

Unlocking Online Art Sales

A Practical Guide for Visual Artists



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Introduction

Hi, I'm Shenole Latimer, and like many of you, I've spent years immersed in the world of art. For 25 years, I lived the life of a professional musician, navigating the challenges of making a living doing what I love.

Later, as the Education Director at East End Arts in Riverhead, New York, I worked with hundreds of visual artists – painters, sculptors, craftspeople – and saw firsthand the passion they poured into their work, as well as the struggles they faced in getting it seen and sold.

That's why I created SellYourCraft.art. I understand the dedication, the artistic drive, and the often-daunting task of turning your creative passion into a sustainable career. Building an online presence, managing an e-commerce store, marketing your work – these things can feel overwhelming and like they're taking precious time away from your art.

This brief guide is designed to cut through the noise and provide you with practical, actionable steps to unlock the power of online sales. We'll cover key fundamentals like understanding your audience, crafting your artist story, marketing your art effectively, and more.

My goal is to empower you with the knowledge and tools you need to connect with buyers, share your unique vision, and build a thriving art business online.

Let's get started!

Embracing Your Artistic Power

As an artist, you pour your heart and soul into your creations. But sometimes, the hardest part isn't the art itself – it's putting your work out into the world and believing in its value. Many artists, myself included, struggle with self-doubt and the fear of rejection. It's completely normal to feel this way, but it's crucial to overcome these challenges if you want to be successful selling your art online. This section is all about embracing your artistic power and developing the confidence you need to thrive.

Overcoming Self-Doubt

Let's face it, self-doubt is a common companion for artists. We question our skills, worry about what others will think, and sometimes even sabotage our own success. The key is to acknowledge these feelings without letting them paralyze you. Remember why you started creating art in the first place – the passion, the joy, the need to express yourself. Reconnect with that core motivation and use it as fuel to push through the doubt.



Believing in Your Value

Your art is unique. It reflects your individual perspective, your skills, and your creative vision. No one else can create exactly what you do. It's easy to compare yourself to other artists, but it's essential to recognize and celebrate your own unique talents. Believe in the value of your work, even if it's different from what's currently "popular" or "trendy." There's an audience out there for your art; you just need to find them.

Stepping Outside Your Comfort Zone

Selling art online requires you to learn new skills and adapt to a new environment. It's okay to feel uncomfortable at first. Embrace the learning process and don't be afraid to try new things.

You might need to learn about website design, social media marketing, or even basic business principles. The important thing is to be open to learning and to take action, even if it feels a little scary. Every step you take outside your comfort zone is a step closer to your goals.

Finding Your Support System

You're not alone on this journey. Connecting with other artists, joining online communities, and finding mentors can be incredibly helpful. Sharing your struggles and successes with others who understand what you're going through can provide invaluable support and encouragement. Don't be afraid to ask for help or advice. Building a strong support system will make the challenges of selling art online much easier to navigate.

Focusing on Progress, Not Perfection

Perfection is the enemy of progress. Don't let the pursuit of perfection hold you back from taking action. It's okay to make mistakes; everyone does.

The key is to learn from your mistakes and keep moving forward. Focus on the progress you're making, no matter how small, and celebrate every milestone along the way.

Understanding Your Target Audience: The Foundation of Online Success

Before you even think about setting up your online store or marketing your art, you need to know who you're trying to reach. Imagine trying to sell a rock and roll t-shirt to someone who only listens to classical music – it's not going to work! Knowing your target audience is the foundation upon which ALL your online efforts will be built. It informs everything from your website design and product descriptions to your social media strategy and pricing.

Why is knowing your audience so crucial?

Targeted Marketing: Knowing who your ideal customer is allows you to focus your marketing efforts where they're most likely to be effective. Where do they spend their time online? What social media platforms do they use? What kind of content do they engage with?

-Product Selection and Presentation: Understanding your audience's tastes will help you decide what kind of art to feature in your online store and how to present it. Are they drawn to vibrant colors or muted tones? Do they prefer abstract art or realistic landscapes?

-Pricing Strategy: Your target audience's demographics and income level will influence how you price your art. Are you selling to high-end collectors or casual art lovers?

-Building Connections: Knowing your audience allows you to connect with them on a deeper level by understanding their values, motivations, and what resonates with them.



If you're not sure who your target audience is, don't worry! Here's how to figure it out.

Analyze Your Existing Collectors (if any): If you've sold art before, think about who bought it. What are they like? What do they have in common?

2. Research Other Successful Artists: Look at artists whose work is similar to yours. Who are their customers? What kind of art do those customers buy? What language do they use in their marketing? (Don't copy, but learn from their strategies.)

3. Consider Your Art: What kind of person would be most drawn to your art? What are their interests, values, and lifestyle?

4. Engage on Social Media: Connect with people who are interested in art. Ask questions, listen to their feedback, and observe what kind of art they like.

