



3 PHASE CURRICULUM

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INTRODUCTION

Phase One

Introduction to Phase One

Phase One is the often overlooked step in creating an art career. When starting out, artists often try to compete with established professional artists who are well into Phase Two or even Phase Three of their careers. It's all too easy to compare yourself to these artists and try to replicate their efforts.

However, this causes an artist to become frustrated by a lack of results and their inability to create art at the scale and speed of professional artists. Stopping to master the four steps of Phase One will allow an artist to launch themselves into Phase Two prepared for success both in their sales and in the creation of art.

Phase One Objectives:

1. **Build your artistic skillset**
2. **Develop a creative process**
3. **Create a 100+ piece inventory**
4. **Foster a local community.**

Phase One is 60% about mastering your technique. **Mastering your technique** means that you have practiced art concepts so much that creating art is now muscle memory and subconscious actions. You no longer need to think about creating. It's second nature. This takes time. Remember, phase one should **last at least two years** for the artist who has not mastered traditional art concepts.

However, mastering technical skills alone is not enough to ensure you will be ready to grow your business. You also need a solid **creative process** to help you create regardless of external circumstances. A creative process is a ritual that helps you begin creating so that you are able to create whether you are having a bad day, good day, or the world's gone to hell in a handbasket. This process is vital to your success because as a professional artist you will have to create when you do not feel like it.

After you have completed honing your creative process, you will need to **create inventory**. This means creating over **one hundred pieces** so that you enter the art market with credibility and variety. This is just a bare minimum and many artists actually suggest creating upwards of 400-800 works ready in your inventory. We'll talk about that more in-depth.

Once you have created your one hundred plus pieces, you are ready to begin putting your work out both online and in person. It's time to **foster your community**. This is where you will begin working with local businesses to display art, begin participating in art events, and working with your local community.



INTRODUCTION

Phase One

Blog Post

It's tempting when you decide to become an artist to feel as if you're already behind. Social media is full of established and upcoming artists who make it appear as if their career has taken off overnight. However, these artists are actually all in Phase Two of their careers. Don't feel guilty for falling into this trap. Many many artists give up their careers because they don't understand where they are in their artist's journey.

What causes most artists to struggle in the beginning is their lack of understanding of how one creates an art career. This creates self-doubt and hesitation causing many artists to question why they started this in the first place. However, once you understand where you are in your journey, you can rest easy knowing you are on the right track.

Consider each action step below as a checklist for you. If you have formal education as an artist, such as a bachelor's in fine art, you may not need to necessarily build a skillset. However, you may not have created an efficient creative process yet. Or, perhaps you've decided to shift into digital art.

If you find yourself struggling with an action step, it might be because you have not yet mastered or completed a previous step. Don't feel ashamed or as if you failed if you need to go back a step. It's all part of developing your foundation. You will reap more benefits in Phase Two the more solidly your foundation is built in Phase One.

A word from experience: there is no time limit on developing your career. The most harmful thing you can do is decide that you will be a Phase 3 artist in four months when you have no business or presence established. We do not expect oak trees to grow in four months and you should consider your art as a seed that is growing. Your art will evolve and develop at its own pace. Part of your journey is to allow your art to flourish and keep following what interests and excites you.





INTRODUCTION

Phase One

(Blog Post Continued) Build Your Skillset

The first step in your art career is building a skillset. This means learning the technical skills required to become an artist who can efficiently and consistently put out art. This includes developing a style, learning art techniques and concepts, and developing muscle memory.

The most important aspect of this step is repetition. The more you create, the better and faster your skill set will grow. You can use courses and workshops to improve your art, but nothing will substitute for practicing your craft over and over again. This stage is not about selling.

Nothing you create at this stage should be to sell. Let me say that again: nothing you create at this stage should be to sell. Focusing on selling creates a perfectionist mindset this inhibits and slows your growth as an artist. Don't shoot yourself in the foot. This is all about creating to grow yourself from a hobbyist artist to a professional artist.

Develop Your Creative Process

As a professional artist, you will have to create the skill of being able to create art when you do not feel like it. Additionally, you will need to learn to create proficiently and efficiently. This is all about shortening the time it takes you to put out a piece of art. When you have commissions, shows, and other various deadlines, you will be faced with art block and burnout.

Without a creative process built into your system, you will find yourself with unhappy clients, constant looming deadlines, and lots of stress. It will feel as if you can never get ahead of your to-do list. And, you will find you have no more time to create the things that bring you joy. This leads an innumerable amount of artists to burn out and eventually quitting their business.

