

# Social Media for Artists

A ZOOM workshop presentation by Kimberly Michael  
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studiographe.me

This workshop will be a deep dive into specific, practical details of promoting your artwork on social media and online, by *yourself*. I'll present pathway for establishing a body of artwork online, and making it accessible to buyers directly. I'll demonstrate how to illustrate an evolution in your artwork to make available to galleries should you desire representation. There's a lot of information here, I've included the links I'm mentioning in this pdf, so you don't have to write them down—they're all collected on page 6.

## In The Beginning

You started out creating artwork for fun, experimenting along the way. You probably have this first artwork around, or at least photos of it:

*Fantastic!*

You can use those, they are part of your *story*. Your story of how and why you create artwork is what makes your artwork unique to *you*. People want to connect with a person, a story; artwork is part of your story. Doesn't have to be dramatic, just be you. Think about why you make artwork, and the motivation behind particular pieces. You can use previous artwork as foundation images to bulk up your story on social media or a web site.

## Telling Your Story

Now that you are considering promoting your artwork, be mindful of taking process photos as you work going forward. This gives potential buyers/curators an idea of your process, but, mostly, it lets people fall in love with how your work evolves into the final image. You might not think it is very exciting, but to a person who does not make art themselves, literally watching paint dry can be quite entertaining. (Probably there are people who might try to copy you, but if you have ever tried to copy someone's artwork as an exercise, it's quite difficult—nothing to worry about.)

There are many examples of this kind of record-taking online, here are a few artists who show progress images, or make time lapse video of their

progress on individual paintings available on youtube:

<https://www.gwennseemel.com/artwork/abc/a/>,  
<https://www.bettyfranksart.com/>,  
<https://www.emilyjeffords.com>

They've each taken very different paths to promoting themselves, but all have used social media to gain an audience.

## What About Social Media?

The thing about creating a web site or a social media presence is that you have to feed the beast consistently for it to bear fruit. Most people who want to have a web presence toss a few images and a couple paragraphs of descriptive text at a web designer, and call it a day. That can be ok for a static presence to stake out a spot on the web, but it won't deliver traffic to your content (that, actually, *is* a science—*SEO*—in itself).

You will need to create content fairly regularly to get and keep an audience. But you still want to have fun! So take progress pictures, or videos, and let them do the work.

You can use your cell phone camera to take perfectly fine photos *or videos* of your artwork and progress on new pieces. Use the highest resolution your phone allows, because this will give you the most flexibility to use your artwork in the future. A few things to keep in mind as you are capturing your work for the purposes of sharing online:

**Lighting.** *Most artists work in a well-lit environment, but be sure you don't have a shadow that you are used to working around. Bright, indirect, unobstructed light is the goal. Take finished artwork out from under glass to avoid reflections.*

**Focus.** *Cell cameras mostly focus themselves, but you do need to give them a moment. If your hand shakes, invest in an inexpensive tripod or other holder to keep the phone still. Keep a clean sheet of paper or mat board on hand to lay artwork on for photos, so the surrounding area is not distracting with paint spatter. Take some time*

to square up the image with the edges of the screen, it will save time editing later.

**Cropping.** You can take an overall photo, and also a few detail photos of each piece—no film, so there's no limit. If there is a particularly tasty area of a painting, go ahead and focus in on it. More is more! People are interested to read why you love that bit.

**Cataloging.** This one is hard for some. You will need to familiarize yourself with how your phone's camera and photo catalog applications work. It really is a file system, exactly like folders in a drawer. You will need to create a folder for each painting. Some folders will have just one or two images in them, some will have loads of process images plus detail shots. Try to name the folders the same as the painting titles so images are easy to find.

It can be helpful to set up a dedicated well-lit area to take pictures if you have space. Live links to instructions, devices I use or mention, are on the last page of this PDF.

## Editing Your Photos

If you have taken care with lighting & cropping your photos, you won't have to edit them much at all. Sometimes though, things don't go as well as we thought.

**File extensions.** Photo files are .jpg files. "JPG" is shorthand for a common file compression format that keeps image files smallish. It is what is called a "lossy" compression, which means that every time you re-save the file after making changes to it, the quality of the image degrades a little. Kinda like how the old Xerox copies would drift in quality once you got to the 10th time something was duplicated from a duplicate. So, keep your primary original images, and rename the second generation edits as such. If you have a lot of images, external disk drives are pretty cheap these days. "PNG" is a non-lossy compression format, but is not usually appropriate for complex images.

