

# PROFESSIONALIZATION

## Grad School, Careers in Art, Admin (and how it all fits together)

Duncan MacDonald

Associate Professor of Practice

The American University In Cairo

# ART AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

1. Art Administration
2. Research-Creation
3. Presentation
4. Grad Studies
5. Careers and the Business of Art
6. Artist statement challenge (5 minutes)

# ART AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- Prepare your Professional Practice before graduation
- Give you the tools to sustain a career as an artist and show the world what you are doing

**Think about all the different ways art can be created, disseminated and collected**

**Think about the different ways art can be organised, presented, marketed and valued**

# 1. Art Administration

- What is Art Administration? Define: Business operations around arts organizations, management of art and facilitating its presence and continuity in society
- Models of Art Administration:
  - Practicing Artists; Professional Practice
  - Collaborations: Artists, Researchers, institutions, Interdisciplinary collaborations
  - Artist Collectives: Groups of artists with mutual aims; see General Idea
  - Galleries & Cultural institutions: exhibitions, museums, cultural discourse
  - Private Sector & Registered Organisations (Charities, non-governmental organisations, Social Enterprises, etc.)

Use your professional network to promote and grow your art practice, that is for the administration of art through any of these models that are relevant to your art practice and its wider social, cultural and ethical aims.

# Art Administration

- How you administer your art practice, or creative practices generally, affects its accessibility in society (peoples access to art in society).
- It also has a direct impact upon your funding and abilities to make new work...

# Art Administration

## **Be Pro-Active (not reactive)**

Looking down the road; finding funds; creating opportunities

Budgeting

Coordinating

Marketing, promotion, creating links

Writing reports on how funds have been used; looking back

Important organization in Canada: <https://www.carfac.ca/tools/>

**What kinds of documents do you need to have on hand?**

# Artist Statements

- The artist statement is central to all of these documents.
- It involves you concisely conveying your artistic intentions and connecting it to an historical lineage.
- This statement can be somewhat creative – not necessarily written in the third person.
- How can this piece of writing be memorable but still convey the info you need it to?

# Artist statement (example)

## **Duncan MacDonald**

My art practice is centered around what I call the commodification of the corporeal sensorium, or the consumption and digestion of perception. The senses are becoming commodities. The visual is bought and sold at the speed of light while the audible lags behind. Our senses only have one purpose – to facilitate and aid in the consumption of ourselves. I intend to draw attention to sensual relationships within my work, prompting the audience to question the very means by which they approach and observe art. Be it relational, conceptual, translational, or anachronistic, the manifestations of my artworks are intended to be catalysts of change.



# Documentation of Artworks/portfolio

- The quality of your documentation is extremely important. spend a substantial amount of time taking high-quality photo and/or video documentation.
- Hire a pro photographer or videographer if possible.

# Your CV

- Education
- Awards, grants, scholarships, etc.
- Exhibitions (broken up into solo, group and/or curated)
- Performances
- Screenings
- Reviews
- Community Arts work
- Artist talks and presentations
- Sections that relate to your practice...

# Grant-writing

- There is an art to grant-writing – and there is a huge element of chance as to whether or not you get it.
- Write very concisely; less is more.
- Explain how your intentions align with your previous artistic pursuits.
- Explain how this grant will enable you to do work that would be otherwise impossible to achieve.
- Fully understand eligibility and the criteria for each grant before launching into doing an application.
- If you do not get the grant, ask for feedback from the granting agency so you can make your next proposal better.
- Be pro-active; there are funds out there for many kinds of projects – find them and apply!

# Budgeting

- When budgeting, be realistic. Juries are comprised of artists and people from the cultural sector. They can tell if your numbers are accurate or not.
- Per diem costs vary but are usually around are usually about \$100/day (misc. expenses). They can go up to \$250/day.
- Often, you cannot use grant money to purchase equipment. However, you can often simply rent space and equipment with it.
- Stick to the rules of the grant and eligible expenses. This is very important.

# Awards

- Other artistic awards are out there. It is wise to subscribe to websites like Akimbo so as to find them.
- Constantly search for these.
- [www.akimbo.ca](http://www.akimbo.ca)

# Exhibition + Residency Proposals

- These proposals should be enjoyable to write and assemble.
- You will probably need an artist statement, a brief bit of writing describing your intentions, a CV, a Bio (written in the third person) and documentation of previous work.
- Keep a file folder on your computer devoted to proposals, CV, Bio, etc...
- Expect to get into 1 out of every 5-10 shows that you propose. Pick a number.
- Don't take it personally if you don't get a show or residency right away. This is one of the biggest mistakes people make. This crushes a lot of artists (and shouldn't). Get thick-skinned. If you want to really keep making art you won't let little set-backs get in your way.

## 2. Research IS CREATION

- Be pro-active
- What is the concept/issue/question? What is the driver for the research/creation?
- What is the best means to explore the research issue?
- How is this issue relevant in society? What can it do to help people re-think problems in society?
- Do you have the agency to explore this research issue?
- Experimentation, nurturing, developing the idea. Trying it out in different forms, media, disciplines, etc.
- Choosing tools, methods, etc. to complement the sensibility of the work at hand.
- Editing process of dismissing some things, and highlighting other works
- Constantly make work; choose the strongest to show

# 3. PRESENTATION

## **Being Pro-Active**

How do you choose where to show your work?

