





The Fine Art of Follow-Up

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Artists Reveal How They Stay in Touch

BY GIGI ROSENBERG

You know you should follow up more but you don't want to bother people. You've already sent one invitation and you're concerned that a reminder will make you sound whiny or, heaven forbid, pushy. So, you send one invitation to your opening and zip. Nothing else.

In a perfect world, one invitation would be enough. But nowadays, everyone needs a reminder or a second ask. For you to succeed, you must develop your skills in the fine art of follow up — not only for invitations but for every activity you do from teaching to selling to

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1 *Moonlight Scrawl*, 2017, by Lisa Daniel. Acrylic on canvas, 60" x 60".
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meeting potential collaborators. Follow up is how you continue a relationship.

As an artist coach, I hear stories all week about how an artwork was purchased or the client said “yes” only after an artist followed up. If there’s one change you make to your procedures next year that will have the biggest impact on your bottom line, it may be to check in one more time or ask again.

This practice will set you apart. Because most people don’t do it or if they do, they don’t do it well or consistently. But not you, not after you’ve read how five successful artists follow-up as a way to keep their audience more engaged and to remind people to show up at events, workshops and so on.

Following up shows your professionalism. It demonstrates to your students, collectors and followers that you’re a serious artist. I dare you to do it more often and with more finesse.

For this issue, I interviewed these artists to glean the many ways they follow up. I heard many stories about how all these seemingly little follow-ups led to much bigger opportunities. Listen in to these stories to inspire your efforts:

Automate Your Follow-ups

Many of us avoid follow-ups claiming they take too much time, but some can be automated. Once you set them up, you don’t need to do anything else but reap the benefits. Here’s how one artist does it:

Kristen O’Neill: Whenever possible, I automate as much work as I can. For instance, when you sign up for my email list through my website you are automatically put into an email sequence. The sequence contains a few emails that introduce you to my work. Then if you click on the link, my email program, ConvertKit, tags that subscriber with which paintings they were interested in. I tag subscribers

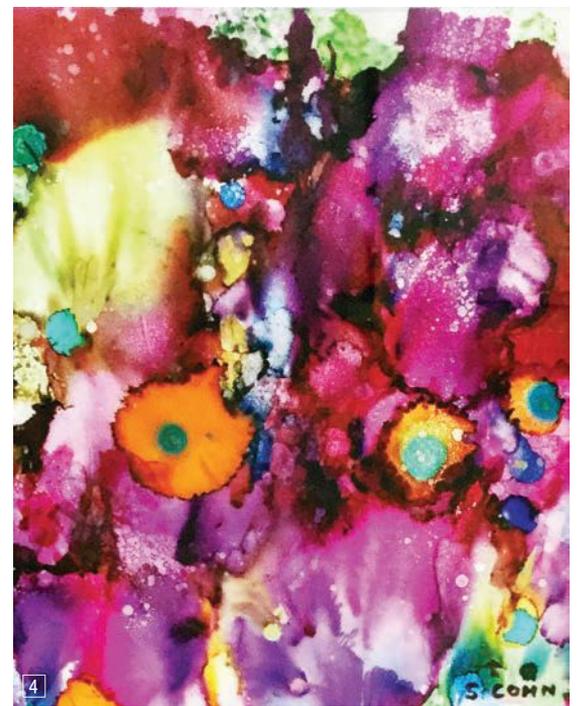


Sometimes we think we are bothering people, but really, these are the people who have said to us, ‘Yes, I want to hear from you. Here is how to reach me.’

~ Kristen O’Neill



2 Harbour Lights Dance. What’s In The Water?, 2016, by Lori Sokoluk. Mixed media on wood panel, 12” x 24”. Copyright © 2016 Lori Sokoluk. Used by permission of the artist. 3 Three Watchmen, 2016, by Lori Sokoluk. Mixed media on canvas, 36” x 72”. Copyright © 2016 Lori Sokoluk. Used by permission of the artist.



with their location (if they live near me, I invite them to local events), what year it is, if they are a “fan” or a “collector” and if they are an art student of mine.

A Reminder is a Helpful Follow-Up

These days, most people rely on reminders for workshops or events or any time-limited happening. Consider these follow-ups as helpful customer service. Don't be too shy to send a reminder or a friendly check in. Here's how O'Neill encouraged a former student:

Kristen O'Neill: Last week, I called a student who hadn't attended any recent classes. I knew my next class would really be a subject she enjoyed. She was delighted that I had been thinking about her and was so happy to sign up. Sometimes we think we are bothering people, but really, these are the people who have said to us, “Yes, I want to hear from you. Here is how to reach me.”

