

Email Address, Blackberry and a Website: The New Essential Art Supplies

Every once in awhile, even today, well into 2006, I come across an artist who is still resistant to the idea of using the computer. Okay, there might have been some justifiable excuses 10 years ago, "I don't want to spend my time learning about something that is just a passing phase..." or, "I am getting along fine in my life right now without the use of a computer, so I don't need one." Or, my personal favorite, "my _____ (insert wife, boyfriend, brother, daughter, neighbor) has a computer and will do stuff for me." Unfortunately, the tides of technology are changing so fast, that even if you get on board right now, you will be hopelessly left behind. Like swimming fast against the current, you will need to use all your resources just to stay in the same place.

The art world, being the technological dinosaur that it is, was the last to come aboard. It took forever for galleries to understand the need for a website and email and just now are starting to use the more sophisticated techniques of electronically sending enhanced digital images to maximize communication with collectors and sales. The art business is changing rapidly and an essential part of that business has become instant visual communication...immediate access. To offer to FedEx materials is *so* 1990's. So, now in addition to a snail mail address, a telephone number and a fax machine, **everyone** expects you to have an email address. Part of the responsibility that comes with having an email address, however, are the expectations that go along with it. Most people who send an email expect a response within hours, if not minutes. To wait over 24 hours to respond to an email is considered rude and unacceptable.

In an effort to drag all you Luddites out there into the 21st century, I've created a mandatory checklist for 2007. To be seriously considered a professional artist in the visual arts world you must:

1. Have a website devoted exclusively to your work. Make sure it is simple to navigate and allows fast access to images and a way to contact you. Maintain the site with new work and develop a strategy to drive traffic to it. (More on website design in my next article)
2. Own your own domain name, such as www.johnsmith.com. You can purchase a website address at www.register.com or www.networksolutions.com
3. Read and answer your own email within 24 hours, even if you need a PDA or Blackberry to do so.
4. Be capable of sending and receiving digital files and jpegs

Moving forward at the pace of today's technological changes can appear intimidating. But, start slowly, ask for the help you need (any 5 year old can probably help you) and practice, practice, practice.

Good luck.