Where does it make sense to show work? Commercial spaces?

Alternative? Artist-run? Etc.

Takes time away from the studio to show work.

Planning involved with showing work, shipping, etc...

How can you design an exhibition or show that complements the sensibility of the art itself?



# Accessibility, Writing, Promotion

1. Writing is a vital part of a Professional Art Practice
2. Writing Accessibly: writing about your work in a way that anyone can understand it, consider, who you are writing for and why?
3. Learn to Write effectively for Different Audiences
4. Clearly Define your practice: how you write and talk about your work and what you do is vital in sustaining your professional practice.
5. Promotion: websites, Blogs, Social Media, Collaborators, Mentors...

# “Starting Out”

- Students leaving university often are lost and not sure how to start the exhibition process.
- Simply, I advise you to keep in close touch with one another (have a strong support system with your colleagues/friends) and organize/curate exhibitions, performances, screenings, etc. Starting in **Groups** is often easier than Solo endeavours – and is a lot more fun!

## 4. GRAD SCHOOL

- Most Grad schools have application deadlines in December or January
  - Check their websites
  - Give yourself time to get transcripts, letters of reference, a CV and a letter of intention ready (ie. do not procrastinate!)

# CHOOSING WHERE TO GO...

Search for people you want to work with (ie. NSCAD – sound)

Where are there strong grad study programmes? What is the reputation of one school built upon?

What kinds of scholarships are available?

Are they ok with you exhibiting while studying?

Word of mouth – ask friends, profs and colleagues.

What kind of studio work is your forte (ie. painting, installation, drawing, etc) – and which university strongly supports such line of studies (with resources and faculty)?

# YOUR CV AND HOW IT WILL BE READ

## What are schools looking for on a CV?

- Community Arts involvement: Have you volunteered before? Are you part of the Sharjah Art Gallery? What have you done to help other artists, curators and cultural workers to better your cultural community?
- Exhibitions in various places:
  1. regional, national and international
  2. artist-run centre, commercial space, alternative space, museum, public gallery, collective gallery, etc...
- A commitment to making art
- Signs of ambition:

Your CV must thoroughly delineate all aspects of your artistic career (this will be covered shortly)

# YOUR CV AND HOW IT WILL BE READ...

Excellent WORK/ART!

This is generally the most important aspect of an application – the WORK (and clear signs of promise)

Consistency in making work/art (ie. not taking off a few years), exhibiting and a conspicuous dedication to all things cultural

# PROS and CONS of going to GRAD SCHOOL

- PRO: intense time-period spent working on researching, making art, reading, writing, studying theory and integrating all these elements (amongst other things)
- PRO: allows one studio time that may otherwise be hard to find (does your programme offer you a studio or not?)
- PRO: Networking and meeting other like-minded individuals: intensely critical studies

# CONS

- CONS: you are probably going to go more and more into debt; ie. expensive
  - CONS: getting a teaching job coming out of your Masters is possible, but not a sure thing (an interesting fact: if you don't get teaching work upon finishing a grad programme immediately, your chances of getting a teaching-related job drops substantially thereafter)
  - CONS: if you haven't made a name enough for yourself in the arts community, your network is stunted
- \*NOTE: there is no advantage in going immediately from an undergrad to a grad studies programme within the field of studio Art. It is the opposite for Theory-based practices.



# DOCUMENTATION

\* Hint: your first and last slides are the most important images you will present as part of your portfolio. They are what is first seen by a jury – and what is last seen during discussions concerning your application. Make sure these images are amongst the strongest; they need to stand out amongst dozens of other applications (sometimes hundreds) that will be reviewed.

## 4. The Business of Art

- It is advisable to research artists, galleries, and scenes that deeply interest you. Know the landscape of what is out there.
- When ready, (and this likely means after completing a Masters or having a practice for a sustained period of time) start approaching commercial dealers you are interested in. Choose the timing carefully.
- Discuss the value of your work well in advance of setting up such a meeting with colleagues.
- There is nothing wrong with making money off your art. Just don't undersell yourself.

# The Business of Art

- Careers:
  - Preparator
  - Curator
  - Writer (and editor)
  - Selling art (as artist or as part of gallery)
  - Renting art
  - Designer
  - Art fabricator (often for senior artists)
  - Conservation and restoration work
  - Academic
  - Education
  - Art therapy
  - The list goes on and on...

For more info see: [www.akimbo.ca](http://www.akimbo.ca) + <https://artistopps.com>

# Writing Workshop

- Writing for your audience: Writing has to be clear, succinct, accessible and cater to the audience you are writing for
- CV: writing for potential employers Professional/Corporate/Private Sector
- Art CV: writing for Arts Related jobs, Curators, Gallery Directors, Art Administrators
- Exhibition Proposals: Curators, Viewers
- Post-graduate study Application: tertiary sector, academics,
- Grants/Scholarships/Residencies
- Collaboration Request
- Online Promotion:

## ACTIVITY

**Artist Statements (who are you – what you do – why/how is it relevant); write a 4 sentence Artist statement that outlines your intentions with your work. (5 minutes)**

DISCUSSION?!?

Contact: [Duncan.macdonald@aucegypt.edu](mailto:Duncan.macdonald@aucegypt.edu)