

Making the Connection – a practical guide

Gallery relations, collector relations, price correlations
and the importance of a broad exposure at art fairs

Presentation by Amanda Coulson
Founder and Artistic Director of Volta Art Fair

THINGS ART
STUDENTS ARE
TAUGHT

STOP
PAINTING

YOU HAVE TO
READ ADORNO

MOVE TO
BERLIN

ART IS NOT
ABOUT SELLING

CALL YOUR
MOTHER



GO BACK TO
PAINTING

FORGET
ADORNO!

BERLIN
IS OVER!

GOTTA HAVE
A GALLERY

CALL YOUR
SHRINK

VOLTANY

VOLTA13







What is a Professional ?

- *adjective*

- 1.

relating to or belonging to a profession.

- 2.

engaged in a specified activity as one's main paid occupation rather than as an amateur.

"a professional boxer"

synonyms:

paid, salaried, non-amateur, full-time

"a professional artist"

CONSPIRACY ART THEORIST



THE MARKET CONTROLS
EVERYTHING... IF IT LOOKS
GOOD IT MUST BE BAD... IF
IT LOOKS BAD IT'S A
MASTERPIECE... SAATCHI
IS BEHIND THIS... ART
HISTORY IS A LIE...
HITLER INVENTED
DOCUMENTA...

Being an artist in the 21st century:
No romantic notion...

It is about original, creative work,
Research & exposure
More work,
Persistence,
Invention ,
Re-invention,
Visibility and Readiness.

Basic Questions

How do I prepare
for the market ?

Which art fairs suit
me ?

How do I find a
gallery ?

How do I find a
curator (or two) ?

How do I price a
work of art ?

How do I maintain
collector relations
?

Preparation for the Job

Create a full body of works !

Have your CV & artist statement ready

Then create another body of works ...

Know the market, players & your competitors

Have a proper digital portfolio

Apply for residencies!

Know your history!

Remember: this is a pitch!

Presentation is Everything

- Your work

Medium, size, scale

Quality (materials)

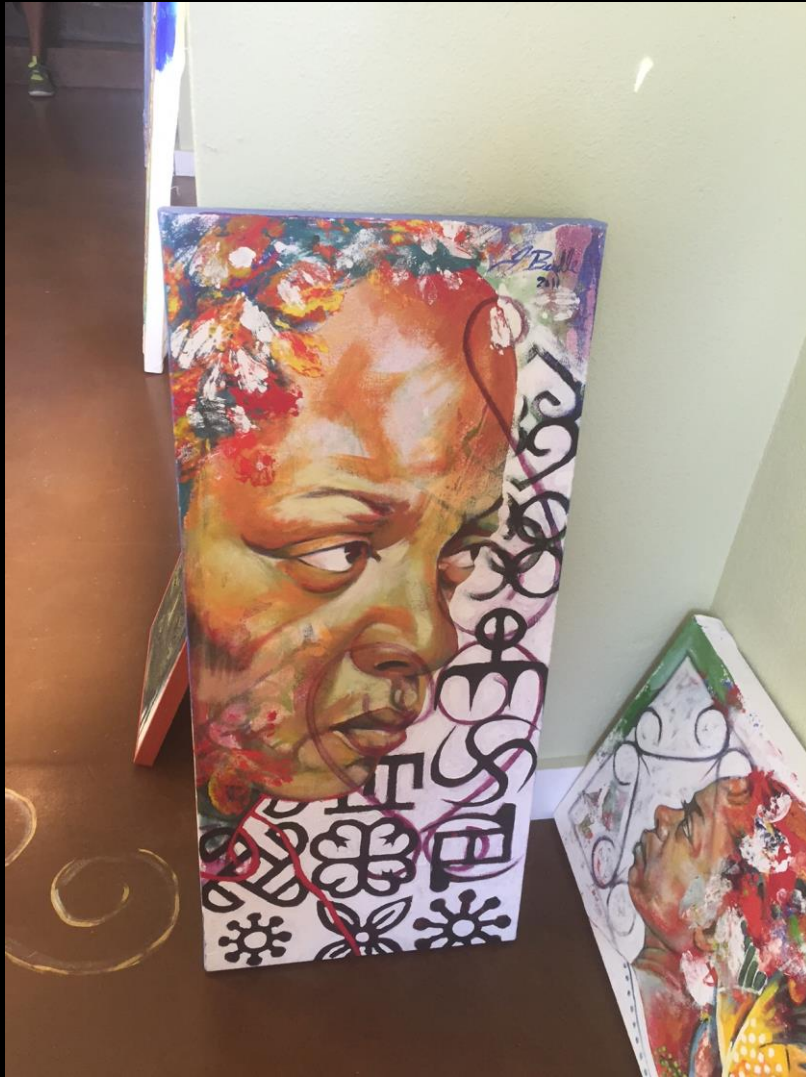
Portfolio

- Yourself

What is your
brand?

