



The VAA Guide to

NETWORKING

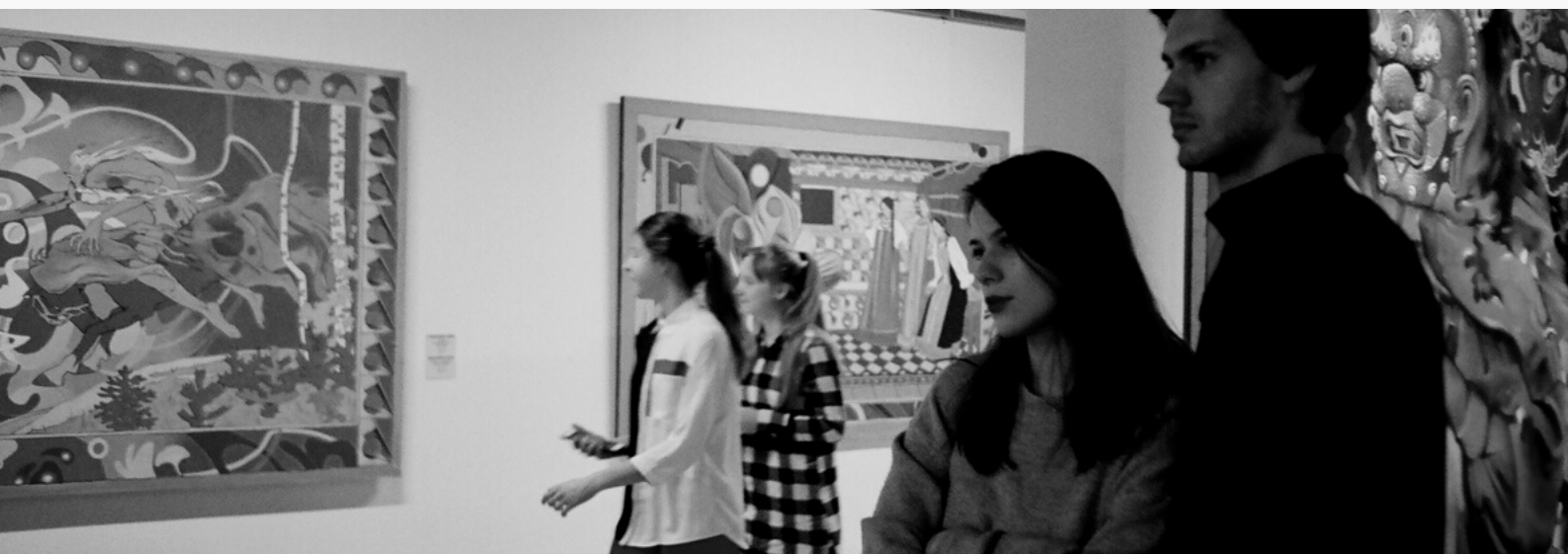
for Visual Artists

VAA | Visual Artists
Association

visual-artists.org

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INTRODUCTION

As a visual artist, **building a strong professional network** is crucial for your career growth and success. Networking allows you to **connect with fellow artists, gallery owners, collectors, art critics, and other influential figures in the art industry**. By establishing relationships and fostering connections, you can **expand your opportunities, gain exposure**, and navigate through the art world with more confidence.