Follow-ups Lead to Work

This follow-up led to a happy ending for Lori Sokoluk when she eventually made her single biggest painting sale. Here, she unpacks her story step-by-step. The italics are mine so you can clearly see how many follow ups this one sale took. Was it worth her time? You bet.

4 *The Color of Sound*, 2017, by Susan Soffer Cohn. Alcohol Ink on duralar, 20" x 28". Copyright 2017 Susan Soffer Cohn. Used by permission of the artist.

Lori Sokoluk:

1. I met an interior designer at an open studio event last November. We talked about my work, and she gave me her card. *I followed up with a postcard* in December and an invitation to a VIP event in March.
2. She didn't come to the VIP event, but I ran into her at an opening. We talked quite a bit and *I followed up with another postcard* saying "great to talk with you and to meet your husband."
3. A month later, I received an email from one of her staff. They were interested in a specific painting. I replied that it was available and included the details re: size, retail and to-the-trade pricing. She said that their budget was quite a bit lower and gave me the figure. I said "Give me until tomorrow and I'll send over some options that will fit your budget requirements." I did so, and there were several emails back and forth, and the designer reached the point where she was pondering framing options for two smaller pieces to be selected from a group of five.
4. Then, I heard nothing for two weeks. *I took a deep breath and sent a friendly email.* "Hi Jen, just wondering if you'd been able to come



5 Peter Iredale, 2016, by Kristen O'Neill. Acrylic on paper, 14" x 11". Copyright © 2016 Kristen O'Neill. Used by permission of the artist.

6 A Highway of Sand, 2016, by Kristen O'Neill. Acrylic on paper, 11" x 14". Copyright © 2016 Kristen O'Neill. Used by permission of the artist.



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~ Gigi Rosenberg

any closer to a decision on which two of the five available pieces you want to go with. Also, to let you know that I'm going to be away next week, so it might take me a bit longer to respond than usual".

5. Within the hour, I got an email back saying she and the lead designer wanted to go for the original big painting. "We love it, we decided to go for it. It's going to look great! Could you do anything on the price, like maybe down to \$___?"
6. I thought on it overnight, and said that in this instance, I would feel comfortable with \$___, a number between my standard to-the-trade price and her ask.
7. I know from other artists that this design firm is good to work with, and they absolutely prefer to place original artwork instead of prints. I felt that it was worth a bit of cash to establish a relationship with this design firm. I deliver the painting in two weeks, and we'll go on from there. *I already have small gifts selected to send to the two designers.*

How to Follow-Up After a Sale

Following up after a sale may be the most important time to do it. As you know, people who buy once, tend to buy again. Here's Susan Soffer Cohn's experience:

Susan Soffer Cohn: At an outdoor show, one woman came walking toward my booth with a smile on her face and walked directly to the wall where my paintings were hanging.

"I have to have one of these," she said. "I love the colors; they make me happy." I talked with her for a while as she went from one painting to two and then



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7 Tree bowl, 2016, by Jennifer C. Vigil. Ceramic stoneware, 3.25" x 10.5" x 10.5". Copyright © 2016 Jennifer C. Vigil. Used by permission of the artist.



three. Then she said the three were more than she wanted to spend.

I don't discount, but I try to give value added. I changed one painting for another one that was slightly less money. We arranged them over and over and she bought three.

After the sale, my booth mates helped to write up the sale and wrap the paintings. We took photos of the customer and then the two of us together and sent them to her phone with a thank you. I offered to come to her house to hang them for her, if she needed assistance.

That night, I also posted the photo on Facebook (with permission first, of course). The following month, at the end of the day, just as we were beginning to close up, this same customer walked into the booth again and bought another painting.

Follow-up with Snail Mail

Old-fashioned snail mail will set you apart because hardly anyone sends or receives mail anymore. Here's how artist Jennifer Vigil makes the most of it:

Jennifer Vigil: I really like sending cards through the post. This is my favorite way to follow-up but not always expedient enough for some responses. I have a love of paper and stationery. I feel like we rarely get "fun" mail anymore in our mailboxes. I like to delight people with hand painted cards (especially for VIP's birthdays — they love it and I get such a positive response from them) and notes of appreciation. I like to say that I am part of the movement to revive handwritten letters — lovely personal conversations that connect us to each other in a tactile and personal way.