What does your
work represent?

NO



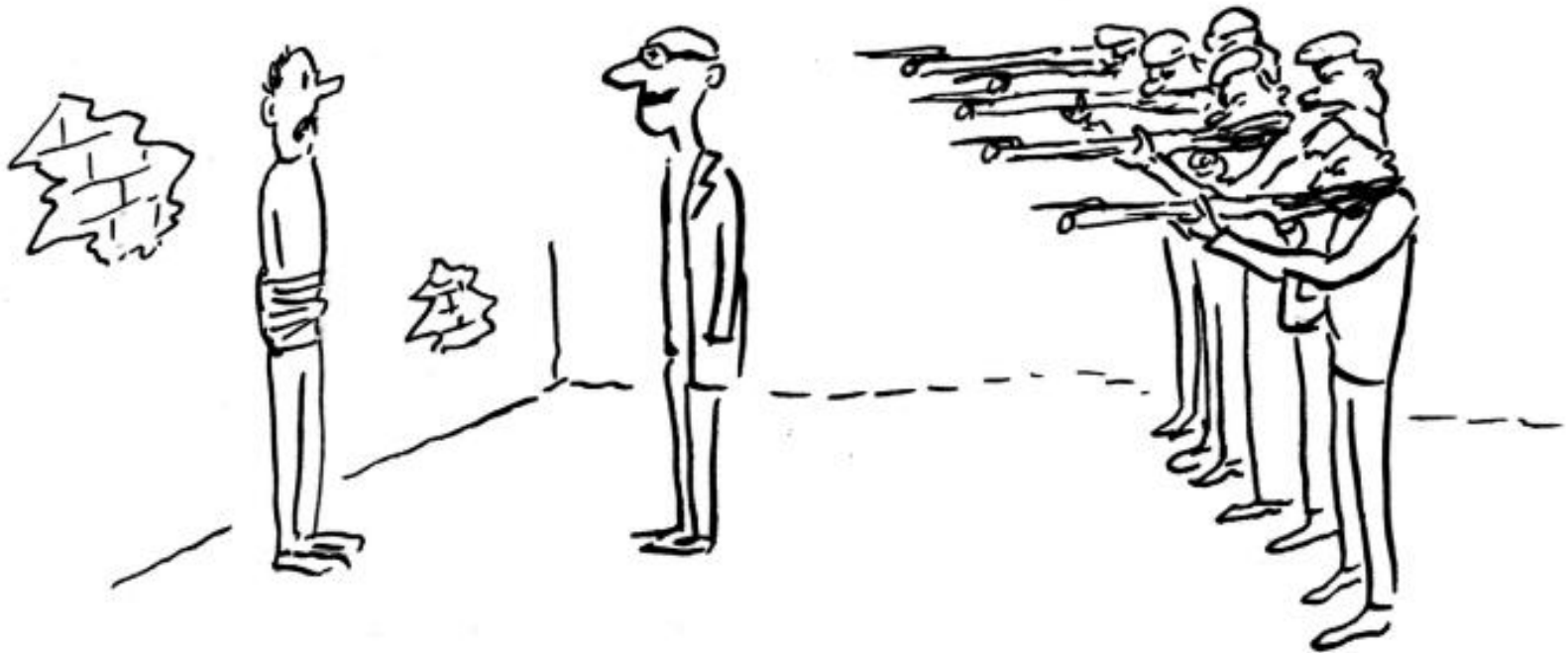
YES

JOHN
BEADLE



In Another Man's Yard II, BIAC, 2013
Mixed Media, Various Dimensions

Galleries



"We just feel more comfortable when we work with dead artists."

Galleries – do's & dont's

Research, research,
research ! Use artnet,
art.sy, blouin info,
artnews + magazines

Find what you are
attracted to and
make up YOUR mind !

Find a link and have
you connected !

Never approach a
gallery yourself

Don't be
impressed by size

Be visible but not
pushy !

Price structure I

What matters:

- Technique
- Material
- Size
- Production

What does not matter ?

- “quality”
- working hours
- personal preference

Simple Formula: height + width x factor
& Global pricing

Price structure II

Simple Formula: height + width x factor

Example 1:

Painting of a
“novice” artist

50 x 50 cm = 100

Factor: 15

$100 \times 15 = 1.500$

Example 2:

Painting of a “mid
career” artist

50 x 50 cm = 100

Factor: 50

$100 \times 40 = 5.000$

Example 3:

Painting of a “well
known” artist

50 x 50 cm = 100

Factor: 110

$100 \times 15 = 11.000$

Works on paper/ sculptures/ etc = different factor

Editions!!!

