

Contemporary challenges

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Digital presence:

- A digital platform of any kind to promote your work, is essential today and has been consistently getting more popular over the past 10 years. You can use any social media platform to promote and share anything you want, every company has an online presence or app for customers to order/ maintain their account from. Money is mainly digital and not an actual physical object anymore, you can send it to anyone in the world with a bank account, at any point in time because of an internet access. An internet access is a necessity and a complete inconvenience to not have these days, even in public areas. This means it can be used as an advantage to artists promoting and selling their work, or just creating a safe way to store/ archive work.

Pros and cons of having an online presence:

- Pros:

- Everyone uses technology in some way, shape or form.
- Accessible to almost everyone.
- Easy way to gain traction toward a business or recognition.
- Easy way to sell work of any kind.
- Multiple platforms with compatible tax percentages or app/website abilities.
- Allows you to share anything with whoever you want at any time.
- Gives your audiences or customers and opportunity to give you feedback or constructive criticism.
- Opens up windows for opportunity – if the right person sees it.

- Cons:

- Digital footprint.
- Lack of face-to-face interactions.
- People can easily access your information.
- Companies own the photographs you upload to their platform.
- Makes your work easy to steal or become copyrighted by platforms.
- Not necessary for some artists occupation, (primary/secondary school teachers don't need a specific online presence) although it's still a good method to store work (usb sticks/ memory cards etc).
- Unnecessary, negative reviews or comments.
- Can and does cause controversies for artists, celebrities and any 'regular' person too.

Online exhibitions

- One of the most underrated contributions to the art world (throughout lockdown in particular) is the use of online exhibitions. The fact nobody could go into a museum or gallery anymore and markets weren't open for people to sell even food, never mind crafts or artworks became tiring. Because it was for so long as well, people became bored and some like myself, decided to go back to college. As a part of this course, I had to produce an online exhibition for one of my modules because we couldn't go into galleries and it had become so prominent at the time.
- We had a website that we uploaded our work onto, it was a graphic design style, 3D hallways and the artwork icons/ thumbnails would be on the wall – you click on the picture icon and it would view your work. Literally a virtual gallery. It was very useful, fun and what I think was the best and safest compromise possible at the time. I think this should have continued and museums or galleries could use this technique on their own websites to show or preview what artworks they have to view.

My own online presence specifically for art – some drawings & paintings but mainly jewellery

Platforms I use or have used for my artwork online and who they reach:

- Facebook – reaching personal friends and mutual friends, share to art/ seller pages and marketplace.
- Instagram – friends, mutual friends, public, commissioners other users that become interested (usually found through hashtag searches or follows on that hashtag, which are necessary to have attached to your images for the algorithm to put you on people's pages). I find people are more comfortable communicating through this app which makes them more open to asking for commissions and the likes of. I have sold many commissions, mainly through friends/ face to face. However, only 1 painting on Instagram as I don't promote it, you need to put it out there for people to know you do it. Especially if you are trying to sell artwork or gain any sort of recognition in the community.
- Etsy – friends, public and home pages of product searches (crystal rings or necklaces for example). The more words in the title, description and hashtags the more searches you are likely to show up on – this applies to every platform. Add as many relevant words as the platform will allow you to fit.
- Depop + Vinted - this would be the last place people close to me would check and so this would mainly be for reach through the use of multiple sites or a chance that someone will come across my page. Or that it will link and redirect them to my Etsy/ Instagram.

Companies main purposes:

- Etsy (sell on Etsy)- any product or artwork you choose (usually small businesses or handmade products).
- Depop- typically used for clothes and other fashion products but can be anything or any artwork you choose.
- Facebook marketplace/ Facebook page- any product or artwork you choose
- Gumtree- used for cars, pets and the likes of typically, but you can post anything you like, may get charged for certain products you post.
- Instagram- anything you want as you would negotiate/ communicate through private direct messaging.
- Personal websites- tailored exactly to how you want it, no charges as long as you are not doing it through 3rd party website creators. Not as easily accessible as existing apps or websites due to cost, capability and time, extremely useful however as they are reliable sources linking directly to your own product or motive and you can add as much as you want.
- Vinted- typically used for clothes and shoes etc but can be used for whatever you want – jewellery can fall into this category.
- Redbubble- upload digital designs to be printed onto products such as T-shirts, cups, key rings, stickers etc. The more the order costs, the more you make so you can earn up to £10 per order depending how much the customer spends.