Life Changing Follow Ups

Lisa Daniel followed up by asking an artist on a lunch date which turned into a major career boost. Here's her story:

Lisa Daniel: I met my mentor because I followed up. About three years ago, I met Camille Patha at a Tacoma Art Museum



opening. She introduced herself to me, we traded business cards and discovered we are both abstract painters. I asked her if I could pick her brain about the business side of art and she told me to call anytime. I honestly did not know who she was, but when I researched her later and looked at her website, I was smitten. Feeling intimidated, nervous, but so curious, I called her and invited her to lunch. The rest is history.

I've had the opportunity to be with her behind the scenes at her second retrospective, multiple gallery shows, lectures and more. She was the catalyst that made me push my art career forward. After meeting her, I decided that I wanted to be just like her, I set a goal to be an artist full time.

Follow Up in a Video

I'd never heard of using video to follow up, but here's how Vigil uses it to welcome and follow up with students who have just registered for a workshop.

Jennifer Vigil: Once someone signs up for a workshop, in addition to an auto-responder sequence, as soon as I see that they have registered, I create a welcome video that is no longer than 1-2 minutes where I

The Artists

SUSAN SOFFER COHN (cohnart.com) trained for two years at Jayne Behman's Desert Fine Arts Academy in Palm Springs and earned a studio in Jayne's gallery after a little over a year. Her work has been exhibited in Sweden, Italy, France and throughout the United States and appears in numerous private and corporate collections. Her work has been included in two museum permanent collections.

LORI SOKOLUK's (lorisokoluk.com) work explores the visual, metaphorical and territorial aspects of the industrial edges of cities. Her architectural and fine arts backgrounds are evident in the focus on the edge of the city and structures of the port. Her paintings begin with curious intuitive experimentation, adding, removing, obscuring and restating until texture, collage and mixed media layer.

LISA DANIEL (lisadaniel.artspan.com) has painted and exhibited her work in the Pacific Northwest and beyond for 31 years. Her paintings are large, organically abstract works of acrylic and gel. She pours, directs and manipulates in multiple layers of unusual combinations of materials to create texture, depth and transparency. Daniel is a Public Art Commissioner for the City of Fife, Washington.

KRISTEN O'NEILL (kristenoneillart.com) is best known for painting hikes. After a childhood of playing in the forest, she realized she was a landscape painter at heart. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She lives in Southern Oregon with her two daughters. Their hikes are the source of inspiration for her paintings. Recently, she has begun to paint other people's hikes.

JENNIFER C. VIGIL, PH.D. (jennifercvigil.com), is an artist, art historian, curator and creativity coach who leads creativity retreats and offers courses on teaching and curating. She has been mentoring artists for over 20 years, helping them to overcome creative blocks, to refine their artistic practice and to write and speak more powerfully about their work. Her next course will be *Creating Courses That Fill: An Artist's Guide to Teaching*.

welcome them to the retreat. Here is a list of points I hit:

- I make sure to say their name since hearing our name triggers that dopamine response.
- Tell them what to expect to receive in their inbox in the following weeks/months. For example, I hold up my favorite Italian phrase book as a prop to show when I tell them I will be sharing useful information.
- I encourage them to join the Facebook group and share a bit about themselves and their creative projects with the group.
- If they have been a follower and I have personal information or connection, I reference that. For example, one person has been working on a novel and needs support completing it. In the video, I encourage her to bring it with her to Florence and say we will have a one-on-one meeting to make a plan for her to complete it.

Timing is Everything

Don't wait too long before following up with someone you've just met. Nowadays, I follow up with people I've met at events as soon as I get back to my desk. I bring my stack of business cards to my office and sit at my computer and follow up in whatever way is appropriate: it might

be following them on Twitter or it might be emailing them to follow up on something we were talking about at the event. If I let too much time go by, I often forget to do it. O'Neill concurs:

Kristen O'Neill: It's also important to reach out to people right away. The longer we wait, the harder it will be for them to remember us, or for us to not feel awkward adding them to a list. When I send out an email and someone replies to me, I always follow up with them. Even if it's a simple "thank you." **PA**

Gigi Rosenberg is an author, artist coach and editor of Professional Artist. She wrote The Artist's Guide to Grant Writing (Watson-Guptill) and coaches artists to help them find funding, blast through creative blocks and launch vibrant marketing plans. Follow her on Twitter @gigirosenberg or on Facebook at GigiRosenberg/Author. To sign up for her smart, art-filled news, visit www.gigirosenberg.com/blog or email her at grosenberg@professionalartistmag.com.