**Resolution.** Images from digital cameras (including phones) are rated by "megapixel," which is the term for a cluster of pixels, in particular, a cluster of one million pixels. The number of megapixels indicates the pixel sensitivity of the sensor in the camera, which was formerly film. Newer phones include cameras in the 12–15mp (megapixel) range. Pixel is short for "picture element," or one single dot in an image. If you enlarge an image on your computer screen to the point where you see

individual squares of a single color, those squares are each a single pixel.

The image from a 12mp camera will have a pixel dimension of 4000 pixels by 3000 pixels: 4000 x 3000 = 12,000,000. In high resolution printing, you need at least 300dpi, or dots per inch, where dot = pixel. A 12mp photo will print well up to 13.3" x 10".

This is a long explanation to say: Your phone can probably take an excellent photo that you can use to print cards, small printed copies, or apply to a wide range of "print on demand" items.

**Use.** You do *not* want to put a full 4000x3000 resolution image on social media or your web site, however. The file size is quite large for loading on a web page, it will slow your site down. FaceBook and Instagram know this, and they automatically downsample (reduce the resolution) of images you upload. Try uploading a photo to Fb, and then download it back and put it next to your original—it will be a bit blurry by comparison.

I recommend for the MVAL site contest entries, etc. that images be 1000 pixels on their longest dimension. This is enough resolution to look good on a high resolution monitor, but it has a small enough file size to load quickly, and is too small to be useful for pirating. (Unlikely, but it happens.) The 300dpi rule means the best image anyone could copy and print would be less than 3.5" on the longest side.

*A caveat:* If you are uploading your images to a fine art resale/print on demand site such as Fine Art America they will require you to upload the highest resolution image possible—your phone is still fine for this. However, if your images/artwork are very popular, it might become financially feasible to hire out very high resolution professional photography at up to 42mp (equivalent to a 20 x 30" printed poster).

## FaceBook

Once you have a few images, and an idea or two of a story to tell about yourself as an artist, its time to announce yourself on social media! Yay! Except...*not* on your personal account, or, at least, not ONLY on your personal account. You want a place to showcase your artwork on its own.

FaceBook makes it very easy to set up a personal account to start. In addition to that, you can set up a Page or Shop associated with the same account. Start with creating a Page, because you don't need a

business name or tax number to do that. To create a Page:

1. Go to [facebook.com/pages/create](https://facebook.com/pages/create).  
As a page name, I recommend “[Your Name] Art” or Artist so friends can find you easily.  
*(I did not do this, but I should have.)*
2. Click to choose a **Category**.
3. Fill out the required information.
4. Click Create Page.
5. Add an optional profile or cover photo, then click **Save**.

After these steps, you can add your contact information as you like, and customize the images that appear on your Art Page. There are two static images to place, a large banner image and a small circle image. Use the banner for a representative piece of art. A large image is good here. Use the circle space for a head shot of yourself. Buyers want a personal touch.

You can post to your Art Page just as you would to your personal FaceBook wall, and you can choose to share your Art Page post to your personal wall at the time you post it, so you are posting in two places at once. As with a personal account, you can post multiple photos at once—a great way to showcase progress/process images.

## Instagram

The visual king of social media options is currently **Instagram**, which for good or ill is now also owned by FaceBook. Primarily for use on mobile devices (get the app), Instagram is probably the most powerful way to get attention for your artwork.

If you already have an Instagram account for personal stuff, you can create a second account for just art stuff, once again, using [Your Name] + Art or Artist. If this is your first Instagram account, start out with this name including Art/Artist. You can always add another account.

Once you have an Instagram account and a FaceBook account, you can link them to each other, and create posts for both platforms simultaneously. One or the other platform will suggest you do so if you create accounts with the same name.

## #Hashtags

This is where the magic happens in social media. Adding a # (**hashtag**) in front of just about any word or phrase (no spaces) will create a ghost account that

includes all posts that include that particular combination. When you follow artists you like on social media, note the hashtags they use at the bottom of their posts. These tags can be in a big paragraph with spaces in between, or each on a single line. Feel free to create a “bank” of hashtags that apply to the people who might enjoy your work.

