

GETTING INTO THE

ART

BUSINESS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMERGING & INDEPENDENT ARTISTS
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CREATIVE CAREERS

FRIST DRAFT
VERSION 1.0

CURATOR'S ADVICE
TO EMERGING ARTIST

PREPARED BY
WONDA GRANVILLE | PEOPLE ART & COMPANY

JANUARY 2026

**WHAT TOP ART WORLD
ADVISERS & CURATORS
TEACH EMERGING
ARTISTS.**

**MASTER YOUR CRAFT
BEFORE YOU CHASE
FAME.**

**FINE ART EXPLAINED,
PLAIN AND SIMPLE**
Primarily to express ideas,
emotions, or beauty.

PART 1 — WHAT TOP ART WORLD ADVISERS & CURATORS CONSISTENTLY TEACH EMERGING ARTISTS

BELOW IS SYNTHESIZED GUIDANCE FROM RESPECTED FIGURES SUCH AS TIM MARLOW (FORMER ROYAL ACADEMY DIRECTOR), HANS ULRICH OBRIST (SERPENTINE GALLERIES CURATOR), JERRY SALTZ (ART CRITIC), THELMA GOLDEN (STUDIO MUSEUM HARLEM), AND LEADING GALLERY ADVISERS. THESE IDEAS APPEAR REPEATEDLY ACROSS INTERVIEWS, LECTURES, AND ARTIST MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS.

1. MASTER YOUR CRAFT BEFORE YOU CHASE FAME

TIM MARLOW'S PHILOSOPHY: INSTITUTIONS AND COLLECTORS LOOK FOR DEPTH, NOT HYPE.

WHAT THIS MEANS:

- TECHNICAL SKILL MATTERS
- CONCEPT CLARITY MATTERS
- CONSISTENCY MATTERS

ACTION FOR ARTISTS:

- PRODUCE BODIES OF WORK, NOT SINGLE "GOOD" PIECES
- STUDY ART HISTORY + CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS
- LEARN COMPOSITION, COLOR THEORY, MATERIALS

THE ART WORLD CAN SPOT RUSHED WORK QUICKLY.

2. BUILD A CLEAR ARTISTIC IDENTITY (NOT RANDOM STYLE-HOPPING)

CURATORS LOOK FOR ARTISTS WITH A **RECOGNIZABLE VOICE**.

ASK YOURSELF:

- WHAT THEMES DO I RETURN TO?
- WHAT STORY DOES MY WORK TELL?
- WHAT EMOTIONAL REACTION DO I WANT VIEWERS TO FEEL?

PRACTICAL TIP:

CREATE A **SIGNATURE DIRECTION** (SUBJECT, COLOR PALETTE, MOOD, MESSAGE) BEFORE EXPANDING.

3. RELATIONSHIPS MATTER AS MUCH AS TALENT

HANS ULRICH OBRIST FAMOUSLY SAYS:
"THE ART WORLD RUNS ON CONVERSATIONS."

TRANSLATION:

YOUR NETWORK = YOUR OPPORTUNITY PIPELINE.

ARTISTS SHOULD:

- ATTEND OPENINGS AND TALKS
- SPEAK TO CURATORS RESPECTFULLY
- FOLLOW GALLERIES ONLINE AND ENGAGE AUTHENTICALLY
- SUPPORT OTHER ARTISTS (THEY OFTEN BECOME COLLABORATORS AND CONNECTORS)

4. PROFESSIONALISM SEPARATES HOBBYISTS FROM CAREER ARTISTS

ADVISERS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZE THIS.

YOU MUST HAVE:

- CLEAN PORTFOLIO (WEBSITE OR PDF)
- ARTIST STATEMENT
- BIO
- HIGH-QUALITY IMAGES
- CONSISTENT PRICING

BEHAVIOR MATTERS:

- RESPOND TO EMAILS PROMPTLY
- MEET DEADLINES
- DELIVER WORK PROFESSIONALLY PACKAGED

GALLERIES INVEST IN ARTISTS THEY TRUST.

5. PRICING STRATEGY IS CRITICAL (DO NOT UNDERVALUE)

COMMON MISTAKE: PRICING TOO LOW OR WILDLY INCONSISTENT.

ADVISER GUIDANCE:

- PRICE BASED ON:
 - SIZE
 - MEDIUM
 - EXPERIENCE LEVEL
 - MARKET COMPARISONS
- RAISE SLOWLY AND STEADILY
- NEVER UNDERCUT GALLERY PRICES ONLINE

6. THINK LONG-TERM, NOT OVERNIGHT SUCCESS

TIM MARLOW OFTEN EMPHASIZES **CAREER BUILDING, NOT VIRAL MOMENTS**.

