



22 Ways Artists Can Make Money From Creativity

Commercial Galleries

- Remember, galleries typically take 40-50% commission. But don't think of this as money being taken from you. Instead, view it as money you might not have made without the gallery's help. Also, the value of your work often increases with professional representation.

Non-profit Galleries / Co-op Galleries

- These can be excellent venues to show your work. Usually there's no contract. They do not represent the artist and the commission taken is much lower than traditional galleries.

Pop-up Galleries

- Pop-up galleries are popping up everywhere! It can be expensive and time consuming but they also offer huge benefits in terms of audience and visibility.
- Other benefits include flexibility, often no contracts, as well as brick & mortar visibility for smaller chunks of time

Vanity Galleries

- Don't discount vanity galleries. The model of paying a gallery for wall space and promotion has caught on and much like self-publishing a book, the stigmatism has disappeared. Many artists work this way successfully.

But do be careful, because there are a lot of people who are willing to take your money while giving little in return. It's up to

you to do the research, to invest the time and energy to learn whether each opportunity is good or too good to be true.

Open up your own gallery

- This can be a costly and time-consuming business endeavor, but one that provides bigger branding & visibility opportunities.

Studio visits / collaborative open studios with other artists

- Open Studio events are a terrific way to share a ‘behind the scenes’ view of your practice. Here’s a powerful tip: art collectors LOVE to see behind the scenes. They often have romantic visions of what an artist’s life is like. So don’t be afraid to share yours!
- Artists represented by galleries should clear this method with the gallery first (the gallery may still take a commission if an artist sells work through an open studio visit or studio event)

Private Commissions

- Private Commissions through collectors, galleries or even interior designers or architects offer artists the chance to collaborate with someone to bring their vision to life.
- Be aware that commissions can be tricky to navigate though. Consider putting everything in writing. Take a percentage upfront, another percentage on approval of the design, and the final payment upon delivery. That way there are no surprises.
- Artists represented by galleries should review their contract carefully because a gallery will often take a cut of the sale, especially



if they brought the commission to the artist through their own connections & relationships

Public Commissions / Public Art

- Public Art Commissions offer another way to get your work seen by a bigger audience. Be aware that you've really got to be a good money manager with these kinds of projects because they usually offer a flat fee that has to cover all of your time and expenses. I've known several artists who mismanaged the money and found themselves losing money instead of making it.

Museums / Art Centers

- Art Centers + Museums do not always pay artists to place their work in exhibitions but the added prestige of a museum on an artist's resume, plus more access to influential art world influencers (curators/collectors/media) is the greater pay-off

Teaching

- A lot of artists teach as a way to support their work. I can think of no higher calling than to teach, but only if you absolutely love it. The work is tough, the competition for these jobs is fierce and the education you need to even be considered is often costly.
- Consider teaching workshops as a way to support your creative work. You can teach technique, creativity, whatever the strength is that you have to share. For example, I use my professional experience as an arts dealer and curator to teach the business of art.
www.theworkingartist.com



- Private schools often seek working artists to teach their courses (*sometimes one doesn't need the same level of teaching certification that would be required at a regular college or school)
- If you are already a teacher with lesson plans: sites such as TeachersPayTeachers buys lesson plans from other teachers as digital downloads

Grants

- Grants offer money to artists for specific projects or challenges. This is not 'easy money' but if you do decide to follow the grant route, it can be incredibly rewarding. Even if you don't win, you get your name and your work in front of decision makers. Sometimes you can even get feedback on your application and work.

Residencies

- Residencies can offer housing and other basic costs while you focus on a specific project. They work much like grants.
- Note: some residencies charge money or a fee.
- Biggest benefits: community / networking and being in close range with art-world influencers and other artists

Guest or Visiting Artist programs

- Many local and state art organizations have visiting artist programs that they provide for schools. This is teaching and mentoring without the baggage – or benefits – of the full-time job.

Speaking Engagements



- If you like public speaking and your work has something to say, you might try getting booked for speaking engagements and take your show on the road.

Publishing

- Publishing offers the opportunity for royalties from book sales. Self-publishing gives a bigger pay-off but you take on the investment yourself. Know that for both venues, you will be doing the marketing as well.

Merchandising / Art Licensing

- Merchandising or Art Licensing is where you sell the right to reproduce your art.
- Note that you don't sell your copyright, just the right to reproduce for a specific image during a specific time frame.
- Your work can be placed on prints, postcards, clothes, bags, whatever...
- Examples of sites: FineArtAmerica.com, Icanvas, Art.com, ImageKind.com, Printfection.com, CafePress.com, Zazzle.com

Sales from your own website

Art Websites

- Online art sales are exploding. Some artists use platforms such as Amazon or Etsy or Saatchi or the hundreds of other platforms out there.



- Not all artwork is suitable for online sales so don't be discouraged if you've done your best but not found the audience you were hoping for.
- The best sites provide a lot of visibility, plus many of these sites are regularly visited by gallery dealers, curators and other art-world influencers.

Craft/Art/Auction Websites

- A few examples include: Etsy, Ebay, Amazon, Artsicle, 20x200, TopHatter.com, Artfire.com

Social Media

- Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, Vimeo, etc
- Online networking sites for artists, such as: EmptyEasel.com, DeviantArt.com

Freelancer sites

- Freelance! Don't be afraid to take outside work to supplement your income. If you can provide graphic design, layouts, portraits, or illustration you can be using your creativity to support your fine art.
- Examples include: Upwork, Taskrabbit, Fiverr

Illustrating or Graphic Design

- Book reference - get the most recent edition: "The Artist's and Graphic Designer's Market"



There's really no end to creative ways to monetize your work. Don't be afraid of "watering down your brand" or "hurting your reputation." If the work is good and your intention is clear, go for it!

The only limit is your imagination.

But do understand that just because you make art, doesn't mean it's right for every market. You must do your research to learn what kinds of venues and opportunities best suit you and your work.

If you'd like to learn how to better navigate the art world and understand how to thrive as a Working Artist, I can help. Visit [The Working Artist website](#) to learn how.

Crista x

Crista Cloutier is the creator of The Working Artist Masterclass, where she has worked with artists from over 60 different countries, helping them to grow their careers. Crista's resume includes experience as a gallerist, award-winning documentary filmmaker, arts writer, fine-art publisher, and she has curated dozens of exhibitions around the globe. Recently, she's also been honored as an "Influencer in the Contemporary Art World" by LinkedIn.