




AN ARTIST'S GUIDE

TO ARCHIVING YOUR ART

A R T W  R K
A R C H I V E

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HOW ARCHIVING YOUR ARTWORK CAN BENEFIT YOUR CAREER

SIX PERKS TO KEEPING AN ART INVENTORY

There are a number of reasons you need to keep accurate inventory records of your art studio.

You will need an inventory of your art studio for insurance purposes, taxes, and to keep your business running smoothly, to name a few.

Do you have an accurate idea of your net sales, costs of goods sold and total inventory?

Since you didn't become an artist to be an accountant, the main thing artists need to know is that they need to take an inventory at the end of the year.

It can seem tedious, but having an easy-to-use program to inventory your artwork details makes the initial process of organizing your studio much more manageable.

Plus, having the ability to run your art business from one platform makes managing all the details of being a business owner and artist less stressful, so you can focus on making your artwork.

Without a detailed studio inventory, it's difficult to accurately report your taxes or get an up-to-date insurance plan in case anything should happen to your studio or collection.

But, do you know how keeping an archive of your work can benefit your career?

Here's what art inventorying helps you do:

Command respect

If you come across as organized, punctual, and with the right information at the ready, you'll gain respect and interest from your professional contacts. This greatly affects future business relationships. For instance, you'll impress art dealers when you can deliver polished consignment reports in a timely fashion.


These same people may question your professionalism if you don't know where your artwork is located (this actually happens more than you think).

Strategize for success

You're probably wondering why would simply archiving your artwork help you with business strategy?

Well, when you've organized all your pieces, client information, sales, and galleries, you'll start to see very illuminating patterns forming. You'll pinpoint who your best clients are and which galleries are working the hardest to sell your artwork.

You'll see how much art you're producing versus selling each month, so you'll know what to focus on the next month. You can use all this valuable information to make informed decisions to improve your business.



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DOWN ON STRESS &
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REACH THAT GOAL.”

Tackle taxes and insurance in better form

Nobody wants to think about insurance or taxes when there's a fresh tube of paint or newly purchased clay on the table. But, you'll be so glad you did when (and if, in terms of insurance) the time comes. Archiving your artwork will allow you to know the value of your entire inventory.

And, if you track your sales in art inventory software, you'll know how much money you've made on each piece and the expenses you accumulated throughout the year. It's always exciting to see how much money you've made through your hard work!

Share your work and grow your brand

Archiving your art makes sharing and promoting it so much easier. You'll also have beautiful images and all the details ready to go when you want to upload new art to your social media channels or send to collectors.

Artwork Archive even lets you share work online directly from your inventory. You simply select what pieces to make public and voilà. They're on your Public Page, and can be shared on Discovery. Or, integrate this stunning gallery directly on your artist website, so your online presence is always up-to-date and you can skip the double data entry.

Spend time on what matters most

Who wants to waste time rifling through endless notebooks, receipts, and emails to find the right information? It's stressful, takes away from precious studio time, and keeps your clients and galleries waiting.

Having everything at your fingertips allows you to spend more time doing what you love. It also makes consigning works and preparing for exhibitions a breeze. This allows these events to be more fun, and less chaotic.

Want to know the best part?

Increase the value of your artwork

Art collectors like knowing the provenance behind the art they're considering. If they're deciding between two similar artworks by different artists and one has a documented history, which one do you think will pique more interest? Exactly.

If your artwork comes complete with an exhibition, competition, and publication history, it's going to be a lot more interesting than art without a story. Now this isn't guaranteed, but it's still pretty exciting. So, track and record all this information in your inventory management system, so you can whip it out and impress collectors.

Reap the rewards and inventory your art

Whether your priority is cutting down on stress and saving time, or cementing important relationships and promoting your artwork—or a combination—archiving your art will help you reach your goal. So, set up your art inventory management software and get to work.

Now, let's get started on how to begin your inventory project.

DEFINING YOUR WHY

IT'S IMPORTANT TO DEFINE YOUR MOTIVATIONS BEFORE YOUR START

WHATEVER YOUR REASON FOR ARCHIVING YOUR WORK, MAKE SURE YOU ARE CLEAR ABOUT IT.

There are many different reasons to archive your artwork.

Perhaps you want to make it easier to update your portfolio. Perhaps you want to be able to pull your updated resume, CV and press for an upcoming grant application at a moment's notice.

Maybe your portfolio has become outdated and you are searching for a way to keep it up-to-date in order to highlight your newest works and biggest achievements to date with potential collectors and clients.

Perhaps you are looking for a secure way to digitally store your inventory of artworks and ensure your artistic legacy for years to come.

A common reason for artists wanting to archive their work is to secure a way to back up their artworks with all the details about them, their exhibition history, and all related sales information and images. There comes a time when storing them in GDrive or Excel (though this is a good start) isn't enough and becomes chaotic. Artists that are looking at their work as a career are often looking for a way to build a full picture of the history of their artwork and be able to access that information as quickly as possible without digging through thousands of folders.

Archiving your artwork is also an incredible way to get a comprehensive look into your creative trajectory as an artist. It can be valuable to be able to organize your works with ease in order to get a full picture of your art career from the start. You will start to see where certain creative evolutions took place, what types of artworks and themes sold the best, what geographical regions were the most profitable for your artwork. This information can help spark new strategic ideas for both the direction of your art practice and the business aspect of your artwork.

Whatever the reason, it's important to define your "why" before you begin to help act as your guiding North Star as you go through the archiving process.

It's easy to always be focused on the future of your work as an artist.

However, just as important as the physical work itself is the documentation of that work. No matter how good the work might be, it will not live on if it's not documented well and archived securely.

It's easy to assume that you will be making artwork indefinitely and would be capable of making similar work if you wanted to recreate an unphotographed work. It's all too easy to assume that the gallery websites that host photographs of installations of my work would still be around if sometime down the line you wanted to use them for your own portfolio. Instagram and other social media platforms give you a false sense of security that they will always be there to pull images from in the future.

What if, most simply—but also most deeply—you just want to look back over your artistic development in a few years and see the progression of your body of work?

Documenting your work allows you to see my work in a new light, to value current projects, to see progress more clearly, and to gain peace of mind in the direction of your art practice. An inventory catalog gives you the ability to see the full scope of your artistic, helps you stay organized in day-to-day life so that you don't have to stress about the small things, and keeps you on top of all the admin stuff. Archiving helps you know where artworks are located, who bought them, where they need to be in a month for a show, and when you need to invoice or follow up on an invoice.