A creative process is a system that gets you into the flow of creation regardless of your mental state. This is key to keeping workdays manageable and consistently knocking out chunks of projects so that you are staying ahead of deadlines giving you the breathing room to focus on growing your business in Phase Two as well as continuing to do the things you love to do like going out with friends, seeing a movie, or just getting out of town for the weekend.

Create an Inventory of 100+ Original Pieces of Work

It's finally time to create inventory! Congratulations! This is a wonderful stage to get to. Creating inventory should not begin until you have both mastered your skillset and have honed a creative process.

What does this mean? It means you should not create inventory until you can consistently create work quickly and efficiently.



INTRODUCTION

Phase One

Create an Inventory (Continued)

Let me break this down further. Before you begin creating inventory, you should be able to take an idea for a piece and execute it 80% of the time or 8/10 times. If you can do this, that means that your skills have transferred to your subconscious memory and are embedded in your muscles and mind. This is exactly where you want to be before creating your inventory.

Note: I know many artists will want to skill the first two steps and will want to begin to create inventory immediately. This might seem like you are saving time, but it will actually cost you more in the long run as you will not be able to scale or grow your business because you cannot create consistent work on a schedule for deadlines. You are only hurting your business by starting here if you have not mastered the first two steps.

Once you are ready to create inventory, you need to create a lot of inventory. This means having 100+ works in your back pocket. Your art is your product. Imagine a store that you go in and it only has three things. Are you likely to buy one of those three items? Probably not, but if a store has 100 items, you will spend a lot more time looking and are more likely to find something that speaks to you.

It's critical to have a large inventory when you take your work into the community and online in the next step.

Foster a Local Community

It's very hard to see as an artist how a person goes from painting to profiting. A common thought for artists is that if they are good enough they will sell or they will be asked to be in museums, shops, and shows. But, this is not reality. Your being good enough has nothing to do with it. Artists get into galleries, shows, bars, museums, businesses, etc. because they asked.

Don't feel ashamed for having thought it was through merit. I used to think that. It was a huge relief to realize that it wasn't because I was a bad artist that I wasn't being asked to be a part of things. It takes networking (in which Alejandro is a mastermind meanwhile I would rather peel my skin off). For extroverts, this is going to be a skill you will greatly enjoy growing. If you are an introvert and/or a neurodivergent, which many artists are, you are going to have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

You foster community in two ways: locally and online. With a stockpile of inventory, you will be able to take your portfolio to local bars, restaurants, bookstores, businesses, boutiques, etc, and let them select which art they would like to display in their storefront. From here you can easily work out a consignment deal and your work will be presented to the multitudes of clientele that the business receives.

Online you will be sharing your art via your website and social media. With 100+ works in your back pocket, creating an online presence will become infinitely easier with content ready to be published.

PHASE ONE

Checklist

BUILDING YOUR SKILL SET

- BUILD YOUR SKILLSET
 - MASTER YOUR TECHNIQUE
 - DEVELOP A STYLE
 - HONE A MEDIUM OR MEDIUMS THAT COMPLEMENT YOUR STYLE

DEVELOP YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

- DEVELOP YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS
 - FIND THE FLOW
 - CREATE A RITUAL
 - CREATE A HABIT
 - MAKE A COMMITMENT

CREATE AN INVENTORY

- CREATE AN INVENTORY
 - CREATE 100+ WORKS OF ORIGINAL ART
 - DOCUMENT YOUR PROCESS OF CREATING EACH PIECE
 - DO NOT TRY TO SELL OR POST TO SOCIAL MEDIA

FOSTER A LOCAL COMMUNITY

- FOSTER A LOCAL COMMUNITY
 - PUT TOGETHER A PORTFOLIO
 - CREATE AN ONLINE PRESENCE
 - DISPLAY WORK IN LOCAL VENUES
 - PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL EVENTS



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

Introduction



BUILD YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

Objective

Creation and art skills are embedded subconsciously. You create from a place of mind-body connection where the technical components of creating art are no longer a conscious activity.

- MASTER TRADITIONAL ART CONCEPTS
- DEVELOP A STYLE
- HONE A SPECIFIC MEDIUM OR MEDIUMS THAT COMPLEMENT YOUR STYLE

Objective: Creation and art skills are embedded subconsciously. You create from a place of mind-body connection where the technical components of creating art are no longer a conscious activity.

