



# 10 Commandments for Your Art Career

by Sergio Gomez, MFA

## 1. You shall be responsible for your art career.

Do not blame others for your shortcomings. At the end of the day, it's all about what you worked for and how persistent you were to get where you wanted to go. It is not that one curator or gallery or newspaper who ruined your career. If you fall, get up, learn from it and try twice as hard. We artists are good at rebounding.

## 2. You shall not expect a portfolio review from a curator, gallery owner or director during opening night.

The worst time to expect a portfolio review is during an art opening or during the hours leading to it. Unless you are expected, do not expect to be attended by the gallery. Once in a while, I still get emails from artists who say they are coming to the opening and ask if I could meet with them. It may be convenient for the artist to kill two birds with one stone but it is very inconvenient for the gallery. Openings are busy working hours for the gallery scanning the floor for who comes in and who goes out.

## 3. You shall be thankful for every guest that comes to your solo show.

There are some individuals who think the art world owes them something and that everyone should come to see them. Ironically, those are the people who hardly make it to other artists' openings. Instead, be thankful to each and everyone who comes to support you. Extend a smile and a welcome handshake every chance you get. Your guests or the gallery guests have left what they were doing to support you and your work. Let them feel special. If you live in a big city like Chicago, there are a number of exhibits every week. Your guests made a choice to be there with you.

## 4. You shall not assume that the curator remembers all of the details about the installation of your work.

On a given show, I have to keep track of many things including special hanging or installation instructions of multiple artists. Do not assume the curator remembers that one conversation you had



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over the phone a month ago. Always, include detailed instructions with your work and follow them up by email. It shows that you are on top of things. The curator will be glad to have that information handy as needed.

## 5. “Dry and ready to hang” means “DRY and READY to HANG”.

No matter how many times it is spelled out in the Gallery/Artist Agreement, I get work that shows up wet or not ready with hanging hardware. Every one has a job in the art gallery system. Think about the whole spectrum from making the art to hanging it, illuminating it, transporting it and packaging it. If you work with a gallery, they can help you with that but getting the work ready to hang or install should be ultimately the responsibility of the artist before it leaves the studio.

## 6. You shall have all your promotional materials ready.

Keep the good habit of always have your website up-to-date, high res images, CV, bio, statements, articles and writings about you ready to go anywhere in a short notice. Always be ready for action. I can't count how many times I have things on hold because images or bios or other info is not coming in. As artists functioning in the art world today, we have access to all the technology we need to be on top of things. Create a filing system that works for you and stick to it. That way, you will always know where to find the info you are expect to provide a gallery or museum.

## 7. You shall not take rejection letters as personal attacks.

Rejection is part of the art game. That one show that you really wanted and did not get in is not the end of the world. Nor, it is necessarily true that the jury or curator did not like your work at all. Every exhibition has a vision and a substance that the curator or the jury is trying to accomplish. There are many reasons why great work may not make it into a show. The worst thing you can do is ponder too much into it. If you submit work for a show, you have already accepted “no” as a possible option. Now, if you cannot get in anywhere, then take a close look at your work and your submission process. Good work always finds a way into the world!!



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## 8. You shall invest time in networking and community building.

Being part of a network and a community of artists is free but it takes time to build. Invest the time into it and it will certainly pay off in the long run. Get to know those artists in your immediate community and learn to collaborate with others in big or small ways.

## 9. You shall not lie on your resume or CV.

This is a big one. Be truthful in your statements, resumes, CV, etc. That one show you had when you got out of college at the local cafe should not be listed as a solo show in a cultural center. A cafe is a cafe and a cultural institution is another thing. Do not make things up. In my experience of being the artist and the gallerist simultaneously, one gets to know who is where. Once in a while, I see things that surprise me in an artist CV. If you are not comfortable with that show at the cafe 10 years ago. It is better to take it out than to lie about it.

## 10. You shall be patient and be persistent.

Be patient, realistic and diligent about your career. It takes time to build an art career. I personally prefer and enjoy a career that is constantly pointing me upward than a quick rush to the top. Make goals for yourself as an artist. Where would you want to be in 5 or 10 years? What do you need to do right now in order to be there? These are the sort of questions that should constantly be coming to our minds. At the same time, be open and aware of opportunities that may arise along the way. Take your time to analyze every opportunity because not everything out there is legitimate or worth while your time, effort and money. Don't give up and be persistent.

Get more artist's resources at [www.theartistnextlevel.com](http://www.theartistnextlevel.com)