Let's jump into the first steps to take when documenting your artwork.

LEGACY PLANNING FOR ARTISTS

LEGACY PLANNING IS NOT A CONCEITED ACT. RATHER, IT IS A NECESSITY.

It is vital to have a plan in place that will serve as a guide to your heirs for protecting and preserving your artistic legacy.

Don't you want a say in how you are remembered?

But, estate planning is a daunting task that is often ignored or put off by working artists.

Curator, director, potter, and author of "Crafting Your Legacy" Mark Leach sat down with us to answer our questions about legacy planning.

Why did you and CERF+ create Crafting Your Legacy?

CERF+'s mission is to help artists by providing core services such as education programs, advocacy, network building and emergency relief.

The goal is to assist artists in thinking more holistically about their career and the steps that are essential to maintaining a vibrant creative life. And, at the same time, a need to prepare for the afterlife of their creative work and possessions.

CERF+ staff are occasionally contacted by family members (or others) after the death of an artist who worked for years in the craft field and who had important collections of tools and equipment. When an artist's estate plan does not exist, families find themselves confronted with the daunting task of making decisions that reflect their loved one's life, career, and reputation.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Artists can provide a more authentic sense of who they are as creative makers and human beings. They can show how they got where they are by documenting their processes and results and digitizing it all.

Why is preserving an artist's legacy important?

To ensure that the artist's life and work are remembered.

In your opinion, how should an artist's legacy be preserved?

Preserving an artist's legacy has to do with authenticity. It's all about capturing and documenting the maker's perspective; that's where it all begins.

Today, artists have an opportunity to record their process

and what they are thinking as they create their work. This approach leaves neither question nor prompts speculation on artistic ideation, concept and result.

We can learn so much more if there is a record and a deeper knowledge of the artist.

Rockwell, de Kooning, Motherwell, they all had their lives under the microscope. Whereas most artists work in solitude, can maintain a commercial livelihood or they teach and mentor our future creatives.

We must think about legacy in a more comprehensive way.

Authentic artistic legacy is reflected in and through the artist's actions, words and thought. Together, these provide the public with a close sense of the artists' peculiarities of style, technique and inspiration.

Vision, technique, process—they are all essential to understanding an artist's lifetime and legacy.

Let's consider an artist who made his own tools. Borne out of necessity, these creative acts and those which follow through the use of such implements provide a unique perspective on and insight into the creative's inspiration, innovation and artistic resolve.

What do artists often not think about when it comes to estate planning?

Artists are focused on their day-to-day life and the act of creating.

Legacy isn't a predominant thought. Perhaps it becomes one when an artist witnesses the impact of its absence on a peer's or close personal friend's family. To see heirs and/or loved ones struggling to honor the creative life of the deceased, the importance of developing and providing a roadmap is made all the more clear.

Why should artists pay attention to non-artistic assets?

Artists' tools and their possessions, whether they are brand new or not, possess value. Even as the tools age, they are worth something.

Artists can benefit by creating an inventory and keeping a rudimentary level of insurance to replace their tools and other assets.

A disaster, a fire, hurricane or tornado, for example, can be devastating. Rebuilding a studio and replacing its contents can pose insurmountable obstacles without essential protections.

Additionally, tools provide insight into an artist's process.

Gerhard Richter turned a squeegee into a massive, emotive instrument. There's a documentary detailing his innovative process. But, most artists don't have the benefit of such documentation.

Information that details how tools are used to create an artistic result has some bearing on what we think of an artist's capabilities, mastery and durability or legacy.

How can artists tell their story?

Digital media can be faithful to the creative journey and used as a tool for artists to tell their own story.

For example, you can capture an audio file that details an ideation conversation that takes place. Or, you can create a video of yourself working in a particular way that is unique to your medium or work.

Digital media can show the fierceness of someone's vision.

What is the one thing you want artists to take away from learning to build a legacy?

This is doable. I hear artists say, "I don't have time for that—I have a business." But, it's important to make the time.

If you really believe in your work then estate planning is an absolutely essential step to take to ensure that you and your loved ones are prepared to take the steps to protect and preserve life's work and the values that it embodies.

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STEPS TO TAKE TO PROTECT YOUR LEGACY

When you're in the middle of your career, who has time to even think about preserving your artist legacy?

You're busy in the studio creating work, applying to shows, making sales—everything it takes to run a successful art business. You definitely don't need one more thing on your to-do list. And you still have so much career ahead of you!

But it's an issue that should not be ignored for many reasons, and we'll tell you why.

It may be a hard pill to swallow, but you want to ensure that your life and work as an artist are remembered after you've gone. Artists devote their life to their work, spending decades honing their craft and producing works of art, putting your heart and soul into what you create.

But when you're gone, how do we ensure that your life's work is not forgotten in a pile of cardboard boxes at the back of a studio? Or even worse, how do we keep the burden of protecting your legacy from resting on your family's shoulders?

Because when an artist's career is not organized when they pass, families find themselves suffocated by the amount of work it takes to ensure their loved one's life, career, and reputation are preserved.

Luckily, your fate is not sealed by these outcomes. There are actions you can take right now in your art career to ensure that your legacy is preserved.

Read on to learn what artists should be doing right now to protect their legacy:

First things first, if you want to preserve your legacy as an artist, you need to have a complete and detailed record of your art inventory.

We get it! An inventory project can seem overwhelming, especially if you have hundreds or thousands of pieces to archive. The task can get so built up in our heads, that oftentimes it gets postponed indefinitely.

Here's the thing, though.

Think about all of the details that past, present, and future collectors will need to know to identify or resell your work—details about each piece that could be lost or forgotten once a work leaves your studio. Details only you, the artist, may know.

And if you think cataloging your art is a big task, would you really want to burden your family and friends with this seemingly insurmountable load of work down the line?

Elizabeth Hulings, daughter of the renowned artist Clark Hulings, was lucky enough to have a father that archived his works during his lifetime. Despite all of that organization, she still recognized the magnitude of the puzzle ahead of her:

"Back when my dad was alive, a woman called the house and said, 'I have a painting called Blue Barn.' We all thought, that doesn't ring any bells. She sent an image. My father recognized the work, but had called it something else entirely. Only my dad knew what that painting was; if he hadn't been there, we would have been at a loss. I thought to myself then, uh oh, I need a much better handle on this because one day that woman is going to call me and I don't want to say, 'I don't know.'"