REALITY:

MOST SUCCESSFUL ARTISTS:

- WORKED QUIETLY FOR YEARS
- BUILT SLOW MOMENTUM
- GREW REPUTATION THROUGH EXHIBITIONS

GOOD CAREER TIMELINE:

- LOCAL SHOWS → REGIONAL EXPOSURE → CURATED EXHIBITIONS → INSTITUTIONAL INTEREST → COLLECTORS

7. LEARN THE BUSINESS SIDE OF ART (VERY IMPORTANT)

JERRY SALTZ WARNS ARTISTS WHO IGNORE BUSINESS BURN OUT FASTER.

ARTISTS SHOULD UNDERSTAND:

- CONTRACTS
- COMMISSIONS (USUALLY 40–50%)
- COPYRIGHT
- REPRODUCTION RIGHTS
- TAXES

TREAT YOURSELF LIKE A BRAND:

YOU ARE NOT JUST MAKING ART — YOU ARE BUILDING AN ENTERPRISE.

8. CURATORS LOOK FOR CULTURAL RELEVANCE

THELMA GOLDEN EMPHASIZES WORK THAT REFLECTS SOCIETY.

ASK:

- DOES MY WORK SAY SOMETHING ABOUT HUMANITY?
- DOES IT REFLECT IDENTITY, CULTURE, EMOTION, STRUGGLE, JOY, HISTORY?

ART THAT CONNECTS TO REAL LIFE RESONATES STRONGER.

9. VISIBILITY BEATS PERFECTION

WAITING FOR “PERFECT” WORK KEEPS ARTISTS INVISIBLE.

BETTER STRATEGY:

- SHOW WORK EARLY
- IMPROVE PUBLICLY
- DOCUMENT PROCESS
- SHARE EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRESS
-

MOMENTUM ATTRACTS OPPORTUNITY.

10. EMOTIONAL AUTHENTICITY WINS

ACROSS ADVISERS, THIS IS CONSTANT:

PEOPLE BUY AND SUPPORT ART THAT FEELS REAL.

NOT TRENDY.
NOT COPIED.
NOT FORCED.

AUTHENTIC VOICE BUILDS COLLECTORS, NOT JUST FOLLOWERS.

FINE ART REFERS TO CREATIVE WORKS PRODUCED PRIMARILY FOR AESTHETIC, CULTURAL, AND EXPRESSIVE PURPOSES, RATHER THAN FUNCTIONAL USE. IT INCLUDES DISCIPLINES SUCH AS PAINTING, SCULPTURE, PHOTOGRAPHY, DRAWING, MIXED MEDIA, AND CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTUAL PRACTICES.

PART 2 — FINE ART EXPLAINED IN SIMPLE TERMS (LAYMAN-FRIENDLY)

SIMPLE VERSION (PUBLIC FRIENDLY)

FINE ART IS CREATIVE WORK MADE PRIMARILY TO EXPRESS IDEAS, EMOTIONS, OR BEAUTY — NOT TO SERVE A PRACTICAL FUNCTION.

IN OTHER WORDS:

- YOU DON'T SIT ON IT
- YOU DON'T COOK WITH IT
- YOU EXPERIENCE IT EMOTIONALLY OR INTELLECTUALLY.

EXAMPLES:

- PAINTINGS
- SCULPTURE
- PHOTOGRAPHY
- INSTALLATION ART
- CONCEPTUAL ART

SECTION 1 — WHAT SUCCESS REALLY MEANS IN THE ART WORLD

REDEFINING SUCCESS

SUCCESS IS NOT JUST SELLING A PIECE. TRUE SUCCESS INCLUDES:

- CONSISTENT EXHIBITIONS
- GROWING COLLECTOR BASE
- PROFESSIONAL REPUTATION
- STABLE CREATIVE INCOME
- CULTURAL IMPACT

CAREER STAGES MOST ARTISTS FOLLOW

STAGE 1: FOUNDATION

- SKILL DEVELOPMENT
- STYLE EXPLORATION
- LOCAL SHOWS

STAGE 2: VISIBILITY

- CURATED EXHIBITIONS
- ONLINE PRESENCE
- COLLECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

STAGE 3: RECOGNITION

- INSTITUTIONAL INTEREST
- MEDIA FEATURES
- STRONG SALES HISTORY

STAGE 4: SUSTAINABILITY

- REPEAT COLLECTORS
- BRAND PARTNERSHIPS
- TEACHING, LICENSING, COMMISSIONS

SECTION 2 — MASTER YOUR CRAFT FIRST WHY SKILL STILL MATTERS

EVEN CONCEPTUAL ART REQUIRES TECHNICAL DISCIPLINE. CURATORS AND COLLECTORS RECOGNIZE QUALITY IMMEDIATELY.

