

Social Media for Artists 101

Think like a business: aim for consistency, focus and specificity, and engagement

1. Focus your efforts.

- a. With so many platforms out there, it's easy to feel pressured to join them all--but you don't have to. In order to maximize your own time and efforts, take the time to think first about **where your audience is**. This may mostly depend on **what kind of work you think you'll be sharing**)
 - b. **What about Facebook?** Because of the shortcomings of Facebook analytics, the ubiquity of the program and the sheer amount of unfiltered content, Facebook is best thought of as an addition or one small component of a larger social media and marketing plan. It makes sense to create an event page for a show opening, but you won't be able to reach as far beyond your immediate circle on FB as you will be on other platforms, where sharing and networking is done primarily via tags rather than relationships.
 - c. Consider the **amount of time you'll really be able to put in and keep up with**: different platforms will require different schedules.
 - d. On a smaller level, **be focused within each post**: just as a business would do, focus on your **call to action**. This is essentially what you are trying to get people to do. As an individual artist, even if you're just sharing a general studio/work update post, your call to action would be **directing people to your website**. If you're a theater artist/performer, **your event invitation is your call to action**. As a writer, **directing people to your recently published work is your call to action**. Focus on this call to action through your choice of **link** and through the **format of your post**: in an email newsletter, your call to action should be the first thing that people see and the last thing that people see; on your website, it should be the first thing (i.e. on a website banner); your bio, on whatever platform, should also be consistently updated with whatever link would be most useful at that particular time.
2. Once you've chosen one (or more) platforms to focus on, **put the basics in place**.
- e. **Have a website ready** and create a place for people to deepen their experience of your work and have access to more info about you: a home base.
 - f. **Be consistently named**: part of thinking like a business means attention to branding. **Choose the same (or as similar as possible) handles** across platforms because essentially, this is the name of your business
 - g. **Be consistent in design**: this definitely applies more broadly to website design (i.e. working consistently in the same color palette, fonts, etc.), but there is a social media component as well, in the need to **use the same (or as similar as possible) profile picture**. This may seem like a small or personal thing, but it's

important to **be recognizable**. Someone searching for you should really not have to guess whether it's you or not.

- h. **Be consistently linked**: you should always include links to your main social media handles in your email signature and your website and update these as needed; again, someone should not have to struggle to find you.

3. Schedule

- i. **Be realistic about what you'll be able to keep up with** and don't count on remembering to and updating your channels on a consistent basis--schedule in advance.
- j. For events: **Work backwards**. Plan out two months+ from an event, making notes and drafting posts about content, invitations, and reminders. This could look like: first, a project launch; next, a save the date; then, a month (4-6 weeks) of behind-the-scenes/preview content, focusing on development, and always including links to an event page, your website, or an rsvp form; then, two weeks of event reminders (two weeks, one week, two days, day of); a thank you post immediately after the event; one-two weeks of wrap up/sharing documentation, if applicable.
- k. If you're planning to mainly just share updates about your practice, choose the **schedule that best fits the platform**: plan to update Instagram on an almost daily basis, Twitter on an every other day basis, or even weekly if you're liking/sharing/retweeting others' work frequently in between sharing original content, and again, maybe using FB primarily for events.
- l. Think about how you can **use your website and/or an email newsletter** to add to your social media: a quarterly or seasonal newsletter of updates, a website banner for a recent project launch or event, an events page on your website, including info about a recent show in your email signature

4. Diversify

- m. **Diversify in terms of content**: just as you would think about how best to document your work, you can think of social media in the same way. **In order to be as engaging as possible, mix it up**: if you usually share photos of paintings on Instagram, share a time-lapse video/Instagram stories of a work in progress; if you usually share only finished projects, share some behind-the-scenes info/footage; share a series of posts from a residency or rehearsal period or show installation, and so on.
- n. **Diversify in terms of networking**: on a post-by-post basis, ask yourself: how many different organizations/people/institutions can you connect with? **The people who show your work are your most valuable resource**. Consistently tag your gallery, theater company, publishers, etc.: they will likely have a larger audience than you, and will be in the best position to broaden your publicity (and they have a stake in doing so). This also relates to **sharing**: be strategic in whose work you share. If there's a gallery you want to connect with, a magazine you're hoping to be published by, etc., share their work and get on their radar in

their supportive/friendly way, especially before reaching out to them formally/professionally.

5. Instagram specifics

- o. As paradoxical as it sounds, on Instagram **your posts should all be different yet also as cohesive as possible**. People will follow you because they're interested in a particular thing that you're sharing (and will likely continue following you only for that interest), and so will ultimately want continuous new content related to that one thing.
- p. **Use tags on every post, as many as you can think of...but also not too many**. The main way that content is organized on Instagram (and the way that people's search pages are populated) is through tags. **Know what your audience is following and be identical**. If a tag is spelled, ordered or otherwise formatted in a specific way, do not change it; someone searching for that tag will not find you if you don't use it identically. And especially if you're just starting out, use existing tags. **Be consistent**--it's completely fine to use the same tags on every image. What works best is choosing three tags that fit everything you post (i.e.: #stilllife, #floral, #painting) and then choosing one to two that are specific to that image (#pastels, #abstract). Basically, this insures that someone looking at a particular tag (#floral) will see a lot/all of your work, but you'll still be able to reach people who are looking at a tag (#pastels) that is applicable to your work but that you don't use everyday.
- q. This of these **descriptive tags as a form of networking**--in the example above, #floral will reach a much broader audience than just #stilllife

6. Twitter

- r. **Have something specific to share**: The posts that perform well on Twitter are those that include a link and image--and **someone specific to share it with**--the posts that perform the best on Twitter are those that include a link/image and include at least one other tagged person
- s. **Always be on the lookout**--as you're reading articles, looking at other artists' work, etc., always be thinking about what might be appropriate to share on Twitter. Unlike Instagram, your feed, while still coherent, does not need to adhere quite so closely to a single interest; your followers will likely be interested in topics that are alongside but distinct from a main topic--and again, you can definitely think about that kind of sharing as a form of networking.