

**How many times have you been asked;
“Do you have a web site?”**

**You sell and have your work exposed at galleries and shows.
An internet presence is almost expected today!**

As an artist we are trying to distinguish ourselves through our art, and in a way, market ourselves to the people around us. What better way to assist in this task than with a web site. A web site is a powerful tool to market and promote yourself and your art. The technology is available to build a site that can play music, download documents, display images, show video reels, animate pages and pretty much anything else you can imagine.

Whether you like it or not a web site is an extension and reflection on the work you do and the art you create. A shoddy looking web site that is just thrown up because you feel you need an on-line presence is doing more harm than good and should be taken down immediately.

A key element to a successful web site is organizing your thoughts and ideas into a projected plan. Assembling your thoughts on paper by sketching how you envision each page looking and how the interact will organize the project and allow you to proceed in construction or approaching a professional.

With the design tips below, you can adopt some of the most important concepts for developing your website design.

1. Your site's theme and purpose should be evident from the beginning. Are you displaying your art or selling your art?
2. Elements of the site should be cohesive and not fight other elements for attention. Focus should always be on your art and how to purchase it, either by contacting you or an online purchase.
3. Navigation should be fluid and obvious.
4. Color palettes should be complimentary and cohesive
5. Bandwidth is still limited on the internet; therefore, your site should be efficient in transfer from server to user. Photos size on the internet does not only refer to the physical dimensions of an image. How fast an image loads is determined by the file size measured in pixels. The more pixels an image has will create a large file, consequently the image will take longer to be displayed on your web page. It is an art to optimize images to reduce file size without losing the clarity of the subject.
6. Site components should fit together and make a whole, not just take up space. This is where a preliminary diagram of each page

containing planned content and navigation. Sort of an arial view to make sure all parts flow and achieve our objectives.

7. A web site should look and feel like a complete unit, not bits and pieces here and there. Google ceramic web artists to get a feel what others are putting forth on the internet. Be critical, what do you like and why? What don't you like and why?
8. Your site should be interactive and engaging, not static and dull. People need a reason to visit your site and they need a reason to return. Keep your images fresh.

A Few Web Design Guidelines

Use caution when selecting your background and text colors. Busy backgrounds make text difficult to read and draw the attention away from the text. In addition, always be consistent with your background theme on each page of your site.

ALWAYS check and double-check your site for spelling and grammatical errors, and make sure your images and links are all working properly. If you have several errors, this will make your site appear to be unprofessional.

View your website through different browsers and screen resolutions so you can see how your visitors will view your site.

Always be consistent when using font styles and sizes. Avoid using large font sizes, as this looks very unprofessional.

Continually add new content to your site. Give your visitors a reason to keep coming back.

When designing your website's main page, instead of trying to cram all of your information into one page, consider creating sections. These sections can contain highlights of your information with a link to further information. You can set your sections up in *tables* with colored *heading sections* for information such as news, articles, products or whatever you'd like.

It's much better to keep your main page down to the most essential elements. You can then use links to additional pages to provide the detailed information. A good rule of thumb is "less is more." In other words, keep your main page as small as possible, while at the same time, include your most important elements.

To enhance your page, you can format your text using bold headlines, colored *table cells*, and graphic bullets and/or arrows.

If you use the same graphic bullets and arrows throughout your page, you can

enhance your page's appearance, but you won't add any additional time to your site's load time. When you reuse an image, your image only has to load once. When the image has loaded, it will instantly be displayed in all of the other locations.

Web Design Mistakes

- Spelling/Grammar mistakes
- No contact information
- Poor navigation
- Broken links and graphics
- Large slow loading graphics
- Pages scrolling to oblivion
- Multiple use of animated graphics-Animated bullets
- Busy, distracting backgrounds
- Multiple banners and buttons
- Pop up messages
- Poor organization
- Different backgrounds on each page
- Over powering music set to AutoPlay
- Too much advertising
- Large Welcome banners
- Multiple colored text
- Text difficult to read
- Multiple use of different fonts
- Under construction signs
- Scrolling text in the status bar
- Poor use of mouse over effects

Preparing to have your site built?

Hire a professional. Unless you are a designer and already know how to use programs like Dreamweaver, Photoshop and Front Page I would suggest hiring a professional web designer to build the site. I've seen too much time exhausted on artists trying to learn the software or attempting to use "canned" templates to construct their site. The problem with "canned" templates is they look generic, uninspiring, and flat. And trying to learn the programs to build a custom web site takes way too long and is most likely pulling you away from what you really should be doing your art.

Cost of a Website

Common sense dictates that this will vary greatly depending upon what you want in your web site. The more features you add the more it will cost. Extra features like flash, message boards, on-line store, e-commerce, log-in databases,

newsletters, steaming media and blogs are typically considered a-la-carte and will increase the price. Your price quote should include custom design, development, hosting set-up administration, search engine optimization, debugging, and hosting/e-mail administration.

Organize and Prepare

You made the conscious decision to find the right designer to build your site. Good job. Now you think you're work is done, hardly. Your web designer is going to ask you for content such as text, pictures, music, whatever it is you want to present. It's your job to provide the web designer with all the content they need so as to incorporate it into the design. Do yourself a favor and search the internet for five sites that you really like. Find web sites that are kind of similar to what you're about and send the links to the designer with a brief explanation of what you like about each one. It's a great way to begin the design process.

Web Hosting

Web hosting is a service that allows you to upload and store a site's html documents and related files on a web server. This makes the files available on the world wide web for viewing by the public. If you have a web site you need a hosting company that will store your site. There is monthly fee incurred for this service. This fee is in addition to the cost charged by a web designer to build your site, however the web designer should take care of linking up your hosting company to the newly created site.

Educate Yourself

Get to know a basic understanding of the terms, costs, software, technology, and services provided. Having a general understanding of what's involved will save you time, money and headaches in the long run.

Check out the following links for further information:

<http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/checklist.htm>

<http://www.inc.com/articles/2001/08/23347.html>

<http://www.1and1.com> (Hosting Company)

NetZero Free Dial Up Internet Service <http://www.netzero.net/>

PeoplePC Online http://www.peoplepc.com/connect/index_FSOT161.asp

LocalNet Internet Service Provider offers unlimited Internet access for a reasonable charge per month.

<http://www.localnet.com/?OVRW=internet%20connection&OVKEY=internet%20connection&OVMTC=standard>

Homestead - <http://www.homestead.com/~site/hslo/website/gallery.ffhtml>

http://www.theartpreneur.com/knowledge/artist_website.asp