The first step in the creative process is often the one everyone wants to skip. Building your skillset is all about learning and practicing each of the techne of art until you master them. Many artists want to skip this step, often because they can copy or mimic from reference materials.

However, when they try to create original works of art, they find they cannot translate what they see in their head to paper. This is caused by a lack of technical skill and muscle memory between the eyes, the hand, the arm, and the mind. Like practicing the piano, an artist's ability to create comes from practicing a skill over and over again until they no longer need to consciously think about the skill in order to execute it.

This seems daunting, but consider when you first began driving a car. The first time you drove you were overwhelmed by everything you had to do. You had to force yourself to push the gas, look at the rear-view mirror, turn the wheel, hit the blinker, watch your speed, stay in your lane. It was a lot! Each action you had to think about consciously. You'd say to yourself "Put on the blinker. Hit the brake. Watch that blue car, it looks a little iffy."

However, now, after years of driving, sometimes you get in the car and arrive at your destination without even realizing you drove! Your subconscious can now drive the car.



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

Introduction (continued)

This is the point you need to arrive at when creating art as a professional artist. You need an autopilot for artistic concepts.

Before you panic, we can break this objective of mastery down even further:

Mastery Objectives:

1. Master traditional art concepts
2. Develop a style
3. Hone a specific medium or mediums that complement your style

Check out our resources for this lesson online as we discuss each of these action steps in detail.

Blog Post

This part of the artist's journey is probably the least sexy. It's the bones of the house: the foundation and the frame. When the house is done, we can't see them. But, if the frame or foundation of a house is off or failing, we can tell very quickly.

When artists start, they focus on the exterior of their skills. That means if we use our house metaphor, beginning artists want to show off the interior design. They want to be able to show how well they can decorate the space in color, furniture, and with all the trendy bells and whistles.

For many artists, this translates into trying to attempt hyperrealism or master-level works of art before they've built their foundation. (Me. I've done this.) How many times did I cry over the fact I couldn't perfectly execute a Rembrandt masterpiece?

More times than I'm proud to admit.

I could see the brush strokes. I could understand how he had completed the details. I saw the interior design of his masterpiece, but I had no idea how he had built the framework and foundation of his house. I hadn't learned the foundations of art therefore I couldn't understand the beginning stages of Rembrandt's work. This led me to a constant merry-go-round of self-doubt and self-criticism because I thought it was simply because I wasn't a good enough artist.

I was good enough. I just hadn't learned how to build a house yet.

(Continues on next page)



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

(Blog Post Continued) Technical Skills

This is why it is so crucial for artists to *master* the techne of art. Please reread that sentence. *Master*, not learn. In education, to master something is to know it by heart or to have it memorized.

When you were younger, you might have learned your multiplication tables by counting out numbers. If your teacher asked you, "What's 3 x 4?" you might have counted by 3's to get the answer. 3, 6, 9, 12. 12. You could find the answer. This level of understanding multiplication is having *learned* the concept.

However, if your teacher asks you "What's 3x4?" and in your mind you think "12" you have mastered the content. You now have the concept that 3 sets of 4 is 12 embedded so deep into your mind that the recall for it is subconscious. This is *mastery*.

It's a vastly different experience when you are trying to work a math problem like 135 X 243 if you have mastered your multiplication tables rather than learned them. This is no different when creating art.

When learning concepts of art, to master them is to have learned and practiced them so well that you no longer need to think consciously about them when you are creating a work of art. This is mastery. It's when the muscles in your arm and in your head know the techne or skill better than your conscious mind. This is why so many masters cannot explain how they perform a certain brush stroke or create a certain light in a painting. (Which is infuriating, I know.) They do not consciously know. They have done it so many hundreds of thousands of times that their body and subconscious mind does it for them.

But, where then do we begin? So many artists begin copying art, which is a wonderful skill to have, but studying and mimicking a finished work is still only studying the interior design of a house. For simple designs, you may copy them perfectly, maybe even improve them!

However, many artists find themselves stuck once they want to create their own art and not copy any longer. They find their minds go blank and their work comes out nothing like what they see in their head. This is because the foundation has not been created yet.

There's no reason to fret. The answer to this is simple. You must learn the classical techne and foundations of art. I wish someone had told this to me when I had started. I could have saved myself 14 years of grief and self-deprecation.

