

Having an official artist website is a must for all practitioners. The internet has rapidly become an important way for audiences to experience, research and discover art. Many people won't be able to see your work in exhibitions but will find you online, so it is important to represent yourself in a professional and simple way. Creating a website may be daunting for some, so here are some tips.

Purpose

A website has many purposes, and the website's purpose will effect how you make it. Websites are a good way of archiving and displaying work that you might not have the opportunity to exhibit. It's a good tool for marketing and selling your work, and for communicating your intentions.

Content

You will have to compose the text that is to be included in the site. Generally speaking, good web text content is short and does not require the reader to scroll the screen very much. The content should also be meaningful, with correct spelling and grammar. Large chunks of text are more likely to be ignored so it's good to break up your content and provide links that lead to more detailed/complex content that the user can access if they wish.

It is necessary to accurately credit and acknowledge anything on your site that wasn't made or written by you, and perhaps include links to the maker if appropriate. Images and videos must be of the highest possible quality so you make a good impression.

How to pay for it

Developing and maintaining a website does cost money and time. This would be considered a professional business cost for tax purposes, and can be allocated as part of the 'marketing budget'. If you are applying for grants or funding, you could include it in your budget or you could organise to have advertisements on your site, but this will interrupt the aesthetic.

Copyright

The Australian Copyright Council has all the information you need about copyright. There is a fact sheet called "[Websites and Copyright](#)" which you're able to download through their website. The key points of this fact sheet are:

- Whole websites are not protected by copyright. However, component parts of a website, such as video, text, artworks, logos, photographs, music and the underlying source code and files, may be protected.
- When a website designer is paid to create a website, it's a good idea to have a written agreement that, among other things, specifically deals with copyright and moral rights issues.

To be sure you're doing everything correctly, please read through the full fact sheet at: http://www.copyright.org.au/ACC_Prod/ACC/Information_Sheets/Websites_Copyright.aspx?WebsiteKey=8a471e74-3f78-4994-9023-316f0ecef4ef

DIY

Content

Thinking about what kind of content you want to have on your website will determine the kind of layout you will have. Some artists choose to have only visuals, some artists choose to have text i.e. reviews, statements and catalogue essays.

Categorising

The way you're categorising your content also plays an important roll in the choice of layout. You may choose to categorise your content by year, by medium, by individual projects. Have a look at other artists' websites to see the different ways people categorise their work. There are many ways of categorising your content but it is important to have your work categorised so the website becomes easy to navigate. So, have a think about different ways of categorising your work and which one is best for your practice.

Platforms

Web platforms are sites you can use to build a website. They're usually pretty intuitive and take you through a step by step process of making your website. This way it's not built from scratch and the administrative side (back end) of the website is already sorted out for you, ready for you to customise. It's important to choose a platform that works for your practice and your level of expertise when it comes to running a site. Don't choose something that is difficult to update unless you are willing to learn a lot.

Here are some popular web platforms and their pros and cons:

Web Platform	Pros	Cons
<u>Wordpress</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenty of themes and layouts to choose from • Many of the free themes are very professional • You can collect and view statistics of visitors to your site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be confusing if you're not very tech savvy. • Many options for customising.
<u>Tumblr</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to navigate and update • Intuitive backend • Plenty of themes and layouts to choose from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runs like a blogging website, offers you a "Dashboard" for reposting other material. This is not necessary for your website.
<u>Cargo</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed by artists for artists • Made for visuals • Good for portfolios. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You either have to be recommended by someone who already has an account or send in an application to make an account
<u>Squarespace</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for artists and designers. • Easy to edit the look of your site without knowing coding • All layouts are responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly difficult to arrange things • Extensive options may be confusing to someone new to website building

These are only a few options, it's good to do some of your own research before committing. Ask your friends what platforms they use, and whether they find it simple or complex.

Once you have your site running through a platform you have the option of web hosting and purchasing a domain which will allow your site to look more professional, and allow you to have more content on your site.