THE VALUE OF YOUR ART,
AND THEREFORE YOUR
LEGACY, DEPENDS ON THIS
DOCUMENTED HISTORY.

When it comes to archiving your artwork, there are a few steps you can take to get started.

At the very least, start by recording the title, medium, dimensions, and creation date along with high-quality photographs for each artwork. You may also want to consider recording the original selling price, inventory number, and any other vital information about its creation or sale.

Creating an inventory of your work doesn't have to be the daunting task that we make it out to be—especially with so many easy-to-use and intuitive art inventory programs out there.

That is why online art inventory management systems like Artwork Archive exist, to keep track of the massive amount of details on your hands.

Unlike a notebook or spreadsheet, images of your work and these important details are stored on the cloud so you never have to worry about losing track of this information again. And when you're gone, your family can easily access it from anywhere.

Get in the habit of adding Artwork Archive to your workflow. With a few minutes a week of getting organized, your inventory will stay up-to-date. No more holes in your art history.

Your legacy goes beyond the basic details of your artwork

Besides the titles and dimensions, think about recording your artist legacy in a more comprehensive way.

"Vision, technique, process—they are all essential to understanding an artist's lifetime and legacy," explains CERF+'s Mark Leach.

Authentic artistic legacy is reflected in and through an artist's actions, words and thought. Together, these provide the public with a close sense of the artists' peculiarities of style, technique, and influences.

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It's all about capturing and documenting the maker's perspective; that's where it all begins.

Artists can show how they got where they are by documenting their processes and results and by digitizing it all.

For instance, with each piece you enter into Artwork Archive, you can record notes about its creation—the story behind it, your inspirations, process, etc. Doing so gives an in-depth view of what makes your work unique and covetable.

Now, not every piece of artwork is a comment on society, but every piece tells a tale—no matter how subtle or abstract. A piece of art is so much more than its aesthetic attributes. It's a portal into the artist's life and their unique experiences.

Art historians, art dealers, and art collectors are eager to delve into the reasons behind every creative decision—to discover the stories intertwined with each stroke of a painter's brush or movement of a ceramicist's hand. While the aesthetics draw a viewer in, the story is often why people fall in love with a piece.

Similarly, it's important to leave behind a paper trail of more than photos.

Collect documents like biographies and artist statements, resumes and CVs, proposals, press materials, news articles, and more that show who you are as an artist. And with Artwork Archive, you can save them all in one place, so they are safe with the rest of your inventory.

Remember the big picture. Archiving an artist's lifetime of work is like completing a puzzle, and it often takes years to piece it all together.

Typically the artwork is considered "done" when the creative process is over and the work has been sold, so many artists do not keep track of the works once they leave their studios. This presents a major challenge for those managing an artist's estate after their death.

You need to find a way to keep track of where your artwork is—if not for your artistic legacy, for the success of your art business.

Once you've entered works into an inventory system, you will want to track the locations and clients you are working with. This way you always know who has your pieces and where they are. A quick and easy way to stay organized, while simultaneously building your legacy.

Pay attention to provenance

The word provenance is derived from the French word *provenir*, meaning "to come from". An ideal provenance captures the ownership history of a piece all the way back to the artist's studio, and when it's verified, can prove the authenticity of a piece and greatly increase its value.

Provenance also establishes an item's collectible significance beyond what it would otherwise appear to have. A piece with interesting provenance might tell a story of fortunes made and lost, famous owners, and remarkable epochs in history. Sometimes the provenance of a piece can be just as interesting as the piece itself!

The value of your art, and therefore your legacy, depends on this documented history.

There are a lot of variables that impact proper provenance tracking— what kind of records the artist may or may not have kept, who had ownership, the length of the artist's career, etc. That's a lot of moving parts! For instance, artworks change hands multiple times—from artist to gallery to buyer, back to a gallery to another buyer, etc.

One unexpected issue for Elizabeth Hulings when dealing with her father's legacy was how cavalier people can be about identifying and describing work. Her father worked with a gallery in the 1960s that had a marketing director that would change the title of a work because she thought it was better, and would not inform the artist. Then, the records would go down incorrectly. And sometimes, a piece is renamed by accident. For instance, Elizabeth discovered that one of her father's drawings, *Two Troublemakers*, was being called *Burro*.

Preserving an artist legacy can also be about identifying what an artist did not create, whether it be identifying forgeries or working with people that were simply wrong about the origin.

The solution?

Besides maintaining an accurate inventory of your artwork, providing a signed, detailed Certificate of Authenticity will help collectors immensely when it comes to tracing your piece's history and proving it's the original.

And with the click of a button, you can generate a Certificate of Authenticity straight from Artwork Archive that includes the image, sale price, essential details like title, medium, and dimensions, and a place to express copyright protection.

An artist's career is different than most.

Your work lives on forever and is part of our collective history. Your body of work tells future generations about our values, aesthetics, and culture.

It is vital to have a plan in place for protecting and preserving your artistic legacy. And, it's something you can and should start working on immediately in your career. By building a comprehensive inventory as you go and by documenting your life's work and story, you will ensure that your legacy lives on.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN ARCHIVING YOUR ART

What information to start gathering

If you are like most artists, you most likely have bits and pieces of this information all over the place. You have information on your website, at your galleries, in past publications, on your social media, and in your own records.

This is what we are trying to solve, but it is also a great starting point.

Take a look at your CV and use the exhibition history section as a jumping-off point. Then, create a running list of works that you want to inventory. Some artists choose to work chronologically from the most recent artworks, for example, as this information is the most top of mind.

Here is the information to gather for each artwork:

- Title of the artwork
- The date it was created
- The medium/mediums used
- Dimensions of the artwork
- The price of the artwork
- Any exhibitions that it was accepted into
- Any galleries in which the artwork showed
- If the artwork was sold and who it sold to
- The high-resolution image of the artwork
- Any detail images of the artwork

From there start to fill in more information once the framework is in place.

First steps: Choose the right tools to archive your work. The tools you choose to archive your work will determine the scope of your archiving project.

You can use a variety of tools to inventory your work. One such resource is [Artwork Archive](#). Artwork Archive provides the tools for artists to organize, manage, share and showcase their artwork. From inventory and consignment reports to sales and invoices, contacts management, and location tracking, we build tools for artists to manage their career effectively.