When starting, I've composed a list of art concepts that are critical for building a foundation as an artist regardless of the medium that you choose.

(Continues on next page)



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

Styles

After you have mastered the fundamentals of art, you can then go on to practicing style. Style is the way in which an artist or production company creates something.



Disney Style

©Disney•Pixar. All rights reserved. Disney's Original Ariel Artwork



Anime Style

Ariel Fan Art (via Tumblr)



Realism

Ariel Artwork SeraFleur

These styles are all capturing the same subject. Each artist will develop their own style over time. However, just like foundation, it comes from time and repetition. Eventually, a mix of your interests, favorite art, and your own specific muscle movements will create a style that is definitively yours. Go ahead and try out various styles that you find interesting.

Mediums

Mediums tend to be an artist's water wings. An artist will feel adequate at a particular medium, like acrylic painting, trying another medium such as oil and run screaming back to acrylic. This is because each medium has its own subset of mastery.

For example, a watercolorist (my favorite medium) has to learn how to compensate with wrinkling paper, mixing water and paint, layering (oh the layering), and the time it takes to really bring to life a watercolor piece. With watercolor, once it's there, it's there. This is why many artists prefer mediums like oil and acrylic that allow the artist to paint over mistakes. However, if an artist is working with acrylics they have to be prepared for fast drying paint! If an artist is working with oils, they have to adapt to paint that may not dry for weeks.

This is why it's vital to save mediums until after you have built your foundations in art. The danger is that if an artist has not spent the time learning the techne of art, they will fall into bad habits that come from the medium they are using. For example, if you learn to create light using oils only, then you will quickly get irritated and put out with colored pencils or watercolor when you don't understand the foundations of light or color theory.



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

I encourage you at this stage to try all the mediums! If you don't want to invest in a medium (because it can be EXPENSIVE) try a class!

Or, spend a day with an artist friend who specializes in the medium you're interested in (maybe bring them lunch to trade for supplies!).

It's a shame to be 10 years into your art career and try pastels for the first time and think "This works so well for me, I should have been doing this all along!"

You're not creating inventory yet. You're not posting online yet. Play. Have fun. And, see what mediums blend with your unique talents and style!

Mediums to try:

- Charcoal
- Colored Pencil
- Ink
- Graphite
- Watercolor
- Oils
- Acrylic
- Pastel
- Pen
- Tempera
- Mixed Media
- Fresco painting
- Markers
- Sculpture
- and way more than I can list!

Spend Money on Time, Not Supplies

Here it comes again (I told you), spend money on time not buying supplies. Now, what does this mean exactly? It means you are much better off spending your money on opening up time to create than working more to spend money on better supplies, workshops, and that expensive art seminar in Rome.

Look at your schedule, can you cut back on your expenses and work less? That's the key. Find how much you can shave down your work schedule and put art in its place.

In my experience, I hate having the whole day to create art. My ADHD mind needs a little bit of work to make me feel safe. I need a little bit a schedule to organize my day, and I need a little bit of money to go get coffee, buy that new book, or to go on a trip with Alejandro.



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

It's okay to work and be an artist. Let me say that again for the people in the back.

IT'S OKAY TO WORK AND BE AN ARTIST.

It's knowing the right place to cut work off and create time for art.

This is where budgeting and knowing your financial situation really come into play. We'll spend some time unpacking that in a future video and podcast, but if you need help understanding how to cut back expenses and hours at work, contact us and we'd love to help you out.

Quantity Over Quality

It feels like I keep heaping boring stuff on you guys, but I promise to focus on building the foundation, and repetition of your art will allow you to grow your business much faster than if you skip this step.

Once you have created time to create, it's time to create. This means it's time to start pumping out art. The more you create, the faster your muscles and mind will create neurological connections in your mind. This step is how you move from learning to mastery.

One of the best illustrations of this, I learned on Tumblr. I have found the original post and put it below:

How to draw good

- fill 14 sketch book
- bad stuff is good stuff bc you made stuff
- do you like sparkle???? draw sparkle
- draw what make your heart do the smiley emot
- member to drink lotsa agua or else bad time
- d ont stress friend all is well
- your art is hot like potato crisps
- don't let anyone piss on you good mood amigo
- and if they do
- you
- eat
- them

StridersKnowBest via Tumblr



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

Quantity Over Quality (Continued)

All silliness aside, this is profound advice. Fill volumes of sketchbooks. Not one, not two. Not five. A dozen at least. Paint hundreds of paintings over the same canvas. Fill it with bad drawings, good drawings, stick figures, classical art. Draw while you're watching TV, draw while you're waiting for the bus, draw while you're watching your kids (draw with your kids!). Just draw.

