

**smARTips™ Guide**  
For Discriminating Artists  
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## **20 WEBSITE DETAILS**

### **EVERY ARTIST MUST KNOW**

by **Ariane Goodwin, Ed.D.**

**1. Development** – Have you thought about your exact reasons for putting up a site? What do you want visitors to do? Answering this one question will guide every single aspect of creating your website. Artists who want to direct visitors to galleries featuring their work will design a site far different from artisans who want to sell directly to their customers.

**2. Design** – In Stanford University's website "trust-ability" research, graphic design came up as No. 1. Pay attention to all your graphic elements: logo, pictures, icons. Do these fit together? Does everything fit the style of your work and personality? Does it overwhelm you with details, or underwhelm you too little information. Does the design engage you; make you want to explore more?

**3. Keywords** – Do you know what a keyword is? These are words that people, who are looking on the web, will type into a search engine (Google) to find what they want. You've probably done this dozens of times. Have you researched the best keywords for your site? If you don't use these, your page will come up as the 2 millionth page on a search...even if it's on the 10<sup>th</sup> page, you will be losing potential customers at a staggering rate.

**4. Immediate Access** – Are you making the classic mistake of having an "Enter Here" page? Has a web designer talked you into putting Flash on your site? Either of these elements will cause your site to download slowly and frustrate your visitors. Any designer worth their salt will make your graphics as small as possible and avoid unnecessary code. Ask for this upfront.

**5. Home-Page Text** – Are you saying, clearly, who you are, what you do or make, and why anyone landing on this page would want to stay here and poke around? On the web, where no one wants to figure out pictures (that equal a thousand words),

but everyone wants information now, you have to write clear text to go with your images.

**6. Navigation** – Are your navigation buttons (all the “click here” elements) easy to read? Easy to click on? (May seem obvious, but I went to one artist site where my cursor kept bouncing off the rollover buttons. I didn’t know if the links didn’t work or the navigation was off. I gave up in frustration and left.) If you click on a navigation button, do you go to the right page? Or reach a dead end?

**7. Directing Your Visitor** – Once someone lands on the home page, do you direct them, exactly, to the next page you want them to go? Do you know where you want them to go? Do you know what you want them to do? (Return to #1)

**8. Bells and Whistles** – You have 9 seconds before a visitor jumps off your site. Are you doing anything to make them jump through hoops? Flash, roll-over navigation buttons, icon buttons that can’t be immediately understood (one site reviewer calls these “mystery meat!”) hidden menus: these all spell one word: *goodbye*.

**9. Easy-on-the-Eyes** – Are your web pages easy to read? Is the information immediately accessible? Or do I have to poke around to figure it out. Is the size of your letters big enough for your audience (Baby Boomers need larger print and have more money to spend: is there a correlation here for you?)

**10. Site Information** – Have you written out all the basic information, about your work and what you do, so customers can figure out how to reach you, or buy your work, or go to an exhibit (or anywhere else you want them to go)? Are you aware that people care more about what they are going to get, than about what you do? Does your site reflect this basic fact?

**11. Even Artists Need Headlines** – Web surfers are looking for information. Even if your work is based on images, this is not enough. Where can I find your work? How do you make it? Have other people been happy with it? If you don’t sell it, who does? Tell me simply, and up front: what do you do and why should I care.

**12. Take Action** – Do you make it clear what you want your visitor to do next? Pick up the phone and place an order? Read an article? Find out about an exhibit? If you don’t tell people what to do next, how will they know?

**13. Meaningful Content** – Virtual reality deprives us of all the normal “body” markers we use to evaluate another person: tone of voice, eye contact, body

language. The next best thing is comments (testimonials) or case studies, which tell people that you are who you claim, and that you deliver whatever promise is implied on your site.

**14. Follow-up** – Is there a reason for a visitor to come back, or a way for you to keep in touch. Ask them if they want updates on your new work, or new exhibits so you can capture their email and permission to contact them. Without a database of new contacts, our website is barely working for you.

**15. Contacting You** – Is it easy to find out how to contact you? Have you included phone numbers, a snail-mail address, email forms?

**16. Ordering Your Work** – If you are selling directly, have you been 100% clear about the process? (One artist had order forms, but no obvious prices. I had to hunt everywhere to find them.) Is your form simple? Do you have a FAQ page (Frequently Asked Questions)?

**17. Shopping Cart** – Are you set up for impulse buying? A lot of people whip out a credit card on the spot when they see something they really want on the web. If all you offer is a phone number, or mail/fax purchases, how many midnight buyers might you be missing?

**18. Care-for Info** – Does your work need specific care instructions? Are they easy to understand? Is this important to know before someone buys from you?

**19. Link Popularity** – Having links from your web site to other web sites increases your visibility on search engines, and creates a higher listing. Anyplace that carries your work, writes about your work, or where you've written about your work, should be linked to your site.

**20. Up-dating** – Besides keeping you in the lime-light with search engines (a higher ranking), updating your site on a regular basis lets people know you're still invested in what you do. Can you imagine walking into your local grocery store and finding year-old product on the shelves? It's the same idea with website content. Nobody wants old stuff.

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with fewer struggles and more credibility*

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