For example, a watercolor portraitist might include:

#watercolor #watercolorportrait  
#watercolorportraits #watercolorfaces #portraits  
#portrait #originalartwork #fineartist  
#ownanoriginal

An abstract acrylic artist might include:

#abstractart #acrylicart #abstractacrylicart  
#modernart #modernacrylic #acrylicartist  
#originalartwork #fineartist #ownanoriginal

As you can see, there are some common hashtags, and some individual ones. If you enter “#abstractart” in the search bar on Instagram, or your browser, you will get an infinite scroll of the most recent postings that include that hashtag, from all over the world. This is not just excellent for getting your artwork in front of new eyeballs, but it gives *your* eyeballs a rich source of new ideas.

Making a word processing file that you can copy relevant hashtags to makes life easier. You don’t have to remember them, but more importantly, you don’t have to type them all in. Instagram, in particular, can be tedious for entering hashtags. “Copy and paste” from a file you can also access from your phone is the easiest way to add them—a draft email will work. The Instagram app is optimized for use on mobile, so if you are not scheduling posts in advance on a FaceBook desktop window, it is simplest to create them on your phone. Once the accounts are linked, you will be given the option to share posts between accounts.

## Scheduling Posts, Why?

Social media is a notorious time vacuum, both from the perspective of the casual user, everybody, and the perspective of the content creator—hopefully *you*. Something about the bottomless scroll of *new!* really appeals to the human lizard brain.

In order to spend more time making art, and less time promoting it, it makes sense to optimize your efforts. You can spend a couple hours on a single painting, or a few weeks on a series of paintings.

Take pictures the whole time you are working, make a few notes. When the painting/s is/are finished, you have a photographic record and ideas you can use to tell the story of that particular artwork. You can spread the story out over time, with scheduled posts over a few days—like a serial tv show. Include hints to future “episodes” to keep audience interest checking back.

If the finished artwork is for sale, say so. List the price and how to contact you. Include information on how it is framed, the archival qualities of the materials used, shipping, payment options, etc. (Keep an eye out for *direct messages*.) While it is possible to set up an actual store on your social media, it is a bit complicated and you can do just as well for an occasional sale by interacting directly with a buyer via direct message, email, or, weirdly, by *phone*.

**WARNING:** Do not send artwork to someone who has not cleared at least a deposit that covers your outlay in materials. Most people are legit, a few people try to scam. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Legit buyers are patient.

In a corporate environment, there is a *staff* dedicated to creating the social media editorial calendar that creates this exact kind of timed interest publishing scenario. Now it is available to you, for free\*. There are all kinds of “plans” for how to plot social media schedules to maximize eyeball exposure. You do you, add some juicy hashtags. It will be enough. *\*You can pay to “boost” your posts to cast a wider net of interest, mostly based on people who have looked at similar things in the past. It is easy to waste \$ on this if you jump into it without doing any research.*

## Building Community

Over time, you will hopefully reach enough people, old friends, new friends, that some of them will comment on your posts. Engage with them. People who take time out of their day to comment on your artwork are *your* people. They might not buy anything, but being friendly can also encourage folks who would otherwise be hesitant to approach you. It doesn't have to take long, set a timer for 20 minutes to follow up on your artwork's social media.

Another way to build community is to follow, like & comment other artists on social media. They are also your people, and a rich exchange of ideas is a good thing.

## Pinterest

Another social media option, too complex for today.

## Do I Want a Web Site of My Own?

There are a lot of options when it comes to building web sites, from simple to super complicated, just like everything else. There are new web site building options popping up all the time, but they have the same basic understructure. You need 3 things for a web site: a *domain* name, a *host*, and a *site* builder.

**Domain** names like “MVAL.org” can be any group of letters that is not already taken, followed by a “.” and a few (2 to 5) letters that mean what kind of web site you can expect to find there. In the case of MVAL, “.org” is the international *extension* for a non-profit organization. You can buy a domain name from a registrar approved by the international consortium that does that. Once you have your name, you have to find it a place to live.

**Hosts** are companies that have warehouses full of computer hard drives called “servers” that hold the actual files that a web site is made of, and *serve* them to the world whenever one of the *domains* that live there is typed into a browser. Many domain registrars also host web sites (GoDaddy, JustHost, DreamHost).