5. Don't Be Afraid to Niche Down: It's often better to target a specific niche audience than to try to appeal to everyone. The more focused your target audience, the more effective your marketing will be.

My Experience (A Real-World Example)

As a musician, I learned firsthand the importance of understanding my audience. I realized that my fan base tended to be within a certain age range, social-economic status, and education level. They were also generally open-minded people. This knowledge directly influenced my marketing decisions. For example, because a significant portion of my fan base was 55 or older, I designed my website with a simple layout and larger fonts to ensure it was user-friendly for them. Understanding these nuances is key to connecting with your audience and making them feel valued!

Connecting Through Your Artist Story (The Narrative)

Your art is more than just a product; it's an expression of who you are. Sharing your artist story is a powerful way to connect with your audience on a deeper level, build relationships, and create a loyal following. It helps people understand your motivations, your inspirations, and the passion behind your work.

Why is your artist story important?

Builds Connection:

People connect with stories. Sharing your personal journey makes you more relatable and human, fostering a sense of connection with your audience.

Creates Emotional Resonance:

A well-told story can evoke emotions and create a lasting impression. This emotional connection can be a powerful motivator for people to buy your art.

Differentiates You:

In a crowded marketplace, your story can set you apart from other artists. It's what makes you unique and memorable.

Share Your Process

Giving your audience a behind-the-scenes glimpse of your creative process can be fascinating. Share photos or videos of you working in your studio, sketching ideas, or experimenting with different techniques. This not only demystifies the artistic process but also allows people to connect with you on a more personal level.



Building a Personal Brand

Your artist story is an integral part of your personal brand. It should be reflected in your website design, your social media presence, and all your marketing materials. Create a consistent brand identity that communicates your artistic style, your values, and your unique story.



Connecting with Your Audience

When I was active as a professional musician, I learned that connecting with an audience is about more than just technical skill. While my musical background (coming from a family of musicians, a couple of whom worked with iconic musicians like Stevie Wonder) was interesting to some, what truly captivated my audience was my present energy and enthusiasm. My philosophy was simple: fun is infectious!

Also, I genuinely enjoyed myself, and I projected that joy to the audience. They, in turn, enjoyed being around me and experiencing the positive energy. But then, I would feed off of THEM feeding off of my original energy...I think you get the picture. Ultimately, I suppose you could say my performances were just one big, glutinous feeding frenzy of energy!

This translates to visual artists as well. While your past and your artistic journey are important, your present passion and enthusiasm for your work will shine through and attract your audience. Be authentic, be yourself, and let your genuine excitement for your art be contagious. Connect with your audience not just through your art, but through your personality and the energy that you project.

Setting Up Your Online Store

Now that you've embraced your inner artist and understand who you're trying to reach, it's time to focus on your online storefront – the place where your art will connect with potential buyers. This section will guide you through the essentials of setting up an online store that's effective at selling your work.



Choosing the Right Platform

You have options when it comes to selling art online. You could try selling through Etsy, joining an online art gallery, or even building your own website from scratch. If you're a coding whiz, go for it! If you're like most artists I know, you'd rather spend your time creating, not debugging. Though, if debugging is your thing, more power to you!

But for convenience, artist-focused features, and managed hosting that lets you focus on your art (not server maintenance), SellYourCraft.art is, shall we say, a pretty sweet option. (Okay, okay, I'll stop with the shameless self-promotion now... mostly.) We'll explore the different options in more detail later, but for now, let's focus on the core elements of a successful online store.



Essential Website Elements for Artists

Your website is your online gallery, your studio, and your business headquarters all rolled into one. Here are the essential pages you'll need:

- **Home:** Your website's welcome mat and also the summary of what's contained in the rest of your website. Make a great first impression with stunning visuals and a clear introduction to your art.
- **About:** Tell your story! (Remember Section III and the who bit about knowing your target audience? This is where it comes in handy.) Let people connect with you on a personal level.
- **Shop:** Here's where you make the money. Organize your artwork into categories, use high-quality images, and write compelling descriptions.
- **Contact:** Make it easy for people to reach you with questions or inquiries.
- **Blog:** Share your artistic process, discuss your inspirations, and connect with your audience through engaging content. (Content marketing is your friend!)
- **Events:** Promote upcoming exhibitions, workshops, or any other events you're participating in. If you don't have events to promote, that's ok! You can always turn that part of your website off so people don't see it, until you have more consistent events you want to announce.

Showcasing Your Art

- **High-Quality Photography:** This is a MUST. Invest in good lighting and take clear, crisp photos that accurately represent your artwork. A well-photographed piece can make all the difference.
- **Compelling Descriptions:** Don't just list the dimensions and materials. Tell the story behind the piece. What inspired it? What emotions does it evoke? Help people connect with your art on an emotional level.
- **Categorization:** Make it easy for people to find what they're looking for by organizing your artwork into categories (e.g., by style or subject).