Discounts (collectors, museums, art advisors)

Art Fairs



"No more. You've had way too many art fairs already."

Art Fairs

Number of art fairs in
1992: 5

in 2017: 200 +

Art fairs are market
places to expose,
promote and trade
artefacts.

Nothing romantic
about it.

Where and when to be:

Feb. Madrid & Mexico

Mar: NY & HongKong

April: Brussels & Cologne

May: NY

June: Basel

July/August: Bahamas

Sept: Vienna

Oct: Toronto, Paris & London

Nov: Turin

Dec: Miami

- **THE COLLECTOR** - The lavish dinners, the slavish dealers, the elegantly curated booths, the chauffeured VIP BMWs with personal sound-art installations, the champagne-sozzled after-parties—they're all for you. You earned it, you dashing and worldly paragon of cultural philanthropy, you. Did I mention that you look particularly attractive today?
- THE CELEBRITY** - Are you a rapper with a J or a P in your name? Have you played Spiderman in a movie? Did you sink with the Titanic or produce "Blurred Lines"? Do you know how I met your mother? Hell, have you ever been on a reality show? Did I mention that I'm impressed by your intelligent grasp of the subtle nuances inherent in the work I'm trying to sell you?
- **THE IDLE HANGER-ON/SOCIALITE** – Whee! What fun! Look at all the colors and shiny objects and mirrored sculptures cheekily referencing the art market. Is that a celebrity over there? Wow. Champagne? Thanks
 - **THE CURATOR** - You get to walk around and look at the art, get excellent background info from the dealers, talk to the artists, and generally just schmooze. Everyone wants your ear, and you basically don't have to do anything with the information you have for a long time, if ever.
 -
 - **THE REPRESENTED ARTIST** - Sure, you're forced to see your work displayed in exactly the worst possible way and immediately commodified. Sure, you have to deal with oleaginous collectors who don't understand your work, and make them feel as though they do. But otherwise, basically, an art fair is one long birthday party for you. Everyone's telling you how much they love you.
 - **THE ART ADVISOR** - You are the trusty sherpa of the superrich, assuredly guiding them through the aisles toward artworks that you have identified through copious advance fieldwork to match their taste. You're the first mate on the S.S. Dream Fulfillment, going along on a luxurious shopping spree, complete with the extravagant meals whose high prices are comfortably dwarfed by the sums being thrown around on art.
 - **THE (PRINT) CRITIC** - Same as the curator, pretty much. You're probably not covering the fair, and even if you are you don't have to file for a while (unless you're the *New York Times*, which actually publishes timely fair reviews). And everyone's so nice to you!
 - **THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR** -You'd think you would be higher on this list, wouldn't you? But in addition to glad-handing and power-brokering, you also have to do nonstop development work and fundraising, which you hate with your entire being.

- **THE ART HANDLER** - You work really, really hard to put up the show—and then you get to hit the beach, booze it up, or otherwise go on vacation. Until the fair closes, at which point you have to work really, really hard, with lots of people yelling at you.
- **THE FASHION BRAND AMBASSADOR** - You don't really fit in or get what's going on, but nobody cares if the party you're throwing is good.
- **THE PR REP** - This is a breakneck face-time opportunity with everyone you want to talk to, from the press to clients to potential clients. So, you have to fit in a punishing gauntlet of meetings, but it's mostly just talking to people in swanky locales. Boo hoo.
- **THE PHOTOGRAPHER** - You're running around, scrambling to get one original, dramatic photo of the fair—perhaps of an art dealer at his booth with his head in his hands in apparent defeat—then shoot the parties and file by midnight. It's exhausting, and how many truly memorable photos of art fairs are there, really?
- **THE UNREPRESENTED ARTIST** - Here you are, hat in hand, walking around the booths on the last day of the fair and trying to get some exhausted gallerist to look at your work on your iPhone, listen to you describe your process, or just acknowledge your existence, really. You are scum.
- **THE FAIR EMPLOYEE** - Welcome to hell. Everyone is a VIP, or thinks they are, so you are on the business end of the single most entitled populace in human history outside of pharaonic Egypt. You deserve our pity, and our kindness. Why did you choose this line of work? You can't remember, can you?
- **THE TAXI DRIVER** - Did I mention that part about the most entitled populace in human history? Fancy people are hopping in cabs and saying strange words that they're apparently convinced you will understand as a destination. "Freeze"? "Nada"? What? Then there's gridlock traffic everywhere, and these people HAVE TO BE THERE IMMEDIATELY. The destinations are so far and the money is so good that you can't afford to stop, and you want to kill yourself.
- **THE DEALER** - Make it work or you're out of a job, buddy.
- **THE ONLINE ART JOURNALIST** - Wake up, report, file, party, don't sleep, report, file, party, don't sleep, never eat, forget to drink normal liquids, get sick, lose your voice. There is no god.