Hosting and domains

Web hosting allows you to own space online for hosting the files that are required for your website. A domain name is the address that will tell the computer where to go to access these files which allows people to access it. In the analogy of a home, hosting is the house and the domain is your address.

It's easiest to purchase both of these services as a package, be prepared to spend around \$200 a year. If you purchase hosting and a domain, your site belongs to you, not the platform you're running it

through. So, if you're using Wordpress, your URL goes from myartwebsite.wordpress.com to myartwebsite.com, giving you a more professional appearance.

You should look into web hosts that give you more options such as cPanel. These kinds of web hosts allow you to custom make professional email addresses e.g. name@yourart.com and store files and calendars online.

Themes and templates

It's important to think about the way you've organised your content when choosing a theme or template. For example, don't use a theme that arranges everything in tiny thumbnails if you intend to have HD images as most of your content.

It's good to choose themes that are "responsive themes". This means that they change their layout when viewed on different devices such as tablets or smart phones so they are still easy to navigate no matter what device the user is using. You can search for themes on the website for the platform you're using, or you can use sites like theme forest.

Video works

Once video works are uploaded to a video-sharing website like Youtube or Vimeo, they can be embedded onto your site. Both Youtube and Vimeo are good for video works, you can choose the quality of the upload and change settings on both.

Youtube is free, and Vimeo has an annual fee if you intend to upload more than what their free accounts allow.

Documentation of work

The quality of the images/videos of your work online must be as good as you can get them. We recommend hiring a photographer for the best possible quality, but if you're short of cash, there is a NAVA guide called "How do I create a good photograph of my work" which will help you with documentation.

Selling work on your website

Some artists may have smaller priced items that they wish to sell online, such as prints and merchandise. This can be done through sites such as Big Cartel and Shopify, which are online stores. Once you've created your own account, you can have a link to your shop on your website. They can share the same url as your site, i.e. If your website is yourart.com, then your store can be yourart.bigcartel.com. These sites are fully customisable, and you can make them look as professional as your main website. They're an organised, tidy and safe way to make transactions online.

Larger scale artworks should not be sold through your website, but in a more professional way.

Engaging a Designer

A designer will probably do all of what is written above, but if this is too complex, or you would like a higher level of expertise handling your website, here is what we recommend when engaging a designer.

Issues to consider:

- Quality of previous work and who they have worked for.
- Price.
- Do they understand and incorporate e-marketing concepts?
- Can they do the graphics wanted and can browsers handle those graphics?
- Number of pages of content required.
- Do they provide technical support and at what cost?

- Will they develop a site that you can make modifications to in the future or will the design relationship need to be ongoing?
- Will they provide backup copies of the site in case of disaster?
- Are they affiliated with an Internet service provider and if so is that arrangement to your advantage?
- Copyright requirements.

If you are having the site designed by someone else, the Australian Copyright Council suggests there be a written agreement between the designer and the commissioner. The ACC information sheet, "Websites and Copyright" can be accessed through their website.

Good Design

A well designed website will have many of the following features:

- The 'home' page that is neat and provides links to all necessary content
- It will look well maintained and up to date.
- It will be easy to navigate the site and visitors will have clear prompts to help them find what they want.
- The site should download quickly and be viewable on a number of browsers and devices.
- The content will be specifically written so that it is easy to read on a website. This will include keeping each section short so that there is minimal scrolling, and a logical and well-organised progression through the information.
- If links to others sites are provided it will be for an obvious reason.
- The graphics should be fresh and interesting but not detract from the text.
- The administration information, such as the date last revised, copyright notification, privacy policy, disclaimer, contact person etc. will be in line with common practice.

Conclusion

Whether you make your own website through a platform, or use a designer, it's important that your site represents you as an artist and that you are able to stay on top of it and keep it up to date. Remember to revamp your website throughout your career in order to keep it from looking dated or showing old work that you don't want people to know you for. Don't neglect your about section; keep current contact details and regularly check the email you have given, as well as constantly updating your CV. All of this is essential to running a successful website.