A great way to get started is to gather all the digital photos of your work that you already have—either on a website, phone, or professional photos. Start from your most recent work and make a master desktop folder of all the images.

From there, adding artworks to the database is easy.

All the fields I filled in for medium, for example, are “remembered” so that you can filter, sort and search for those works within the database. It’s an incredible way to quickly pull up very specific pieces within a large body of work without remembering the exact name of the work.

Or, if you want to create a price list for a customer that is interested only in porcelain works with blue and gold patterning for example, you can quickly pull up all of the works that fit that category and within a few clicks generate a report for them with the thumbnails of those works along with all their information and prices.

The database is also largely visual—because, well, artists are very visual beings!

You can easily scan all the works in your inventory or in certain galleries or retail locations. No need to go digging through loads of text or spreadsheets or click in and out of a pile of folders.

Second steps: Getting all the details right

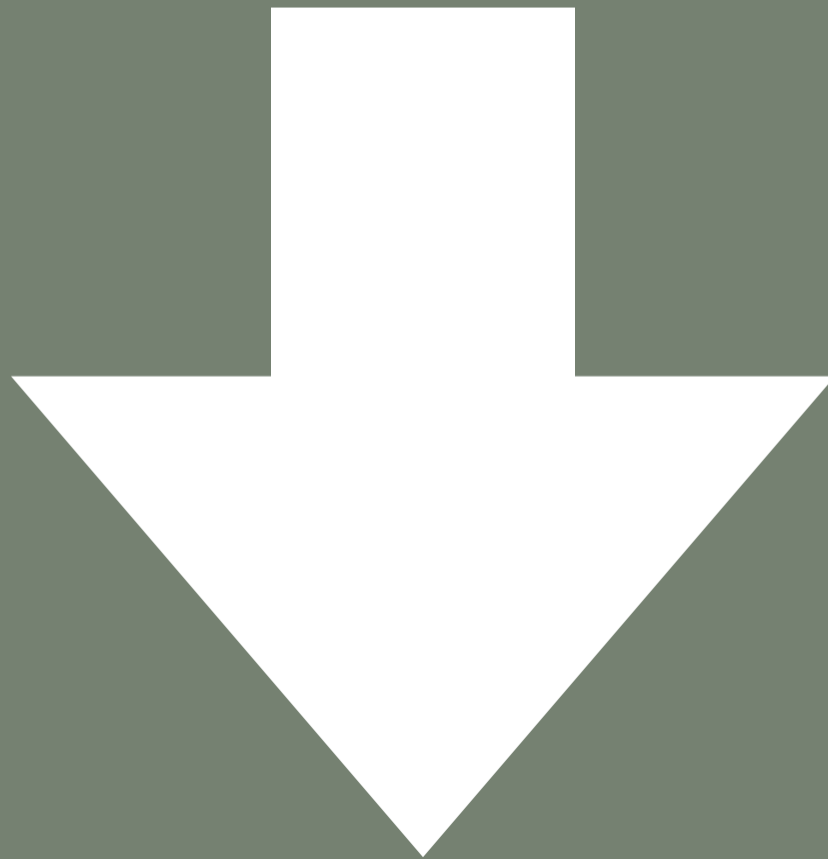
Beyond documenting artworks, an inventory program helps build a holistic picture of your entire body of work with a dynamic database. Which means instead of having your works in a list view, they build relationships with contacts, exhibitions and locations to create a living provenance record.

Have you ever found yourself panicked in the middle of the night asking yourself:

- Did I already commit this painting to an exhibition in September?
- Have I submitted to this exhibition before?
- Who did I sell that painting to last year?
- How much did the frame cost?
- What gallery is performing best for me?
- What body of work of mine is the most profitable?
- What were the dimensions of the painting that is currently on loan?
- Will this group of artworks work together for as a solo show?
- “history” for that artwork, which helps with your catalog raisonne.

If so, follow the steps on the next page for getting started.

TEN STEPS TO START



INVENTORYING YOUR ARTWORK HELPS TO ORGANIZE, STRENGTHEN, AND STREAMLINE YOUR ART BUSINESS. PLUS, IT ISN'T THE BEAST YOU THINK IT MAY BE.

We've broken it down into ten simple steps to make it even easier.

Work Backwards

It can seem overwhelming to inventory a career's worth of art, so we recommend working backward. That way you'll start with the art that is freshest in your mind—and the work you need to have details on hand for potential galleries and buyers. Then you can take a trip down memory lane and archive your past work.

Take High-Quality Photographs

While this may seem obvious, it is tempting to type in the title and dimensions of a piece and be done with it. Don't fall for that trap! We all know artists are visual creatives and it is so important to have a visual reminder of your work.

As the years go by and the works amass, it can be easy to forget which painting goes with what title. It's also nice to have beautiful, high-quality images of your work to send to interested art collectors, buyers, and galleries using the Artwork Archive inventory report or portfolio page feature.

Inventorying all your art with beautiful photos and the right information lets you send buyers and galleries what they need in a snap.

Number Your Work

It's useful to have a numbering system in place so you can track your work chronologically and know the basic information just from the label. There is no one way to inventory your art, but there are plenty of great ideas out there if you don't know where to start.

One method is to use the first two digits for the number of the painting of that year, then a letter for the month (January is A, February is B, etc.), and two digits for the year. You can also add more detail such as a letter to signify the type or medium of the work like OP for oil painting, S for sculpture, EP for edition print, and so on. This would work well for an artist who creates in a variety of medium.

Add In the Right Details

You'll want to record the title, dimensions, inventory number, creation date, price, medium, and subject matter to have a detailed catalog of the piece. You can also add in the framed dimensions if need be. Then you can add in the rest of the information. Next, comes the extra fun part – and no, we're not joking.

Record Notes on Each Piece

These can be thoughts you had while creating the artwork, inspirations, materials used, and if it was a gift or a commission. You'll get to relive the creation of each piece, reflect on past successes, and see how far you've come. Your notes will always be private in [Artwork Archive](#) and your description will only be made public if you mark a piece as "public".

Assign Your Work to a Location

Once you've logged all your Pieces into the art inventory software you can assign each piece to a location. That way you'll always know which gallery or venue is showing your work.

You'll have the information at the ready if a buyer wants to purchase a piece that is outside of your studio and you'll never accidentally send work to the same gallery twice. You'll also know where all your art resides once it has been purchased whether it's your hometown or an international location.