Collectors



*"Remember how we used to ignore you
before you became a successful artist?"*

Collectors – do's & dont's

Treat them what they
are: your life line !

Maintain a website

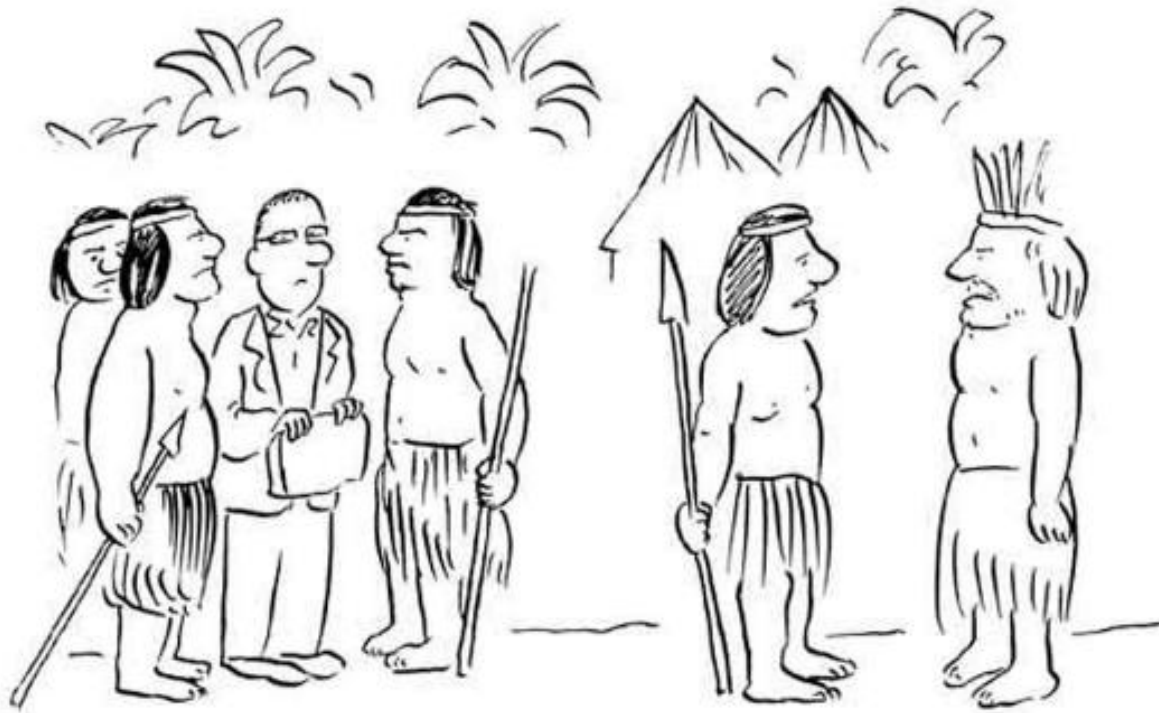
Keep them informed

Maintain a broad
collector base if -
you can

Send newsletters and
postcards (even
handwritten...)

Do not rely on just
one supporter

Curators



"He says he is curating a biennial and wants to know if anyone here does video."

Curators – do's & dont's

Independent agents in
the field

Have curators on
YOUR roster.

Their own agenda

Artists are NOT
helpless.

Critical edge vs. the
monetary aspect
(galleries often pay
curators)

Listen!

Institutions



"Oh, those footnotes? She is an academic."

Institutions – do's & don'ts

Support your
institution

One show is not a
game changer

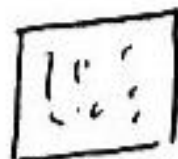
Consider the timeline

Historicisation &
scholarship

Consider the mission
i.e. not sales oriented

YOU can plan your
career !

FIRST SHOW



RADICAL
PROMISING
BREAKTHROUGH!

SECOND SHOW



CONSECRATED,
BIENNIAL-BOUND

THIRD SHOW



LIKED THE
OLD WORK
BETTER

FOURTH SHOW



MADE BY
THE ASSISTANTS

FIFTH SHOW



AS LONG
AS IT SELLS