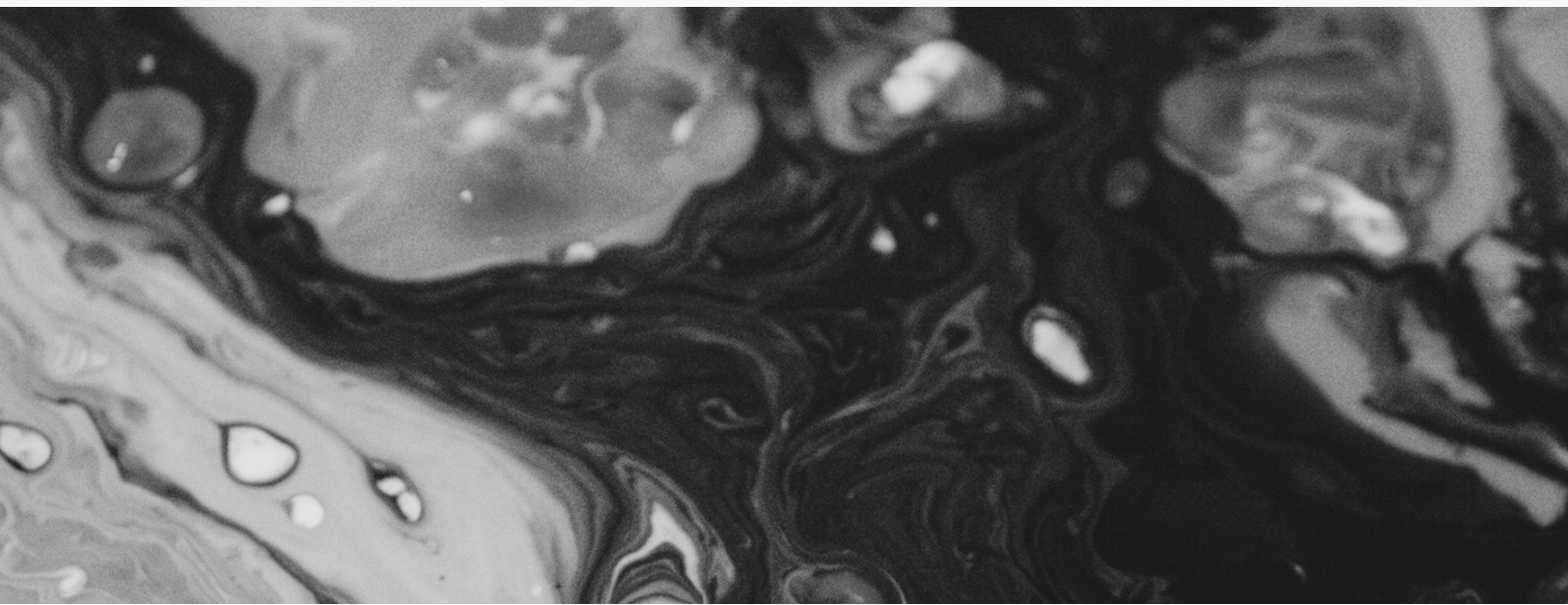
This guide will walk you through the **benefits of networking**, provide tips for **effective networking**, offer guidance on crafting an **elevator pitch**, highlight common mistakes to avoid, and offer **advice on how to get started**.



BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

Networking offers numerous advantages to visual artists.
Here are some key benefits to consider:

1. **Collaboration and Shared Knowledge:** Networking enables you to meet like-minded artists who can become collaborators or mentors. Engaging with other artists allows for the exchange of ideas, techniques, and inspiration.
2. **Increased Visibility and Exposure:** Building a strong network exposes your work to a broader audience. Attending art events, exhibitions, and social gatherings enables your art to be seen by potential buyers, collectors, and curators.





3. **Access to Opportunities:** Networking opens doors to various opportunities, such as exhibitions, residencies, grants, commissions, or representation by art galleries. Connected individuals can provide recommendations and introductions that may lead to significant career advancements.

4. **Feedback and Critique:** Networking allows you to receive constructive feedback and critique from experienced artists or art professionals. This can help you refine your artistic practice and gain valuable insights to enhance your work.

5. **Support and Community:** Being part of a supportive network provides emotional encouragement, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging within the art community. Building relationships with fellow artists can combat feelings of isolation and foster a supportive environment.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NETWORKING

To make the most out of your networking efforts, consider the following tips:

1. **Attend Art Events:** Frequent local and national art events, such as exhibitions, art fairs, open studios, and gallery openings. Engage in conversations, exchange contact information, and actively participate in discussions surrounding art and creativity.

2. **Join Art Organizations and Groups:** Become a member of local art organizations, artist collectives, or online communities dedicated to visual arts. Attend their meetings, workshops, or networking events to connect with fellow artists, curators, and art enthusiasts. This includes being active with the VAA members!



3. **Leverage Social Media:** Utilize social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, to showcase your artwork, connect with other artists, and engage with art communities. Engage in meaningful conversations, share insights, and support fellow artists to build a strong online presence.

4. **Maintain Professionalism:** Approach networking with professionalism and courtesy. Be punctual, respectful, and attentive during conversations. Demonstrate a genuine interest in others' work and accomplishments, building a strong foundation for future connections.

5. **Follow Up:** After meeting someone at an art event or exhibition, follow up with a personalized email, connecting on social media, or scheduling a coffee meeting. Nurturing connections through follow-ups is essential in building long-term, meaningful relationships.