Add Important Contacts

Have the details of your art collectors, gallery owners, interior designers, museum curators, and art fair directors all in one place. That way you can access them anytime, anywhere as well as connect them to specific pieces within your inventory. You can keep them updated on your art career and mail personal thank you notes to your best buyers. Or, notify them of new art they might like to purchase.

Register Sales

You can register sales to specific contacts within your Artwork Archive account. You'll know exactly who bought what, when, and for how much. That way you can notify them when you've created similar work and hopefully make another sale. You'll also gain sales insight this way to assist you with your business plans.

Record Competitions, Shows & Exhibition History

Having a log of all the competitions allows you to see which ones accepted your artwork and which ones awarded you a prize. Tracking your most successful pieces will help you to understand what jurors are looking for, so you can enter with better pieces every year.

Also, it certainly piques a buyer's interest if a work has won a competition, so you'll want to have this titillating piece of information on hand to help a sale along.

Enjoy and Share Your Work with Ease

Once you've inventoried all your work, having your work cataloged makes it easy to share online.

Programs like [Artwork Archive](#) make it easy to embed your works on your website, get professional presentations & reports, and share your work with art collectors and buyers with an online portfolio.

TOP QUESTIONS ABOUT ART INVENTORY SYSTEMS

If you've gotten this far, you now know the benefits of using an art inventory system and how to get started, but you still might have some questions.

We've answered five frequently asked questions about art inventory management systems, so you know what to expect and exactly how one can help your art business thrive.

What, exactly, is an online art inventory management system?

An online art inventory management system is a way to easily track your inventory, contacts, galleries, sales, and more. Rest easy knowing you can access your work from any device, your data is all in one place, and everything is backed up nightly.

Why should I use an art inventory management system? Is it better than using Excel or GDrive?

An art inventory management system will help you get organized, so you can spend more time in the studio doing what you love—creating art. Unlike Excel, you can build a full history for each piece you upload and follow its journey from creation to the final sale.

What does this entail?

- Know where your artwork is at any time with location records and competition scheduling.
- Monitor your production and sales with artwork insights to make informed decisions about your art business.
- Keep important contact information in one place and track who buys what.
- Print professional consignment reports, portfolio pages, invoices, and gallery labels at the click of a button.
- Display art on your Public Profile Page, gain exposure, and connect with buyers.
- Integrate your Public Page on your own artist website, so your gallery of work is always up-to-date.
- Keep track of your exhibitions and to-do list with a Schedule and Reminders feature.
- Store all of your important business documents in one place.
- Manage your art business finances year-round with a Expense Tracking feature.

AN ART INVENTORY
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STUDIO DOING WHAT YOU
LOVE—CREATING ART

Will an art inventory management system increase my efficiency?

Yes! Instead of combing through stacks of paper, spreadsheets, and Post-it notes, you can access everything instantly. It's an organizational boon. Time that was spent on searching for the right information can now be used for making artwork.

Artist Terill Welch uses Artwork Archive for her art inventory system and said, "I am a painter, not an administrator. Anything that successfully keeps my brushes in my hands and still allows me to run my business is essential."

Does the system own any rights to my artwork?

At Artwork Archive, your artwork is yours! We do not claim ownership rights to any information, data, text, photographs, graphics, software, music, sound, video, messages, or other materials or content you make available or use in connection with the site, services, or your account.

Is my information secure?

Yes. Make sure you choose a cloud-based service that uses the highest level of encryption, industry best practices, and enterprise level security and hosting. And, one that takes care of the nightly backups and continuity of your data.

Getting a new computer or losing your old one? Your data is always safe on Artwork Archive.

Ready to say goodbye to art career chaos?

The perks of using an online art inventory management system are endless. Take the leap to get organized, save time, and build a better art career. From tracking inventory, contacts, galleries, and sales to ease of use and security, an art inventory system helps you succeed as an artist.

INVENTORY SYSTEMS VS. EXCEL

YOU KNOW INVENTORING YOUR ARTWORK IS IMPORTANT, BUT
THINK EXCEL OR THE LIKE WILL DO THE JOB JUST FINE?

FIND OUT WHY EXCEL DOESN'T LIVE UP TO AN INVENTORY SYSTEM.

What does an inventory management system do that spreadsheets can't do?

Spreadsheet programs like Excel seem like a safe choice, at first. Even though they're a bit clunky and slow, you make it work.

But, what if there was something much, much better?

Something created specifically for artists to help them grow their business.

Here are six reasons why an online art inventory system puts programs like Excel to shame:

Serious convenience

Need to show a potential buyer more of your available artwork? Want to enter their contact information then and there, so you don't lose their business card? Need to check the location or price of an artwork they're interested in?

You can do it in a snap on your cell phone, tablet, or any other device with internet access. When you have an online art inventory management system, all the information you need won't be sitting in an Excel file on your desktop at home. It will be with you always, anywhere you go.

Stress-free organization

Ever wasted time clicking through a multitude of spreadsheets trying to find the right information for a piece? It's excruciatingly frustrating, especially when a gallerist is expecting a quick answer.

You can spare yourself these tear-out-your-hair moments by using an online inventory management system. You'll have information on your pieces, editions, contacts, sales, expenses, shows, and locations in a click of a button.

Everything is organized into visually pleasing, easily-searchable sections. It takes the time and stress out of running the business side of your art studio.

"I have never seen a better organized, inclusive art inventory program that offers so much more than just inventory. Can't imagine living without it. I groan when I see artists still using their own Excel Spreadsheets. And you care! You respond! You keep getting better and better! You are the best out there!" - Susan Helen Strock

What's more, you'll build provenance for each piece as you automatically track its location history. Upload important documents tied to each piece. And, schedule weekly reminders tied to certain contacts, shows, etc. sent straight to your inbox, so you never miss a beat.

Valuable peace of mind

You never think it's going to happen to you, but then it does. Whether it's a cup of spilled coffee making its way into your laptop's keyboard or an energetic pet knocking your computer off the desk, accidents happen. Not to mention, computers can easily malfunction on their own.

When you archive your artwork and business information online, you can access everything on another device instantly and none of the data is lost.

If your whole art business is stored on the hard drive of a now deceased computer, you'll have to spend hours inputting the information all over again—if you can even remember all the details.