**Site** builders come in many forms. The simplest is an “all in one” situation like Weebly, or Wix. These “**WYSIWYG**” (*what you see is what you get*) site builders are usually also domain registrars, and their site building software can only be hosted on their proprietary servers. The next level of site builder is called a “CMS” (content management system), where the “back end” or non-public part of the web site looks nothing at all like the public face of the web site. A few examples of this are Art Storefronts, Squarespace, and Shopify, all tethered to a specific host, and WordPress which is free and used with any host.

For a simple art site, mostly a gallery and contact information where you don't have a store, but you do sell via email or other contact, **Weebly** and **Wix** are the simplest, with Weebly being very slightly easier. Both have free hosting options, though you do have to pay about \$20 per year to register a domain name through them.

For a store site that has some helpful back end options, but is \$30–\$150 month, **Squarespace** and **Art Storefronts** are useful for artists. Art Storefronts in particular has some print-on-demand options built in and focuses on hosting working artists in particular.

A web site with a store that is based on **WordPress** (free info site) has the most flexibility, can be hosted for \$5–\$50 per month, but has a steep learning curve. I do not recommend this unless you have someone who can keep this web site up to date for you, or you want to learn to be a web developer. There are a ton of free tutorials and a whole social ecosystem of inexpensive seminars for **WordPress** (hosting site), but it is a time suck.

## Some Examples?

The 3 linked artists at the beginning of this handout have taken very different paths regarding their online presence.

**Gwenn Seemel** got tired of the sturm und drang on social media the last few years, and also was irked at how complicated and time-consuming her WordPress web site had become. She dropped all social media, and re-created her web site in plain old “html,” nothing fancy about it. It loads a little oddly, but looks great. It takes some coding expertise, but it is pretty unhackable. She primarily sells to people she finds in person or who come across her excellent **Vimeo** time-lapse channel, and through her print-on-demand shop on **Redbubble**. Gwenn has some interesting ideas on **copyright** that are worth a ponder.

**Betty Franks**’ web site is hosted on Art Storefronts. In various places (I think her **YouTube** channel) she has mentioned that it is a pain to maintain, but she likes the perks of being on that platform because of the print-on-demand connections. She has been growing her business a lot the last couple of years, so she might be paying someone to help her with the back end now. You can tell when someone is having a hard time with their web site if it loads weird for you, with pictures obscuring each other, or misaligned. She is very forthright on her art marketing **journey**, and even has a video of tips for packing artwork to ship.

**Emily Jeffords** has also grown her art business practice exponentially since I started following her 3 years ago. Her site is hosted by SquareSpace, and it is lovely. I am not sure if that is because SquareSpace is easy to deal with, since I have not used it, or if she has hired a web site person to handle it for her. Probably the latter.

**MVAL** is hosted on Weebly, we are just barely above the “free” hosting at \$12 per month, plus \$20 each for two domains, **midvalleyartleague.org** and **mval.org**.

My own web site **Studio Grapheme** is built in **WordPress** and hosted on **SiteGround** but my domain registrar is a German company called **joker.com**. It’s complicated, left over from when I built a few sites for a living. It’s costing me ~\$17 per month, and I’m really not using it nearly as much as I should.

## Print On Demand?

There are multiple places online where you can upload cell-phone quality photographs of your artwork and have it reproduced for sale on their site (and yours if you link it) on all kinds of things, from beach towels to wallpaper, canvas prints, backpacks. the sky is the limit. Each site has their own commission % and design expectations, so if you are interested in doing this, focus on one for a while to get the hang of it. They print, manufacture and ship from *their* factory to the end user, it is a passive arrangement for the artist.

These are the ones I am familiar with, having used them or looked into them at one time or another: **RedBubble**, **Zazzle**, **CafePress**, **FineArtAmerica** & **Pixels**, **SaatchiArt**, **Minted**,

These are a couple print on demand companies that also do “drop shipping,” meaning, they will brand the packaging with *your* logo, etc. so it appears the items with your artwork on them came from you. You have to have your own web store to show this kind of merchandise, though it is possible to do that on a FaceBook or Instagram virtual store:

**PrintedMint**, **Printful**

## Where Can I Find Out More?

Most of the people I refer to here have at some point read Cory Huff’s books or listened to his podcasts. He is a great place to start. His web site, **The Abundant Artist** (WordPress) is bursting with actionable marketing information. I have his book *How to Sell Your Art Online*, but Betty Franks *really* ran with it. It’s a great book, but like anything, you have to DO IT. Cory is also a part of **Productive Flourishing**, a company devoted to helping people meet their goals. Both Sites are useful if you are looking for information or motivation.