CRAFTING AN ELEVATOR PITCH

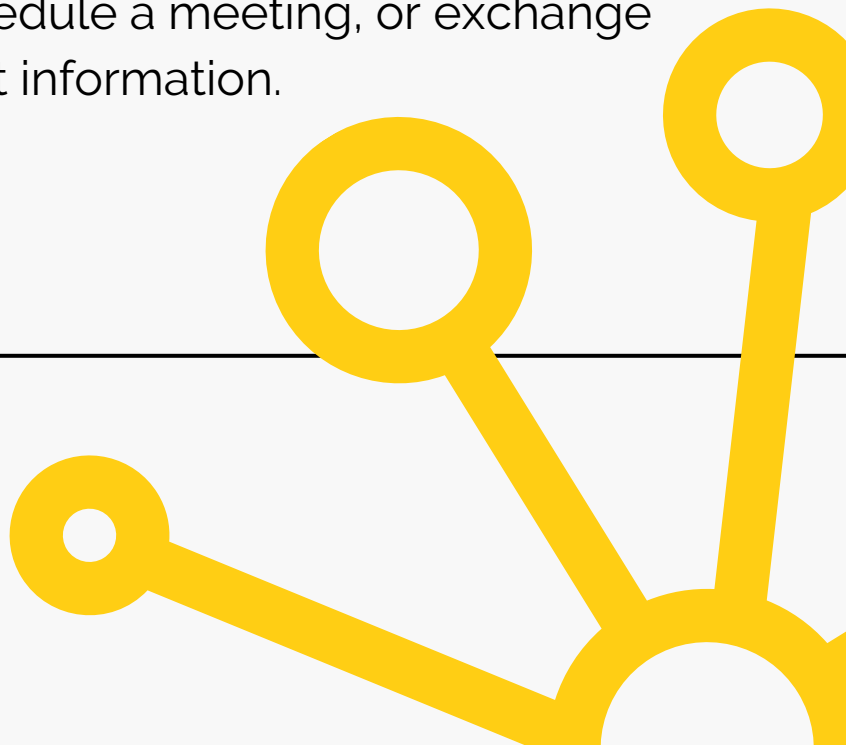
An elevator pitch is a concise description of yourself and your artwork that can be delivered in the span of an elevator ride. Crafting an effective elevator pitch is essential for networking encounters. Follow these guidelines for a compelling elevator pitch:

1. **Keep it Succinct:** Your pitch should last no longer than 30-60 seconds. Focus on communicating your core message concisely and effectively.
2. **Highlight Your Unique Selling Points:** Identify what sets your artwork apart and succinctly communicate those unique qualities. Highlight your distinctive style, subject matter, or artistic philosophy.





3. **Practice, Practice, Practice:** Rehearse your pitch until it sounds natural and authentic. Practice in front of a mirror or with friends, incorporating feedback to refine your delivery.
4. **Adapt to the Audience:** Tailor your pitch to your audience. If you're speaking with a potential collector, emphasize the emotional impact or market value of your work. If talking to a gallery owner, focus on concepts or themes that align with their curation style.
5. **End with a Call to Action:** End your pitch by prompting further conversation or action. It could be a request to visit your art studio, schedule a meeting, or exchange contact information.





COMMON *MISTAKES* TO AVOID


In the networking process, be mindful of these common mistakes that can hinder successful connections:

1. **Being Too Self-Centered:**

Avoid dominating conversations or only speaking about yourself and your work. Show genuine interest in others and develop a two-way dialogue.

2. **Misjudging the Setting:**

Different networking opportunities require different approaches. Be mindful of the setting and adjust your behavior accordingly. Politeness and respect are key in professional environments.




3. **Not Following Up:** Failing to follow up after an initial introduction can lead to missed opportunities. Take the initiative to maintain contact and nurture relationships.


4. **Having Unrealistic Expectations:** Networking takes time, and results may not be immediately apparent. Avoid expecting instant success or gratification, and focus on building genuine connections.


5. **Being Overly Aggressive:** Respect personal boundaries and avoid being overly pushy or aggressive in pursuing connections. Allow relationships to develop naturally without excessive pressure.


INCREASE YOUR CONFIDENCE


AT NETWORKING EVENTS


 **Prepare in advance:** Research the event and create a plan. Know who will be attending, familiarize yourself with the topics, and prepare some conversation starters or questions.