Concerned about your information living solely on the internet? You can also easily download copies of your data onto your computer for double protection.

Impressive professional reports

Ah, the feeling of satisfaction when a gallery asks for an inventory report and all you need to do is click a button. In seconds, you have a polished report with all the piece information you need, your contact details, and piece images. Your gallery will be impressed with your speed and professionalism.

You could painstakingly turn your spreadsheet into a report and add in each image, but that wastes precious art time. You can quickly print off consignment reports, portfolio pages, invoices, expense reports, certificates of authenticity, inventory reports, and more from an art inventory system like Artwork Archive.

"I've been so happy with Artwork Archive and can't believe I used to use (or tried to use) spreadsheets to keep track of everything!" - Rebecca Woodhouse

Crucial business insights

Ever wondered how much your inventory is worth, where all your artwork is located across the globe, and what your production versus sales value is? Ever hoped you could see all this crucial business information without whipping out an Excel pivot table?

Why make more work for yourself and use up valuable time that could be spent in the studio? Use at-a-glance insights on your art inventory system, so you can stay on top of your business. You'll see whether you need to focus on creating more art or on selling it, and which gallery is performing the best—and the worst! Then you can use these insights to inform your plan of attack.

Promote your art while keeping it organized

Excel will never offer up a professional, beautiful public portfolio page which you can share with interested buyers and gallerists. Excel will never index on Google when someone searches for your artwork, and no one can ever contact you through your Excel spreadsheet.

Art inventory system Artwork Archive has a Public Page that helps you promote and sell your artwork, and member artist Lawrence Lee has already sold \$20,000 worth of art commission free via his. Lawrence has complete control over what he makes public, and can easily pick and choose from his archived inventory.

More than that, you can integrate this portfolio on your very own artist website! That means your portfolio always stays up-to-date. No more double data entry. And no endless coding projects.

Can Excel do that? Definitely not.

Your art business and your stress levels will thank you.

All that time you give to inputting details into Excel (and re-inputting them when your computer crashes), making your own reports, dealing with pivot tables, trying to find the right information, and figuring out how to promote your artwork can now be spent on doing what you love in the studio!

CONDUCTING YEAR-END INVENTORY

If you have registered as a small business and you have physical artworks (or products) for sale, you need to complete an inventory for the year-end tax requirements. It's definitely not the most fun or glamorous part of being an artist, but it is a necessary part of maintaining your career.

Even if you use art inventory management software, an actual count can reveal what you have on hand and make sure it matches what's in your system and what may have gone astray.

Here are just some of the benefits of performing a studio inventory.

Account for missing payments or consigned pieces

Taking an inventory of your artwork allows you to make sure your sales information matches what has come in financially. It also helps you track down any stragglers that have been unaccounted for in various consignment shops or galleries.

A physical inventory of your studio is a great way to make sure the information from your sent works and received sales match up and there are no discrepancies.

Conducting a year-end inventory is the perfect time to assess how the business side of your art career is going.

You can take stock of what types of artworks sold well and which pieces have been collecting dust in your studio for the last few years. Were there any similarities in these categories?

It's a great time to note what styles, themes or mediums are worth putting more efforts into and what might be time to cut from the production schedule.

Better relationships with your collectors

Getting an accurate picture of what you have in the studio helps ensure that you're able to meet all orders and restock on artworks, prints, or products that are running low. It also helps improve your reputation as an artist

By knowing where specific artworks are located (in a gallery, show, retail shop, etc) at any given time, you are able to run an organized and professional studio. With an accurate inventory, you have an immediate response ready when a collector reaches out to inquire about an artwork or a curator reaches out about a potential series to exhibit. Without a seamless way to present this information to collectors in a timely fashion, artists may lose opportunities, exhibitions, clients and their reputation.

Artwork Archive makes it easy for artists to get organized and perform a year-end inventory with easy-to-use tools to manage an art career.

So, how do you go about conducting an end of year inventory so that it isn't a painful process?

Take note of what you currently have in your studio

Get a quick overview of what you currently believe to have in your studio and the value of those works. An art inventory platform, like Artwork Archive, has reports showing this information in just the click of a button. Print this out to make a checklist as you move through your studio.

Try an art inventory software solution

There's good news: a studio inventory only take a little legwork the first time if you have an art inventory solution like Artwork Archive. Once the first inventory is over, you'll be able to keep track of all purchased items and art moving forward with a little organization.

Inventory systems help give you an accurate idea of your net sales, costs of goods sold and total inventory in just a glance.

Since you didn't become an artist to be an accountant, you want to seek out an inventory system that is easy to use, tracks critical details of your artworks and also gives you the added benefits of show tracking, contact management, professional reporting and more.

Quickly calculate the cost of your inventory

Your year-end inventory is the cost to you for the artwork that has not sold that year. You will need this number to get to your total of cost sold. To get your materials deductions on your taxes you will need to have the total costs of materials used in the production of your artwork minus the cost of finished unsold inventory.

This means estimating the cost of the artwork that was unsold at year end—including artwork in galleries, at home and in your studio. To do this, get a list of your works that remain unsold and if you haven't already, the associated costs of producing the work (canvas, paint, framing etc.) When calculating this number, remember that the selling pricing is not taken into consideration.

Estimate the value of the items in your inventory

For insurance purposes, ideally, you'll have two values for every item in your studio: purchase price and replacement cost.

The purchase price is the amount you paid when you originally bought the items, and the replacement cost is the amount that would be paid if you were to buy that item today.

For high-value items such as kilns, computers and other big equipment, this number is also important to keep track of, if you plan to depreciate the costs over time.

If you've never done a studio inventory and you've had your studio for a while, chances are you'll only be able to catalog the replacement cost. You can do a little online research and document the replacement cost for every item you want to get insurance on in the studio.

Create a running list of tools and materials

Could you replace all your tools and equipment out of pocket tomorrow if an unfortunate disaster were to impact your studio? If you are like pretty much every artist out there, the answer is a resounding "no".

Luckily, there are programs like CERF+ that help artists in the tragic case of studio disasters.

However, in order to get returns on your insurance, you will need to keep a running list of the value of not only your artwork but your materials and tools.

Additionally, having an accurate list of your tools and materials will help on your expense reporting at tax time.

We recommend entering the following information:

- Item type
- Number or quantity of items
- Purchase price
- Purchase date
- Replacement price
- Condition of items

Track your expenses

Okay, bookkeeping probably isn't the most exciting part of being a creative entrepreneur, but nothing helps more than keeping all of your financial records organized.

