going to send emails to more than 20 or so people at once consider using a mass-email system as offered by companies like Constant Contact or Mailchimp (there are many more). Using this system will usually get around spam filters, and your email is less likely to end up in the trash. Most of these services let you send out emails for free until your list gets big enough that you will have to pay a small fee per month.

    Remember, it is annoying and impolite to disclose the email addresses from your contact list in the To: section of an email. Send emails to yourself in the To: section, and then add the others in the BCC (blind carbon copy) section to avoid this problem. Some emails are meant to be private.

2. Be very careful when sending images in your emails, as they can take a long time to download. If you don't know the person you are emailing, think about warning them before you send an email with an attachment. It is a good idea to mention that something is attached, so if it is not there, the receiver can let you know it got stripped (or you forget to attach it.) This way, they will be sure to open your email, instead of rejecting it as virus-laden spam.

    You should never send large files (more than 5 –10MB, depending on the host provider) through email unless requested. For large files, consider using an online service like yousendit.com, which will allow your recipient to download the file via the web. You can also use Dropbox or a similar product to share large files.

3.   Never send unsolicited emails or images to galleries or organizations. If they don't ask for it, don't send it.

4. Never send out unsolicited information about yourself to a bunch of random emails you happened to receive because they were carelessly left visible in the To: field. You don't want to receive an angry email asking, "How did you get my email?" It is also illegal to send unsolicited materials through email, so it is best to stick to people you have at least met in person or online.

5. Use your mail program to create an email signature file that will be included in every email you send. Keep it short with your name, email address, and web site URL and make sure that the link is active. This little trick will work wonders!

6. Sending out a newsletter on a quarterly basis to a list that your readers have opted in or signed up to, and using a bulk mail program is a better way of operating. This way you can not get busted for spam, since the reader signed up to hear from you.

What are some basic guidelines for marketing your work on social media?

1. Social media shouldn't take the place of your portfolio or website. Your social media profiles should work to direct people to your website. Always include links to your website on your SM profile pages.

2. Don't bombard your social networks with messages, group invitations, application invites, virtual gifts, etc. This is annoying. If you send an invite to your show do it once, two or three weeks before the event and maybe send a reminder the day before. That's it. If you moderate a group or fan base, limit messages to a maximum of one per week. Even this can get annoying. The goal is to keep your networks, not abuse them.

3. Post at a pace and frequency that suits you. Try to avoid the pitfalls of comparing your work or success on social media to that of other artists.

4. Be reasonable about asking folks to join your networks. Don't bug people you do not know or have never met.

5. Realize that any content or picture posted to your profile or anyone else's profile is permanent. Even if you remove it, untag yourself, or ask Facebook to get rid of your account, someone could still download your image or content and upload it later. The Internet is much more permanent than you might think. Actively avoid being photographed doing things you might regret later. Employers scour sites like Facebook and other sites for incriminating pictures of future employees. If your friends post unflattering pictures of you, be efficient in asking them to remove the pictures from the web.

6. Think about ways you can synch the aesthetics of your social media profiles to compliment your website and your work. Instagram, Vimeo, and Youtube are a few examples that can help you create a cohesive web presence across multiple platforms.

7. Follow other artists, musicians, writers, performers, curators, critics, collectors, influencers, or arts organizations you admire.

8. Create a dedicated hashtag and promote on other profiles, platforms, and your website.
9. Participate in popular conversations.

10. Write descriptive captions that tell engaging stories.

11. Think about how you want other users to respond to your content and come up with clever ways to encourage viral marketing through reposting, retweeting, etc.

What are a few social media networks that emerging artists find useful?

1. Facebook.com: Facebook is probably the most universally important social networking site if you want to be found. It has essentially become the world's phone book and yellow pages. Here you set up a profile, upload pictures, and let people know about what you are doing. Facebook is a way to network with other artists, venues, and curators. Also the event feature on Facebook is one of the best ways to let people know about your exhibitions and events. You can also create ads on Facebook. You can also use categories to sort "friends". A basic account is free and there are upgrades. You can also now create your own business page for artist run companies, non profits, and collaborations.

2. Artslant.com: Artslant is one of many social networking and news sites specifically for artists. It lets you create a profile and upload some images of your work. It also lists the shows you've been in and who you've shown with. It is less useful since it has become a world-wide project, but it is a good way to let others know of an opening or to find out who is showing where.

3. LinkedIn.com: LinkedIn is like Facebook without all the personal information and bad videos. It is set up for professionals and this is a much better way to contact people rather than cold emailing or Facebook. They also have a serious jobs area, discussion groups for just about every topic (including art) and since you are a professional artist, you should sign up. You can also start your own group in order to get a dialog started or talk about a specific topic that is not being addressed on the site.

4. Pinterest.com: Pinterest is a social networking site that relies on images to get ideas across. Once you join Pinterest, you can create boards and "pin" an image to those boards. Many artists use this to highlight their artwork, recommend things to friends, or for sales. Other people can repin your pins which gives you more exposure. A basic account is free.

5. YouTube.com: YouTube is where you can find almost any video imaginable. It is a video sharing website. This is a good place to post your own videos, of either your work, interviews, etc. The viewing of videos online has increased tremendously so posting here adds to your ranking online. A basic account is free.

6. Vimeo.com: Another video sharing website in which users can upload, share, and view videos. A basic account is free. Some artists find this site more professional and better at linking videos to websites than YouTube.

7. Twitter.com: Twitter is an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables it's registered users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets." Other people can follow your tweets and you can follow theirs. A basic account is free.

8. Instagram: Instagram is a photo sharing site that you can link to other networking sites. Great platform for visual artists (owned by Facebook).

9. Ning.com: Ning is an online platform for people and organizations to create custom social networks. You can create custom layouts and use various plugins created specifically for this site. You can start your own social network here that anyone you invite can join. There is a monthly fee.

10. Meetup.com: Meetup is an online networking portal that facilitates offline gatherings, meetings, group events in various localities across the world. Meetup allows members to find and join groups unified by a common thread. Check out arts related meetups in your area.

    In addition to the above, there are art related sites for portfolios, galleries, deadlines, jobs, resources and information, online communities, residencies, renting artwork, auctions, print on demand, art prints, forums, directories, video portals, blogging and more.

Additional Resources:

1. https://www.studentartguide.com/articles/how-to-make-an-artist-website (Student Art Guide)
2. https://www.artbusiness.com/weberrors.html (Art Business)
3. https://www.squarespace.com/ (Squarespace)
4. https://www.wix.com/ (Wix)
5. https://wordpress.com/ (Wordpress)
6. https://www.artworkarchive.com/blog/which-social-media-channel-is-right-for-your-art-business (Artwork Archive)
7. https://artplusmarketing.com/social-media-for-artists-make-art-for-you-not-likes-d419d4fcd76b (Art + Marketing)