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Tips & Hints

Improving Online Visibility for Cultural Practitioners

From a workshop by Rupa Subramaniam in October 2020, for Rimbun Dahan

Useful Online Tools/Platforms

Canva – <https://www.canva.com/>

Free online graphic design app, with many templates for small screen format. Social media platform requirements are always changing; this can be frustrating. Canva has pre-existing templates for different social media platforms.

Google Trends – <https://trends.google.com/>

Shows you what keywords people search for, which can be helpful for your copywriting and to support grant applications. Related queries can give you ideas of what topics are evergreen (Top related queries) versus what is trendy (Rising related queries). Use it to find out: are you trendy? are you evergreen? are you on point? Use insights from Google Trends to subvert the search algorithm. Past search trends can help you to decide when to launch content.

Patreon – <https://www.patreon.com/>

An online platform to get regular monthly income, creating multiple tiers for your audience. For example, a one-off donation gets an introductory level of access, a monthly donation gets a higher level. Helpful to use IG/Facebook to direct traffic towards Patreon. You are aiming for a small number of high-paying users, but it can be exhausting designing giveaways for each tier of access.

The Abundant Artist - <https://theabundantartist.com/ephemeral-marketing/>

Use these free resources/blogs to learn different ways artists in the West use digital tools. Particularly, learn how artists use stories on IG to build a stronger connection with their audience.

HootSuite - <https://hootsuite.com/>

Schedule social media posts in advance, saving you loads of time. Reply to comments and mentions through the dashboard. There's no need to visit each individual platform.

Trello - <https://trello.com/>

A task manager, great when you are working with a team, and have multiple projects going on at the same time. Share a social media posts on Trello before you publish it, give others on your team the opportunity to review the post, comment and make changes before it goes live.

Zen Habits - <http://zenhabits.net/>

A blog with tips to help you focus, by eliminating mental clutter.

What to Put Online

- There's a lot of poor content out there. Do we want to be part of the problem?
- “Heal the digital space by sharing what you do and directing more people towards this magic.”
- Consider: What responses do we want from our online work? Likes, followers, commissions, sales, discussions, connections...
- Find the gap you want to fill and do the research to see what already exists. How are you adding another layer of meaning or perspective?
- There is a lot of Westernized content, not much localized content. i.e. YouTube videos of “How to paint darker skin tones?”

Avoiding Burnout

- Make boundaries for yourself so you're not overwhelmed.
- Consider targeting your content towards circles of privacy, from most private to least private, with different segments of audience, or different platforms for each (i.e. Facebook for friends and socialising, Instagram for artistic content).
- Try to separate yourself from the work and distance yourself from reactions. You can't control public reactions!
- Take back control: don't follow what others say you have to do, use the digital space for YOU.
- You are the artist, and the curator of your personal space online.
- You don't have to respond to every request just because someone asks.
- Always remember: you can't do everything or be everywhere, so do not try. Check with yourself that you are putting time and resources towards a goal you really want. If you really want a response online, you need to invest in your online platform or project over time.

Increasing Visibility

- Using 5-10 hashtags in a post can help it reach further.
- Research what other things come up with a hashtag you're using, to make sure you want to be seen in that company.
- Building connections online with other artists can be helpful, to share audiences.
- In IG (for now) hashtags are relevant for posts, but not for stories.
- Your post may trend much later on, if the hashtag becomes popular later.
- Specific art-related hashtags may help you to become visible to potential artistic collaborators.
- If you are teasing a future event or project, give a few ideas/main points about it in the tease.
- If your work touches on social issues, you can also provide links to other organisations/campaigns, so viewers can take action on these issues.
- If you're looking to make a particular connection, let your audience know how they can connect with you. But don't overthink it!
- Useful design rule (i.e. for Instagram): Have 3 elements in each post image; one big (idea), one medium (time, venue, details), one small (sponsors)

Videos

- 1 minute 30 secs is a good time frame for a video on social media.
- Consider a standard-format ending (or beginning?) for your videos, for consistent branding.
- More than 40% of users watching a video pay attention to sound, so consider using work by musician friends.
- Viewers often switch off videos in the first few seconds. So the most impactful section needs to be in the first 10 seconds. You can put any behind-the-scenes play after that.
- Consider investing in a landing page (for example, on your website) that showcases your video work in a cleaner environment, without the surrounding clutter of social media. This landing page can also provide extra context around the creation of this work.

Salami Publishing (One Artwork, Many Slices)

- The online format ‘flattens’ the artwork, so consider ways that you provide a ‘layered’ digital approach to a single artwork.
- A series of videos or posts on a single theme can make the most of an idea.
- You can create multiple assets to support a particular artwork (how you made it, what people thought of it...) This is particularly useful for highlight projects.

Troubleshooting

- Issues of copyright, stealing of artworks – maybe appeal to your regular audience to support you, to put public pressure on the people who steal.
- Find another source of digital expertise to help you with the tech (your son/daughter, your venue...)

Planning

- It helps to have a plan for a major release on the online space. But not everything you put on social media needs that.
- Consistency in experimenting with a particular approach towards publishing online content can give you a more solid result.
- After the project: reporting/documentation from your online material should also include responses that you got from viewers.
- Most important: choose the platform that is right for what you want to do. A website is a white box, but may require a lot of expertise and resources to make it do what you want. Facebook is a social space, but often has lots of politics. Instagram may be a more playful space, with less interaction. Twitter is debate-based and useful for social issues, but you need a thick skin. Pinterest can be a good album for images, and can help you be found via Google Images.