By staying on top of your income and expenses, only then can you get an accurate picture of your art business. Know where all of your sources of income are generated, where your money is going, and what you can write off with our Expense Tracking feature. More than that, you can tie your expense records to a client within the database, gain insight into how much you are spending in certain categories, and get one-click expense reports.

NOTE: Once they are recorded in Artwork Archive, you can easily export them to Quickbooks or any other accounting software.

Put aside a dedicated time and make it as fun as possible

With so many obligations falling at the end of the year, it can be hard to find the time to set aside the time to do an inventory. Particularly if you have a lot of holiday orders or festivals, it can be the busiest time of year to conduct an inventory.

Turn your inventory day into more than just a mundane numbers game by stocking up on your favorite tunes, snacks and beverages.

Have studio or seconds sale

Use this time to assess what might be collecting dust and taking up rooms on the shelves. Then, take the opportunity to clear out some physical and mental space for new work by having a studio or seconds sale of all the work that hasn't moved in the last few years.

Set aside the works that you are willing to hold for a special studio sale and start dreaming up all of your new ideas. Just make sure you have documented this work on your inventory program, so you have records going forward. It's great to move forward, but it's important to have a digital record of your trajectory as an artist.

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CONDUCTING A YEAR-END INVENTORY IS THE PERFECT TIME TO ASSESS HOW THE BUSINESS SIDE OF YOUR ART CAREER IS GOING.

GETTING AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF WHAT YOU HAVE IN THE STUDIO HELPS ENSURE THAT YOU'RE ABLE TO MEET ALL ORDERS AND RESTOCK ON ARTWORKS, PRINTS, OR PRODUCTS THAT ARE RUNNING LOW. IT ALSO HELPS IMPROVES YOUR REPUTATION AS AN ARTIST.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN INVENTORY SOFTWARE

Being disorganized is one of the biggest complaints artists have about trying to run a studio and a career.

It's grueling to run an art business when you are constantly losing track of where your artwork is or what price you've set for each piece. You know you are a professional artist—make sure it appears that way to clients.

It's time to get organized.

Inventory programs help you keep track of your art, so you can run your business more effectively. There are a handful of systems out there for artists to choose from, but exactly what elements should you be looking for?

Before choosing your art inventory software, take a look at these twelve important features you'll need to grow your art business and keep everything organized:

Does it track the details of your artwork?

At the very least, the basic details you need to be able to keep track of for each piece are the inventory number, title, date of creation, medium, dimensions, price, collection, images of the artwork, a description with your art's story, and any important notes you may need to consider.

You will need this information to seal the deal with clients and buyers, and your art won't always be right there in the studio for you to reference.

Does it track locations and exhibitions?

How embarrassing would it be to email a gallery asking if they have one of your pieces that you have lost track of? Or, accidentally promising a gallery a piece that's already being shown somewhere else.

Being disorganized does you no favors when it comes to the professionalism of your art business. That's why it's absolutely crucial for you to know the locations of your artwork — and not just galleries. The same goes for exhibitions, competitions, and anything on consignment.

If you're going to run a successful, organized art business, your art inventory software needs to be able to track your inventory, not just compile it.

Does it track sales and expenses?

If you are trying to make a living as a professional artist, of course, you want your art business to be profitable. So, a good art inventory management system will be able to track the sales of your artwork, as well as the expenses you accrue while doing business.

Features to look for? Tracking sales from particular contacts and locations, and the ability to generate invoices and expense reports so you can stay on top of your income. Your tax accountant will thank you.

Can you manage your client & contact information?

With a gallerist's info here and your babysitter's info there, lumping in your art business contacts with the rest of your phone or email contacts can get messy quickly. Instead, look for an art inventory software that lets you fully utilize your contact list for your business.

Your software should allow you to see who your top buyers are and what they've purchased. It should also allow you to group, sort, and filter for more control, and even create address labels for your correspondence.

Does it provide insights?

How do you expect to propel your art business forward without a strategy? A good art inventory software will go the extra mile to provide you with insights like which gallery is selling the most, your production and sales over time, and the worth of your entire inventory—so you can make more informed decisions about your art career.

Can you create professional reports & invoices?

First and foremost, you're an artist. You should be focusing on your art, not worrying about how to make and format reports for your galleries and clients.

Find an art management software that can use your inventory list to create professional-looking inventory reports, portfolio pages, gallery labels, invoices, consignments, expense reports, and more with the click of a button. You should be able to choose which information is included to customize your report to specific projects. Clients will be impressed, and you will be back to the studio in a flash.

Can you manage your schedule?

A solid art inventory management system will have the ability to take your location and competition dates and create a schedule. That way, you can keep on top of all your important to-dos and never miss a deadline.

Is it user-friendly?

Again, you're a professional artist. Your passion is what led you to this career. You shouldn't have to spend hours upon hours sitting behind a desk trying to figure out a software program instead of in the studio.

A worthwhile art inventory software should make running an art business easier—not harder—so look for a system that's easy to use and recommended by other artists.

Is it cloud-based?

This is a big one. Using a system that stores your data on the cloud is the only way to make sure that all of your hard work and provenance records aren't gone forever if your computer is ever lost, stolen, or broken. Plus, it should take care of automatic backups so that your data is always safe.

Can you export your information?

You never know when you will need a hard copy of your inventory list. Make sure you get a system that can export your data to a CSV or Excel file so you can keep a local record. It's just another way to ensure that your art inventory is always safe.

Is the software going to last?

Businesses come and go, but you don't want your records to go with them. Search for an art inventory program with a steady amount of users and a high level of customer satisfaction. If other artists are loving the program, that's usually a good sign. Then, check into the founder's background and mission to feel out the longevity and commitment of the company.

Is it shareable? Can you embed it on your website?

These days, having an online presence is everything. So, wouldn't it be amazing if your art inventory software doubled as an online gallery to market your art?

Why not put all those entered pieces and details to good use with a program that creates a professional-looking profile page online that you can instantly share with potential buyers. It's even more helpful if you can choose which pieces and details you wanted to make public and what information you want to keep private, and an easy way to link to your other website and social media accounts. A page like this will come up in search results, so more interested buyers can find you. The more SEO, the better!

