

The Web Isn't As Scary as You Think

What to Put on Your Website:

People like to know who the artist is behind the gorgeous abstracts, landscapes, sculptures and photographs. So here's a quick list of what to put on your web site. I recommend you be as clear and "YOU" as possible.

- Your Artist Statement
- A biography
- Some photos of your artwork
- Where to find your artwork (if hanging in galleries)
 - "Buy Now" buttons under available artwork
- Past/Present/Future Shows & accolades
- Contact information
- News & events

What You Need for an Online Presence:

- Web Site w/ blog built in (WordPress)
 - Hosting
 - Domain name
- Email Address
- Social Networking Accounts (We'll cover this in next week's class)

Email:

If you don't have an email address yet, you're way behind! Get a Gmail.com account or set one up through your web host (See Inexpensive Web Hosting section).

Blogs:

Blogs or Weblogs are on-line diaries. You can update them whenever you'd like, post pictures, thoughts, links, in-progress works, anything you feel comfortable sharing with the world. One of the best things about these is that Google and other search engines LOVE Blogs since they're updated regularly, making it easy to find you.

Using a Content Management System like WordPress for your web site will allow you to blog without any additional steps or accounts (like using a free service at blogger or wordpress.com).

I do not recommend going with a free service. This is why:

1. They can stop the service at any time without warning & you lose everything you wrote and uploaded.
2. If you violate their Terms of Service, your content can be yanked without consulting you first.
3. You're stuck with a web address that advertises THEIR services instead of YOUR art (i.e. myart.blogspot.com as opposed to myart.com)

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Writing regularly on your blog about your work and process is optional. Use the Blog feature of your WordPress site to announce upcoming shows or awards you won or new works if you're not too keen on writing. If you want to show more of what you do, concentrate on photos and even video of your studio or your techniques.

Domain Names:

Expect to pay \$9.00 or more a year depending on where you go. Domain names are yourname.com, and points to your space on the web (usually with your web host). The best domain name is made up of your first and last name to make it easy for people to find you.

- Godaddy.com
- Register.com
- Namecheap.com
- 1and1.com

Before you buy a domain name, check <http://retailmenot.com> for coupon codes for GoDaddy.com and other domain name services. I find \$0.99 domain coupons a few times a year.

Inexpensive Web Hosting:

A web host is where your files live. It's like the physical P.O. Box at the Post Office, while the domain name is the actual address. Your web host handles your files and your email as well so you can get a professional-looking email address like yourname@myart.com instead of a gmail or yahoo or aol email which are increasingly seen as unprofessional.

- Dreamhost.com – most expensive, but has best reputation, \$9/mo
- YourArtHere.net – starts at \$3/mo, for artists
- HostGator.com – starts at around \$4/mo
- Bluehost.com – \$7/mo

Promote & Market your Art & Website:

- Flickr.com: photo hosting & sharing site. Free or \$24/yr for pro account (more space, more options), community features are excellent – groups & discussions, people can comment on pictures. You just can't "sell" on Flickr.
- Facebook & Twitter.com: social networking, we'll get into this next class.
- Business cards with your art and website on them (see previous class info)

Sell your work

It helps to get your artwork out there on high traffic sites. However, you can't neglect adding "buy now" buttons next to your available works on your web site.

- Artshow.com: juried + yearly fee, all fine artists, no commission.

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- Etsy.com: handmade marketplace, \$0.20/item to list, 3.5% of price when item sells, crafters & artists, very community-driven.
- Shopify.com: Full Shopping Cart solution. Free for 30 days, then \$24/mo & 2% per transaction.
- Cafepress.com: upload images/photos of your work and sell shirts, bags, mugs, and calendars with your work on them.
- Zazzle.com: same idea as cafepress.
- Artfire.com: Free and paid accounts (\$12/mo), no transaction fees.
- **On Your Own Site (DO THIS FIRST)**

Get Someone Else to Do It All for You:

There are many people out there offering web development/maintenance services. Packages can start for as little as \$100 but as with everything, you get what you pay for.

For a professional-looking site, with all the bells & whistles (graphic design, eCommerce, blog, email, maintenance etc), it'll cost at least \$2000 to start, plus whatever the provider charges for monthly maintenance, web hosting, your merchant account, etc.

You'll still need to market your own site on the web, but at least you won't have to worry about your web site and can devote your time to other things like making art.

There are *some pitfalls* to getting someone else to do it for you. They're best avoided by keeping control of all your passwords and accounts, and asking your designer to use a content management system like WordPress so you can edit your site yourself when you need to.

Part of my business is helping artists & other creative folks set up web sites using WordPress. You can find out more about my services at <http://wpchick.com>.

My next steps:

1. What do you see that's missing from your web presence?
2. What do you think you can do now (or today) to get started?
3. Make a list of all the things you want to do for your web site.
4. Review your list and prioritize them in order of ease, time & knowledge (i.e. The easiest thing for me to do right now is buy a domain name. The hardest thing would be to set up my web site because I have no time and have no clue how to do it.)
5. For the easiest things that you can do yourself, do them. At least 10 minutes a day that's all you can spare. Write your content, buy your domain name, sign up for Artfire, etc.
6. For the most difficult things, start asking questions, figure out who can help, what you need to do to learn those things.