

A simple explanation of social media for Oxfordshire Artweeks artists

There's been a social media explosion over the last few years and it's a marketing channel that, if done properly, can seriously develop your audience.

Please note that you can use social media in a purely professional capacity – there's no need to expose any of your personal life if you're uncomfortable with it.

Within the visual arts, social media improves communications generally, helps artists to promote themselves, enabling easy networking amongst artist communities, helps Artweeks promote the festival in its entirety as well as individual artists, and allows open studios organisations to work together to build a country-wide awareness open studios events.

And it's rather like word-of-mouth recommendations – people use and appreciate social media as real commentary on things like the reviews on amazon or trip-advisor.

The most popular social networks (Oct 2013) include:

Facebook (literally half the world are on Facebook) and Twitter (ever growing – a key tool)

Also Google plus (up and coming); Linked In (primarily a business tool); Instagram (for which you require a smart phone); Pinterest (perfect for pictures but has an audience of which 97% are women.) and Four square which is social networking within a particular locality (if you have the others cracked).

We'd recommend you start with either Facebook or Twitter. Noone can do all of them!



Facebook – an on-line noticeboard

For Facebook, go to www.facebook.com and set up a personal page (which can be entirely private) and from that (and using the same email address) you can set up a Facebook page for your art, adding a business page as your professional persona: 'John Smith the artist', or 'The art of John Smith' for example. This would be a public page, rather like a noticeboard or blog, that any Facebook user can visit - such as <http://www.facebook.com/OxfordshireArtweeks> - an on to which you post news, comments and pictures to which you hope people will respond. Asking questions encourages interaction.

On Facebook, you aim to accumulate 'likes'. This is where visitors to the page who are keen to see more of your posts click 'like' so that the things you add to your page appear in their newsfeed.

Adding something interesting – just a comment or a new picture - a couple of times a week, or every day ideally, then keeps the people who 'like' your page informed about what you're up to, and keeps your name/brand in their heads day-in day-out.

There's also a handy admin panel on your page so you can see exactly how many people have seen each post and other statistics.



Twitter –an ever changing real time newsfeed

Twitter is live, a dynamic list of short bursts of information/commentary in real time, called tweets, each no longer than a text message, which you send out into the ether rather like a message in a bottle. It's non-directional, messy and can't be guaranteed to reach any particular person. However, anyone can read it and anyone might respond.

Joining up will take just five minutes for anyone who is computer literate at www.twitter.com

You'll need a photo of yourself, a brief line about yourself which should be about twenty words and include any key words that people might use to search for you and your web address if you have one. As you join you'll be encouraged to follow the tweets of people you are interested in (start with @OxonArtweeks).

You can have two or more twitter accounts so if you wish you can just have a professional persona or you might have a personal twitter account and another as an artist. Or roll them both in together.

Tweets are 140 characters long and they aren't not case sensitive.

140 characters looks like this

NB: this is a guide to getting started by Artweeks, not a definitive how-to -by techno-marketing gurus with cutting edge Twitter know-how.

Ideally, you should tweet four times a day, minimum, to keep yourself noticeable on your followers' home pages.

Tell people that you're starting to tweet and give them your Twitter name. Once the ball starts rolling you'll gather followers, and the more interesting your tweets, the more you'll gather because other people will share your tweets with their own followers – 'retweeting'.

If something is retweeted (or 'shared' on Facebook) this is 'going viral' and people you don't know and who've never heard of you will be seeing your tweets/pictures/information. You can reach thousands of people this way, with a good tweet.

People will only see your tweets, however, if they're on-line around the time you post them so Twitter is time-sensitive. The times of day at which you post tweets are important – peak times include 7-8am, 10.30-11am, 4pm and between 8 and 9pm.

Twitter etiquette – the point of Twitter is to engage and network with other people, both those you know and those you don't (yet!). It's entirely acceptable to just join in a conversation that's taking place around you.

To talk to someone directly, you use their Twitter name in your Tweet. This is known as a 'mention'.

For example "Hi **@OxonArtweeks**. Enjoyed the exhibition launch last night **@O3Gallery**."

You can also reply to someone's tweet – this will only be visible to the people who follow both of you. In addition there's also a facility for direct messaging which is completely private.

A hashtag uses the symbol # followed by a key word or phrase such as #OxonArtweeks. It has no spaces or punctuation and it is a link between tweets with a shared content/interest, and is like a search facility for a key word. You can make up your own - there's no need to register them.

The key to successful use of social media

Don't ever go for a hard sell. It's all about posting, replying, commenting and asking questions: make it interactive, personal and engaging.

Put up quality content – this can be shared/retweeted from other people.

Tell your news.

Show your interest and passion.

Include fun stuff - be yourself.

Include the link to your website or blog - remember that social media is transitory so refer people to your main website for any static info.

People love photos! There's almost twice as much interaction with posts that include pictures and these needn't be images of your work. Post a picture of yourself painting, or grinning and clutching a newspaper article that includes a mention of you, or a sculpture that went wrong ☺

Blogging

Blogging helps get you higher up on search engines so put a blog on your website – and then tweet or share the link every time you update it.

As a title for each entry, use a question! Titles are important for search engines and should be descriptive.

[Search engine optimization means helping people find you easily on-line – or being found by people who don't know you from key search words e.g. Bicester, landscape painter.]

Now go socialize!



www.facebook.com/OxfordshireArtweeks

&



[@OxonArtweeks](https://twitter.com/OxonArtweeks)