ACTION STEPS

- PRACTICE WEEKLY STUDIO HOURS
- STUDY ART HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS
- LEARN COMPOSITION, COLOR, MATERIAL HANDLING
- PHOTOGRAPH YOUR WORK PROFESSIONALLY

SECTION 3 — DEVELOP YOUR ARTISTIC IDENTITY

ASK YOURSELF

- WHAT SUBJECTS KEEP APPEARING IN MY WORK?
- WHAT EMOTIONS DO I WANT VIEWERS TO FEEL?
- WHAT MESSAGE AM I COMMUNICATING?

BUILD CONSISTENCY

- SIGNATURE THEMES
- COHESIVE COLOR PALETTES
- RECOGNIZABLE VISUAL LANGUAGE

SECTION 4 — PROFESSIONAL ARTIST TOOLKIT

EVERY SERIOUS ARTIST SHOULD HAVE:

1. ARTIST BIO (150–300 WORDS)

WHO YOU ARE, BACKGROUND, INFLUENCES, EXHIBITIONS.

2. ARTIST STATEMENT (100–250 WORDS)

WHY YOU CREATE, WHAT YOUR WORK EXPLORES.

3. PORTFOLIO

- 10–20 STRONG IMAGES
- HIGH RESOLUTION
- NEUTRAL BACKGROUNDS

4. ONLINE PRESENCE

- WEBSITE OR PORTFOLIO PAGE
- UPDATED SOCIAL MEDIA

SECTION 5 — PRICING & VALUE STRATEGY

COMMON PRICING MISTAKES

- UNDERVALUING WORK
- INCONSISTENT PRICING
- EMOTIONAL PRICING

SMART PRICING FACTORS

- SIZE
- MEDIUM
- EXPERIENCE LEVEL
- MARKET COMPARISON

BEST PRACTICES

- RAISE PRICES GRADUALLY
- KEEP PRICES CONSISTENT ACROSS PLATFORMS
- RESPECT GALLERY COMMISSION STRUCTURES

SECTION 6 — BUSINESS SKILLS EVERY ARTIST MUST LEARN

UNDERSTAND THESE BASICS

- CONTRACTS
- COPYRIGHT
- COMMISSION SPLITS
- SALES AGREEMENTS
- TAXES AND EXPENSES

TREAT YOUR ART LIKE A BUSINESS

- TRACK INCOME AND EXPENSES
- CREATE SIMPLE BUDGETS
- SAVE RECEIPTS
- SET INCOME GOALS

SECTION 7 — NETWORKING WITH PURPOSE RELATIONSHIPS BUILD CAREERS

ATTEND:

- GALLERY OPENINGS
- ART TALKS
- COMMUNITY EVENTS

ENGAGE:

- CURATORS
- OTHER ARTISTS
- COLLECTORS

SUPPORT OTHERS AND BUILD AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS.

SECTION 8 — VISIBILITY STRATEGY

SHOW YOUR WORK REGULARLY

- GROUP SHOWS
- ART FAIRS
- COMMUNITY EXHIBITIONS

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING

- PROFESSIONAL PHOTOS
- BEHIND-THE-SCENES CONTENT
- INSTALLATION SHOTS

MOMENTUM ATTRACTS OPPORTUNITY.

SECTION 9 — COLLECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

BUILD TRUST

- BE PROFESSIONAL
- COMMUNICATE CLEARLY
- DELIVER ON TIME

MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS

- THANK BUYERS
- INVITE THEM TO EXHIBITIONS
- SHARE PROGRESS UPDATES

COLLECTORS INVEST IN ARTISTS THEY TRUST.

SECTION 10 — FAITH, PURPOSE & CREATIVE INTEGRITY

AT PEOPLE ART & COMPANY, WE HONOR CREATIVITY AS DIVINE EXPRESSION.

REMEMBER:

- YOUR GIFT HAS PURPOSE
- YOUR VOICE MATTERS
- YOUR WORK CAN INSPIRE HEALING, REFLECTION, AND UNITY

STAY GROUNDED IN EXCELLENCE, HUMILITY, AND SERVICE.

SECTION 11 — PEOPLE ART ARTIST SUCCESS

CHECKLIST

FOUNDATION

- ☐ PORTFOLIO CREATED ☐ ARTIST STATEMENT WRITTEN
- ☐ BIO COMPLETED ☐ PRICING STRUCTURE SET

PROFESSIONALISM

- ☐ EMAIL SIGNATURE CREATED ☐ WEBSITE OR PAGE LIVE
- ☐ HIGH-QUALITY PHOTOS

GROWTH

- ☐ APPLY TO EXHIBITIONS ☐ ATTEND EVENTS MONTHLY
- ☐ POST CONTENT WEEKLY ☐ BUILD MAILING LIST

FINAL MESSAGE

**YOUR ART IS MORE THAN DECORATION.
IT IS COMMUNICATION. IT IS
TESTIMONY. IT IS CULTURE.
BUILD BOLDLY. CREATE FAITHFULLY.
GROW INTENTIONALLY.**

— PEOPLE ART & COMPANY
"PEOPLE ARE GOD'S PERFECT ART"