 **Dress appropriately:** Dressing professionally and feeling good about your appearance can boost your confidence. Choose outfits that make you feel comfortable and confident.


 **Arrive early:** Being one of the first attendees can make it easier for you to initiate conversations. It also helps to avoid crowds and gives you time to settle in and get comfortable.

 **Set realistic goals:** Instead of focusing on meeting as many people as possible, set achievable goals for yourself. For instance, aim to have meaningful conversations with a few key individuals rather than trying to connect with everyone in the room.


 **Buddy up:** Attend with a fellow artist, this can boost your confidence and help to break the ice.




Use body language: Maintain good posture, make eye contact, and offer a firm handshake when meeting someone. This will convey confidence and make a positive impression.




Ask open-ended questions: Engage others in conversations by asking open-ended questions that require more than a simple "yes" or "no." This will encourage discussion and make you seem genuinely interested.



Be a good listener: Show genuine interest in others and actively listen to what they have to say. This will help you build stronger connections and make others feel valued.



Find common ground: Look for common interests, experiences, or connections to establish a bond with others. This can make conversations more meaningful and help you feel more confident.



Follow-up: After the event, connect with the people you met on LinkedIn or through email. Following up shows your continued interest and professionalism.

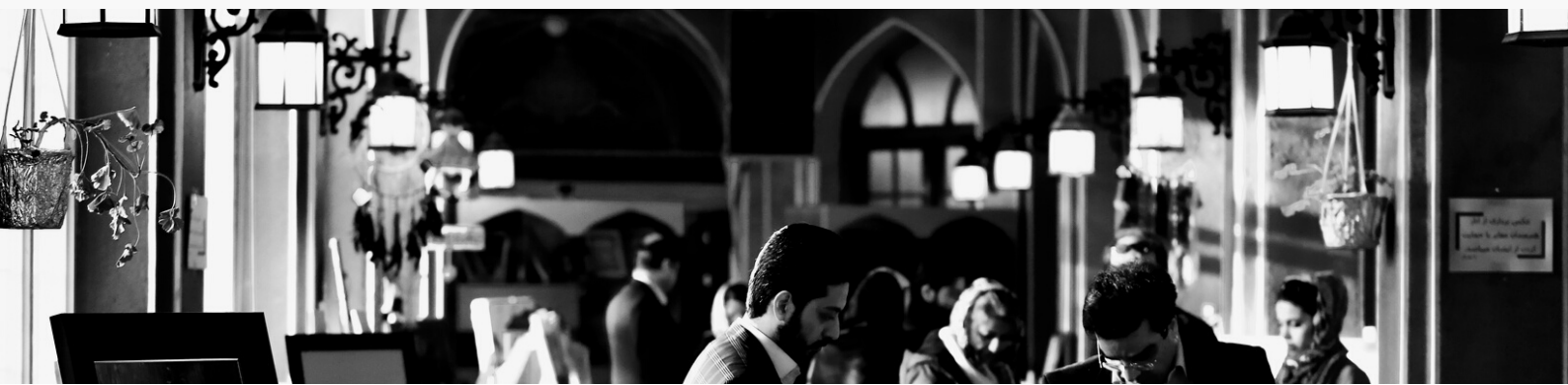
Remember, confidence comes with practice, so the more networking events you attend, the more confident you will become.

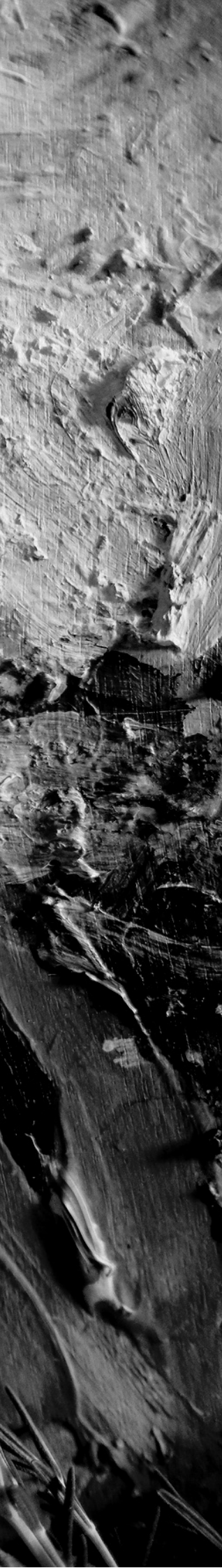
DEVELOPING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH **COLLECTORS & GALLERIES**

Developing meaningful relationships with new galleries and art collectors as an artist involves a combination of strategies and approaches. Here are some steps you can take:

1. Research and target the right galleries and collectors: Do thorough research to identify galleries and collectors whose aesthetic and interests align with your artistic style and vision. Visit galleries, attend art fairs, and engage with the local art community to gather information and find potential matches.