Company fees:

- Etsy (sell on Etsy)- 20c to post a listing, 6.5% transaction fee on every individual order
- DepopVinted-- VAT charges pending from 16th may 2023, currently no fees
- Facebook marketplace/ Facebook page- 0%
- Gumtree- 0%
- Instagram- 0%
- Personal websites- 0%
- Vinted- 0% (customer is liable for sales tax/VAT)
- Redbubble- typically you get 20% of the sale as its only your design but users can alter this

the fact so many of these companies don't have seller fees goes to show there is nothing to lose and everything to gain in some cases.

An example of how the different platforms can bring in different sales and flows of traffic. From my own personal experience, referencing my sales per app/site:

- Etsy – 33 sales since 2020 (have had the shop closed for the past year).
- Instagram – 30 customers that have ordered once or more through direct messaging, about 4 regular customers before the shop closed.
 - Facebook – 3 customers from post comments, direct messaging or from shares, usually redirected to Instagram.
 - Depop – 1 sale, jewellery item (I didn't continue to sell due to lack of endgame t compared to other platforms).
- Roughly 15 sales in person from 2020-2022, organised with/for friends or friends of family etc. Previously had one main frequent customer that was in college with me and would commission me via material she wanted.

Personal favourite - based on own experience:

- The top two apps or websites for a digital presence, from my own experience are: Instagram and Etsy. What you are using your online presence for matters a lot but, for sales or to exhibit, store or sell work these two are the best, and are efficient in all those aspects. USB sticks, memory cards, and SD cards, Google drive and the likes of are also great for backing up any images and digital pieces etc. as there is always the risk of online platforms like Instagram being taken down without warning or availability for backing up your data first.
- Some people prefer the security of buying through Etsy, so they will view your Instagram to see the business, comments and engagement etc. Then they purchase through Etsy incase there is a sales dispute or to leave a review after the purchase.
- Instagram has brought a lot of traffic to my shop from people clicking the link in my bio. This reflects the amount of people that see your posts and you never know about it, because Instagram doesn't have those analytics accessible to users. Some of my sales have come from people finding me on Instagram and this just goes to show the positive impact having multiple platforms has.

Negatives to using these apps and websites

- I have had very few negative experiences while using my online presence for art and crafts. I closed my shop a year ago in April, after it being open for two years. I chose to close it because I was finishing college and in the process of moving homes with a new job. I had no time for orders and they were taking too long to process and send off, I had one customer complain due to their order taking over a week and so ultimately decided to close the shop and stopped uploading onto my social media platforms. The customer did not leave a negative review and cancelled their order instead. I still chose to make commissions to anyone that's asked over the past year however, haven't promoted anything since April 2022.
- After creating this PowerPoint I have re opened my shop and will begin to build up my Instagram again. I've decided to also use it for my drawings. Incorporating my educational practices into it may motivate me to use it more as it would be useful, less stressful to handle posts and the pros would outweigh the cons.

Evidence: Etsy stats and traffic from alternative online platforms/ digital presences.

The only two platforms I had uploaded the link to my Etsy shop. Making a Twitter or tumblr would increase traffic further as some prefer them over others.

37.4% of traffic comes from direct Etsy traffic
37.2% of traffic from increased search results via tags (such as rings, necklace, crystal etc).
15% of traffic comes from Etsy search
7.9% of traffic comes from social media
2.5% SEO/ increased shop visibility through search engines like Google, yahoo, bing etc.

numbers are based on stats as a percentage of total views