Now, here's the caveat. Do not take this advice and decide you need to fill 14 sketchbooks by next month. I'm talking to my neurodivergents out there. Do not take this advice and create a mental prison out of it. There is no time limit to developing your art career. The two ingredients to mastering the techne of art are repetition and time. You cannot control that it takes a biological set amount of time for your brain to master something. You have no control over that. You cannot speed it up. All you can do is keep practicing.

Do not practice so much that you burn out. Don't try to draw 20 pictures a day. Don't create so much you lose the love of creation. This step begins to slide into developing your creative process. If you're tired of drawing, try a different location. Go outside and draw, draw at a coffee shop, draw on the floor, draw on an easel, draw standing up, draw while listening to music, draw while eating, draw while talking. Skip a day. Try everything and see what you like!

REMEMBER: You are not selling yet.

The most important thing I can impart to you while practicing is to remember that none of this is for sale. That's not even an option. None of this is inventory. Don't put the pressure on yourself to create masterpieces at this stage (or any stage really). You are not selling any of your practice materials. This is all for you and doesn't need to be shared with the world.

Consider all of your practice art like sports practice. Your art practice is not any different than LeBron James shooting free throws, Serena Williams practicing her serve, or Tom Brady throwing down the field. You're at practice. The cameras are not on you. No one is going to see these. They are only for you. We don't see the missed baskets and serves, nor do we see the times Tom Brady trips in practice. Don't assume the world will see your work and judge you.

Note for the practicing artist: I know that many non-artists ask to see your sketchbook. I know this is a question we all dread getting from our family, our friends, and strangers. We don't want them to be disappointed or, worse, to tell us we maybe shouldn't devote our lives to art because we aren't good enough.

You are allowed to tell a person no if they ask to see your sketchbook. It's the same as a diary. It is your private space.



BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

Quantity Over Quality (Continued)

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BUILDING YOUR SKILLSET

Phase One

You Are Not Selling (Continued)

If you feel uncomfortable telling them no, take pictures of your favorite sketches on your phone and say "Oh, let me show you my portfolio, these are just messy doodles."

You don't owe anyone anything. You don't need to prove yourself. Just keep practicing.

Keep building that house. The time to decorate it will come faster than you think.

Review

Let's review and break down the micro objectives for building your skillset:

Building Your Skill Set Objectives:

1. Master traditional art concepts
2. Develop a style
3. Hone a specific medium or mediums that complement your style

Check out our resources online as we discuss each of these action steps in detail.

Notes:

Checklist

TECHNICAL SKILLS



MASTER ART CONCEPTS



LINES



VALUE



ANATOMY



SHAPE



SPACE



PERSPECTIVE



TEXTURE



COLOR



MOVEMENT



FORM



CONTRAST



COMPOSITION



DEVELOP YOUR STYLE



CREATE STUDIES



FILL 14 SKETCHBOOKS WITH EVERYTHING
THAT INSPIRES YOU



TRY EVERY MEDIUM



GRAPHITE



CHARCOAL



FRESCO



ACRYLIC



MARKER



SCULPTURE



OIL



DIGITAL



LITHOGRAPHY



PASTEL



COLORED
PENCIL



MIXED MEDIA

REMEMBER!

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER



YOU DO NOT NEED TO POST OR TRY TO
SELL YOUR WORK.



YOU ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO SHOW
PEOPLE YOUR SKETCHBOOK.



SPEND MONEY ON TIME NOT SUPPLIES.



QUANTITY OVER QUALITY.



DEVELOPING YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Introduction



DEVELOP YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Objective YOU HAVE A RELIABLE PROCESS THAT ALLOWS YOU TO TRANSITION INTO A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN CREATE REGARDLESS OF EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

- FIND THE FLOW
- CREATE A RITUAL
- CREATE A HABIT
- MAKE A COMMITMENT

Developing a Creative Process Objective: You have a reliable process that allows you to transition into a place where you can create regardless of external circumstances.

Developing a creative process might seem like a superfluous thing to do. After all, you've spent all this time mastering your art technique, why do you need a creative process? A creative process is a ritual that helps you begin creating so that you are able to create whether you feel like it or not. A creative process is essential to scaling your business. Without it, you will not have the stamina and endurance it takes to build the art career you desire.

