



BUILDING YOUR ARTISTIC LEGACY

Career Documentation
and Legacy Planning
Questions for Artists

Career documentation and preserving one's legacy are essential components of an artist's life and practice—and include all aspects of your career as an artist. It is a system created to illuminate connections between your artwork, exhibition history, contacts, and archives.

The process of career documentation is about valuing your artwork and your career. The information that you gather can be crucial at any stage of your practice and allows you to maintain intellectual and physical control of your work over time.

Here are some scenarios that might come up for artists at different points in their careers:

As an emerging artist

- Documentation of artwork for a grant application, commission, residency or fellowship
- Preparing for a presentation or artist's talk

For mid-career artists

- An opportunity to create a book or catalogue of work
- Provide images for reproduction in an art history text or for educational lectures
- Studio visits by gallerists or other professionals

Established Artists

- Planning a retrospective exhibit
- Documentation of a past body of work for use by art historian or critic
- Beginning the process of legacy planning

The following questions might help you to assess your needs, set goals, celebrate your progress, or discuss this process with others.

What is your immediate purpose or primary goal related to your career documentation or existing archive?

- Apply for a major grant, fellowship, or commission
- Create a book or catalog of my work
- Gain control of administrative tasks
- Organize my studio
- Plan a retrospective of my work
- Prepare for an artist talk
- Evaluate the safety and security of my artwork storage
- Begin Living Legacy or estate planning

Other _____

What are the top three reasons you think this type of organizing will benefit you?

- Increase available studio time
- Save space in my studio (or on my computer)
- Increase visibility of my work
- Make my work available for research by others
- Sell my artwork
- Retain my legal rights
- Support and inspire the creation of new work
- Control my image/reputation as an artist

Other _____

Check all of the following that are true of your artwork inventory.

- All completed work has an inventory number and is labeled with it
- Current inventory spreadsheet or database tracks all finished work
- Location of all completed work is known and tracked
- Artwork images dated, titled, and labeled with inventory number
- Artwork is stored safely/securely
- Somebody else could easily discern what my inventory is

Notes _____

What systems are you using to inventory your artwork?

- Notebook
- Index card file
- Spreadsheet (like Excel or Numbers)
- Database (Filemaker, Artwork Archive, Art Galleria, Arawak, Artlogic, etc.)

Other _____

How many artworks (past and present) comprise your studio inventory?

- Less than 25
- 26–100
- 101–150
- 151–200
- Over 200 (Quantity _____)

How complete are your studio records/archive?
Have you recently worked on any or all of the following?

- CV complete and up to date
- Artist statement and/or biography
- Career-related files are clearly labeled, documents are filed or scanned
- Artwork by others is inventoried and separated from my own artwork
- Timeline of my career and life as an artist begun
- Current bibliography of publications and other materials
- Contacts organized and up to date
- Digital images of studio activities or processes labeled and backed up

Other _____

Where are your art collections stored?

- At my studio or house
- At a gallery
- At an institution or cultural center
- At a climate-controlled storage facility (ArtworksFAS, ArtTech, X Gallery)
- At a storage facility that does not have climate control (U-Store, U-Haul, etc.)

Other _____

How do people learn about your life and work now?

- Books or catalogs
- Website or social media
- Public lectures
- Galleries, museums, or public collections
- Not sure

Other _____

Who will be responsible for your artistic legacy (manage your artwork, gallery relationships, archive, copyright permissions, etc.) when you cannot attend to it yourself?

- A friend
- Family member(s)
- Studio assistant
- A foundation
- Gallery representative

Other _____

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The core of X Gallery's business is art storage. Our promise is a high level of professionalism and access to collections in service of the highest need of the client. Some of our clients store one or two objects, some store a thousand or more. Institutional clients often need the kind of services that reflect the back end of a museum or gallery. Other clients require registrar services that prepare a collection for the next step on its journey—which may be sales, placement, study, or generational dispersal. We have found that our business grows with client need and that very often storage is the fulcrum of that need. In addition to being guardians for the collections in our care, we have expanded our services to act as consultants and educators. Through this we support artists with career documentation and legacy planning services and collectors with collection management and documentation for short-term needs as well as long-term planning.

xgalleryart.com