Finally, find a program that integrates with your own artist website, so your website always stays up-to-date with your inventory. That way, you don't have to enter all your information on multiple platforms or deal with lengthy annoying coding projects.

What's the bottom line?

Choosing a system that goes above and beyond the basic inventory needs of your art helps you manage your art career successfully.

So, which product checks off all twelve of these boxes? Drumroll, please ... Artwork Archive.

With the mission to help every artist make a living doing what they love, Artwork Archive serves thousands of artists with its intuitive and reliable tool for art management. Its powerful features allow you to stay organized and conquer your business, so you can focus on the art.

Why not have it all? Sign up for your [free 30 day trial of Artwork Archive here.](#)

THE MAIN TAKEAWAYS

If you are more than a year or two into your art career, chances are you have a lot of artwork around the house, office or studio.

You have probably said to yourself that you should catalog your artwork to keep things organized, make sure things don't slip through the cracks and ensure your artistic legacy. You might even have a Post-it note or calendar reminder that has been in your phone for far too long.

Remember, the first step is the hardest.

An inventory project can seem overwhelming, especially if you have hundreds or thousands of pieces to archive. The task can get so built up in our heads, that oftentimes gets postponed indefinitely.

Having a system in place will help you get started and work your way through your artwork, saving you time and stress in the future. Plus, in the unfortunate case that a disaster occurs, you will be prepared with records.

Here are the main takeaways when you are about to embark on an inventory project.

Start with the information that you already have

If you are like most artists, you most likely have bits and pieces of all this information all over the place. This is what we are trying to solve, but it is also a great starting point.

You have information on your website, at your galleries, in past publications, on your social media, and in your own records (if you are one of the lucky ones).

Take a look at your CV and use the exhibition history section as a jumping off point.

Decide on an art inventory system

Decide on a system that will work best for you and your art business. Do you already have a hand-written log or excel document of your works? Some inventory systems like Artwork Archive will allow you to upload that file to their program and cut down on data entry time.

If you are going with a database system or art inventory software, make sure it is capable of recording the information you are interested in tracking.

At the very least, the basic details you need to be able to keep track of for each piece are the inventory number, title, date of creation, medium, dimensions, price, collection, images of the artwork, a description with your art's story, and any important notes you may need to consider.

You will also want to look for a program that can track locations and exhibitions information to create a full provenance record of your artwork.

A quality inventory program should also track sales, editions and client information—using that data to create a dynamic system to schedule, invoice, create price lists, certificate of authenticity reports and much more.

Choosing a system like Artwork Archive that goes above and beyond the basic inventory needs of your art helps you manage your art career successfully.

Make sure the program you choose has longevity

Hard drive failures are not a myth. They happen and they take with them all of your records without apology. Look for a system that is cloud-based and allows you to export your information to your computer to store your data locally. That way, you have it backed up on your computer and on the cloud—so it is accessible anywhere.

Know that you don't have to go it alone

If you already have a studio assistant, consider this a wonderful project that will allow them to learn more about your history and evolution. For those who have been flying solo, it might be time to consider short-term help.

Consider looking for a summer intern or art student to help you start cataloging your artwork. Having some extra hands on deck will help make the process smoother! Plus, once all that information is cataloged, it cuts down on the administration time needed in the future when it comes to creating price lists, invoices, and finding information for collectors or publications.

If an assistant isn't in the budget, see if you can find another artist who is also archiving their work and create an accountability system for getting your work entered. Or, buy some pizzas on a quiet Saturday and enlist some enthusiastic and good-hearted friends to volunteer to help jump-start the process by going through all of your old work.

The best place to start is ... anywhere

Don't worry about starting the project chronologically if you are using an inventory system. Your inventory system should give you the ability to sort and filter by date, date added, date created, location, price, and much more.

Try not to get bogged down in making everything perfect before you begin. The most important step is starting, after all!

Art inventory systems help you sort and find the information and artwork you are looking for, so you don't have to do all the thinking.

The best time to start is now

You may have heard the old proverb, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

The same goes for inventorying your artwork.

Sure, it would be less of a headache if you had started cataloging all of this information at the start of your art career, but the second-best time? Now.

You will thank your past self a year from now when all your information is easy to find and your records are clearly labeled and stored. Not all of us are naturally organized, that’s why your database should be as intuitive as possible.

Take an afternoon to photograph all the work in your studio and enter the critical information about it into a database and then follow these steps to get started.

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Create work habits that work for you

Read: Don’t try and do it all at once.

“The bigger a project seems, the less likely you are to do it because it seems like too much effort. So if you really want to form better habits start really, really small—one pushup at a time.” [Fast Company]

Whether it’s getting into the studio at a certain time of day or finally getting to that cataloging project, good habits can make the difference between a flourishing art career and a part-time hobby.

Since building a new habit can be as daunting as a big project, there are a few ways to stay on track.

Celebrate your small wins: You unpacked your kiln. You sent out an invoice. You added five artworks to your inventory. Say, “Done!”

A recent study confirmed that breaking large or less-than-exciting projects into smaller components and then celebrating your wins is scientifically proven to make you more productive.

Think about a large project and see if you can break it into chunks that you can complete in 25 minutes.

Link new habits to old habits

Do you brush your teeth every day? Good. You have a daily habit. What if you identified and attached a small, new activity to that existing habit?

Dr. BJ Fogg, Director of the Persuasive Tech Lab at Stanford, did just that. Every time he goes to the bathroom at home, he does push-ups before he washes his hands. He attached an easily repeatable task onto an already ingrained habit. This routine didn’t start out tough—he began with one push-up. Over time, he added more. He changed his aversion to working out into a daily habit one push-up at a time, and today, he does 50 push-ups a day with little resistance.

Why does this approach work?

Changing a habit or building a new one is not easy. To improve your odds, attaching a new habit to an existing one is your best bet at success. Your existing habit becomes the trigger for the new one.

Think about your time in the studio or your workspace. What’s an existing habit that occurs during your workday in which you can attach a new activity? For example, every time you walk into the studio in the morning and put on your apron, record one artwork in your inventory.

At first, it will seem forced. But over time, you will get used to this new activity and the resistance will decrease.

Now go ahead and start that archiving project, get organized, and protect your artistic legacy!

YOU CAN TRY ARTWORK
ARCHIVE FREE FOR 30 DAYS
TO BUILD YOUR DIGITAL
ARCHIVE & MANAGE YOUR ART
BUSINESS.