Pricing Strategies

This is a thorn in almost every artist's side! Pricing your art can be a challenge. You need to consider your costs (materials, time, studio space), the market value of similar artwork, and your own perceived value.

There are various pricing models you can explore. There're also ways you can package things together with pricing. However, the most important thing is DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT! That being said, if you create a piece and there are similar pieces out there being sold for \$500, I really wouldn't recommend you selling yours for \$20,000. Obviously, the market (people who would be interested in work like yours) needs to be able to support whatever price you choose to use.

Shipping and Handling

Shipping your precious artwork can be nerve-wracking. You want to make sure it arrives at its destination safe and sound, and you don't want to break the bank in the process. Here are some tips:



Packaging: Invest in sturdy packaging materials. Bubble wrap, packing peanuts, and sturdy boxes are your friends.

- **Shipping Costs:** Calculate shipping costs accurately. Factor in the size and weight of the package, as well as the destination. Offer shipping options (e.g., standard, expedited) so customers can choose. (Pro tip: Don't underestimate shipping costs. Nobody likes a surprise shipping bill.)

- **Shipping Carriers:** Research different shipping carriers (USPS, FedEx, UPS) to find the best rates and services for your needs.

- **Shipping Insurance:** Insure your artwork! It's worth the extra cost for peace of mind. Let's face it, things can happen in transit. Murphy's Law and all that.



Customer Service (Happy Customers, Happy Artist)

Excellent customer service is crucial for building a loyal following. Respond promptly to inquiries, be friendly and helpful, and address any issues quickly and professionally. A happy customer is more likely to buy more art and spread the word to their friends.

Marketing Your Art Online (Getting Seen)

You've got a fantastic online store, your art is beautifully displayed, and you're ready to connect with buyers. But how do you get your art seen? That's where marketing comes in. And remember all that work you did in Section II, "Understanding Your Target Audience"? Well, this is where it pays off.

Knowing your audience inside and out will save you time, energy, and potentially a lot of frustration. This is because if you don't know who you're trying to reach, you're likely to waste time and resources throwing marketing spaghetti at the wall and hoping something sticks. (Spoiler alert: That's rarely effective.)



Building an Email List

Email marketing, believe it or not, is still one of the most powerful ways to connect with potential buyers. It allows you to communicate directly with people who have expressed an interest in your work. (Think of it as your VIP list of art lovers.) Use email signup forms on your website and social media to collect email addresses. Offer a valuable incentive (like a discount or a free download – hint, hint, like this guide!) to encourage sign-ups.

Social Media Marketing

Social media is a visual playground for artists. But it's NOT about being on every platform. It's about being on the right platforms – the ones where your target audience hangs out. (There goes that term “target audience” again!).

Content Marketing

Creating valuable content related to your art can attract potential buyers and establish you as an expert in your field. (Think beyond just posting pictures of your art.)

Blog: Write about your inspirations, your artistic process, the techniques you use, or even the stories behind your pieces.

- **Videos:** Create videos showcasing your art, your studio, or your artistic process. (People love behind-the-scenes content!)

Collaborations (Strength in Numbers)

Partnering with other artists, influencers, or art organizations can expose your work to a wider audience. Look for opportunities to collaborate on projects, cross-promote each other's work, or participate in joint exhibitions.

Never Stop Growing

The world of online art sales is constantly changing. New platforms, marketing strategies, and technologies emerge all the time. To stay ahead of the curve, you need to be a lifelong learner.

Stay Updated: Follow art blogs, read industry publications, and attend online or in-person workshops to stay up-to-date with the latest trends.

- **Experiment:** Don't be afraid to try new things. Experiment with different marketing strategies, explore new art platforms, and see what works best for you.

- **Seek Mentorship:** Find a mentor or coach who can provide guidance and support as you grow your art business.

Well, I suppose at this point it's as good as any place to wrap things up!

Conclusion

We've covered a lot of ground in this guide, from understanding your audience and crafting your artist story to setting up your online store and marketing your work. Remember, selling art online is a journey, not a sprint. It takes time, effort, and a willingness to learn and adapt.

The most important thing is to be authentic, be yourself, and let your passion for your art shine through. Connect with your audience, share your unique vision, and build a business that reflects your values.

Don't be afraid to experiment, try new things, and make mistakes along the way. Every experience, good or bad, is a learning opportunity. Celebrate your small wins, and never stop growing as an artist and entrepreneur.

The art world needs your creativity, your unique perspective, and your artistic voice. Embrace your power, share your gifts with the world, and build the art business you've always dreamed of. Now, go out there and make some art (and sell it!).

Get a Website Built That Speaks to Your Audience



Remember, understanding your target audience is key to online success. That's why SellYourCraft.art offers website templates designed to appeal to different art buyers. Whether your audience prefers a clean and spacious design, a modern aesthetic, or something in between, we've got you covered.

Schedule a free consultation today to discuss your website needs and discover which template is the perfect fit for your art and your audience.

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