2. Reach out and introduce yourself: Once you have identified target galleries or collectors, introduce yourself professionally. Write a personalized email or letter expressing your admiration for their gallery or collection. Briefly explain your artistic practice, share recent achievements, and express your interest in collaborating or exhibiting with them. Attach a portfolio or provide a link to your website to showcase your work.





3. Attend gallery openings and art events:

Attend openings and events hosted by the galleries you're interested in. This offers an opportunity to introduce yourself in person, connect with the staff, and engage with the existing artists they represent. Show genuine interest in the exhibited artwork and build relationships by opening conversations and asking thoughtful questions.

4. Utilize social media and online platforms:

Leverage social media platforms and online art communities to connect with galleries and collectors. Follow them, engage with their content, leave insightful comments, and share their posts. Demonstrate your knowledge and passion for art while subtly showcasing your own work. But remember to strike a balance. Overly self-promotional behavior may be off-putting.

5. Network with other artists: Build relationships with artists who have existing connections with galleries and collectors. Collaborating with or participating in group exhibitions alongside established artists can boost your visibility and introduce you to their network. Mutual support within artist communities can lead to introductions and recommendations within the industry.



6. Art shows and open studios: Host your own art shows or open studios to invite galleries and collectors to view your work in person. Create a welcoming atmosphere, discuss your artistic process, and engage in meaningful conversations. Offer background information about your artwork, inspirations, and the stories behind your creations. This personal touch helps forge connections and create memorable experiences.

7. Follow up and maintain relationships: When you connect with galleries or collectors, always follow up promptly. Send a thank-you email expressing your gratitude for their time and interest. When appropriate, provide updates on your artistic journey, new projects, or upcoming exhibitions. Maintaining regular communication helps nurture relationships and keeps you on their radar.

Remember that building meaningful relationships takes time and effort. Be patient and consistent in your approach. Stay true to your artistic vision and continue developing your skills and portfolio. Genuine connections are more likely to occur when there is compatibility and alignment between your artistic practice and the gallery's or collector's interests.

GETTING STARTED

NETWORKING WORKSHEET

Now that you have an overview of networking for visual artists, here is a **worksheet** to get you started.

Local Art Scene: Research local art organizations, galleries, and creative spaces in your area. Attend their events, introduce yourself to fellow artists, and immerse yourself in the local art community. List your ideas.

Online Presence: Establish an online presence by creating a professional website or portfolio. Engage with other artists and art communities on social media platforms, sharing your work and insights. Identify your 3-5 favourite artists, galleries, art journalists to follow or engage with.

Connections Through Education: If you're currently studying or have graduated from an art program, connect with former classmates, professors, or alumni who may provide valuable networking opportunities.

Volunteering: Offer your time as a volunteer at art events, art galleries, or community organizations. Volunteering provides opportunities to engage with professionals, fellow artists, and art enthusiasts. List any ideas.

Attend Workshops and Courses: Enroll in workshops or courses focused on artistic techniques, art theory, or professional development. These environments provide networking opportunities while enhancing your artistic skills. List 1-2 ideas.

Networking the VAA: We run quarterly Members Meetings, in-person networking and also our Online Roulette Networking. You can find details on our [website](#).

Networking serves as a **powerful tool** for visual artists to expand their horizons, **establish meaningful connections**, and advance their careers. By implementing the tips provided, crafting an effective elevator pitch, avoiding common mistakes, and taking initial steps, you will be well on your way to **building a vibrant and supportive network within the artistic community**.

Remember, networking is an **ongoing process** that requires effort and genuine engagement. Imagine if you committed to 1 new networking event a month – a gallery opening, an art fair or an online networking event? The results and opportunities are **limitless**. Embrace the opportunities it provides, and let your art and passion shine through your interactions.

Good luck in your networking journey!

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