## Can I Hire You to Help Me?

Sure. My fee is \$60 per hour, I’m happy to help you. My email is on the lower left corner, just click it. Questions are free.

## All The Links In One Place

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### Photos:

Selfie Stick/Tripod with Detachable Wireless Remote:

[Amazon](#)

Desk Lamp with adjustable LED ring: [Shop Canvas](#)

### Camera instructions

iPhone: [Apple iPhone Camera instructions](#)

Android: [Select Your Phone](#)

### Photo gallery instructions

iphone [Apple iPhotos App instructions](#)

Android [Select Your Phone](#)

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### Social Media & Web Page Info

Facebook Page Creator

[facebook.com/pages/create](https://www.facebook.com/pages/create)

Instagram sign in/sign up

[Instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)

Hashtag explanation

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashtag>

Domain explanation

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain\\_Name\\_System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_Name_System)

Hosting explanation

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_hosting\\_service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_hosting_service)

Site builder explanation

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Website\\_builder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Website_builder)

WYSIWYG explanation

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WYSIWYG>

Weebly Web Site Builder

[weebly.com](https://www.weebly.com)

Wix Web Site Builder

[wix.com](https://www.wix.com)

SquareSpace Store Site Builder

[squarespace.com](https://www.squarespace.com)

Art Storefronts Store Site Builder

<https://www.artstorefronts.com>

WordPress Organization (Tutorials & Info)

[wordpress.org](https://www.wordpress.org)

WordPress (Free & Fee Hosting)

[wordpress.com](https://www.wordpress.com)

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### Example Artists Online

Gwenn Seemel's web site

<https://www.gwennseemel.com/artwork/abc/a/>

Gwenn's Vimeo channel

<https://vimeo.com/gwennseemel>

Gwenn's Redbubble page

<https://gwennpaints.redbubble.com>

Gwenn's copyright page

<https://www.gwennseemel.com/uncopyright/>

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Betty Franks' web site

<https://www.bettyfranksart.com>

Betty's Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/bettyfranksartist>

Betty's Instagram Feed

<https://www.instagram.com/betty.franks.art/>

Betty's YouTube channel

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_LtcQkDngMzTtnGtdl1gxA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_LtcQkDngMzTtnGtdl1gxA)

Betty's Art Journey video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGEEIe-bIn4>

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Emily Jefford's web site

<https://www.emilyjeffords.com>

Emily's Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/EmilyJeffordsStudio>

Emily's Instagram Feed

[https://www.instagram.com/emily\\_jeffords/](https://www.instagram.com/emily_jeffords/)

Emily's Pinterest Board

[https://www.pinterest.com/emily\\_jeffords/](https://www.pinterest.com/emily_jeffords/)

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MVAL site

<https://mval.org>  
[midvalleyartsleague.org](https://www.midvalleyartsleague.org)

MVAL Facebook Page (not plein aire)

<https://www.facebook.com/midvalleyartsleague>

MVAL Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/mval1959/>

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Studio Grapheme (Kimberly's web site)

<https://studiographe.me>

Kimberly's Art Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/studiographe>

Kimberly's Art Instagram Page

<https://www.instagram.com/studiographe/>

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### Print on Demand & Drop Shipping

Redbubble <https://www.redbubble.com>

Zazzle <https://www.zazzle.com>

Cafe Press <https://www.cafepress.com>

Fine Art America <https://fineartamerica.com>

Pixels <https://pixels.com>

Saatchi Art <https://www.saatchiart.com/whysell>

Minted <https://www.minted.com/participate/challenges>

Printed Mint <https://printedmint.com/pages/getting-started>

Printful <https://www.printful.com/how-printful-works/on-demand-drop-shipping>

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### Further Information

<https://theabundantartist.com>

<https://www.productiveflourishing.com>

Book: [How to Sell Your Art Online](#)

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