When you are beginning to find your creative process, you have to get familiar with the feeling of being in the flow. What is the flow? Biologically, the flow is moving your brain waves out of beta and into an alpha brainwave state. However, you might recognize it when you lose the sense of time or lose the sense of your problems. When you are doing an activity that gets you into the flow, you are not focused on yourself, your problems, or life around you. You are hyperfocused on the task in front of you.

As wonderful as this place is to be, the flow, or alpha brainwaves, cannot be forced. You cannot think yourself or make yourself get into the flow. It's a lot like falling asleep. To fall asleep, you have to close your eyes and pretend to sleep. Then, when you least expect it, ploop! You're asleep.



DEVELOPING YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Introduction (Continued)

Once you have found your ritual, it's time to get some mileage built up! It takes time and consistency to rewire your brain. This is how you create a habit. Your ritual will not work the first time. It won't work the second time. It won't work the 25th time. It takes time and consistency to teach your brain that when you begin your ritual, it's time to get into alpha. Your ritual is your trigger for your mind. Eventually, your body will learn to automatically get into flow when you begin your ritual. But, this comes with months and months of being dedicated.

This is where making a commitment is vital and, if you live with others, a team effort. Just as we talked about in lesson one, it is critical that you spend time on your art. Not simply the art itself, but in creating mental stamina for the art business. Spend money on time, not supplies. Work with the people in your house. Agree on set times, in advance, that you will be creating. Your kids will be okay. Your spouse will be okay. Protect your creative time just as you protect your time with your kids, significant other, or friends. It must be non-negotiable. However, it also doesn't need to take over your life. You need friends, your lover, your kids. You need to go watch a movie, binge Netflix, and pet the cat just as much as you need to work on your art. We'll discuss this more in the blog.

It is imperative that you create a system for creation for yourself. This includes working in time for your life around your art. This is also non-negotiable. Without inspiration from your life, your art is nothing but hollow productions. Your life makes your art yours.

Creative Process Objectives:

1. Find the flow and become familiar with what it feels like.
2. Create a ritual
3. Create a habit
4. Make a commitment

We discuss each of these mini-objectives in further detail in the resources online.

Blog Post

Let's define the creative process. A creative process is how you move into a mental/emotional state of creation. It is NOT actually creating.

Your creative process is akin to how many miles you can run. When you start out running, one or two miles is a huge accomplishment! However, when you want to become a marathon runner you have to have the mental fortitude and physical strength to go from running 2 miles to 24.6 miles. That's the same as your art business.

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DEVELOPING YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Blog Post (Continued)

It takes time and consistency to rewire your brain. This is how you create a habit. Your ritual will not work the first time. It won't work in the beginning, you'll only have to create marginally as your inventory depletes, but as your business grows, you'll be having to paint marathon levels of inventory! That's exciting, but it will take a lot of work to get there.

Many artists we come across resist this stage. Again, just like mastering your technique, it's not something that shows results. You cannot put this up on Instagram and receive validation. However, it is invaluable to your ability to play the long game with your art career. Without developing a creative process, artists burn out, can't keep deadlines, and quit.

Do yourself a huge favor and do the hard work now. Once you build the muscles in your body and your mind, you will be able to create with speed, stamina, and skill that you never thought possible.

Find the Flow

Let's talk about "the flow." You've undoubtedly heard about this concept from motivational speakers, other artists, or books about creating. But, let's break down what the flow actually is.

"The flow" is actually a biological process. Your brain operates in brainwaves. When your neurons fire, they produce an electrical pulse also called brainwaves. This pulse and its speed determine your thoughts, feelings, and physical response.

Most of us operate day-to-day in beta brainwaves. This is our analytical mind. It's logical and designed to look for danger and threats. When we get into higher beta, it triggers a stress response and this is when we experience cortisol and adrenaline responses. (If you're interested in learning more about this, I highly suggest the work of Dr. Joe Dispenza.)

The flow state is when your brain moves from beta to alpha brainwaves. Within the alpha state, you are physically and mentally relaxed. You are operating from within yourself (your emotions, ideas, creativity) rather than outside yourself (your problems, self-worth, external circumstances). The best states are when you are hovering right in between alpha and theta (see Human Brainwaves chart).

(Continues on next page)



DEVELOPING YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Find the Flow (Continued)

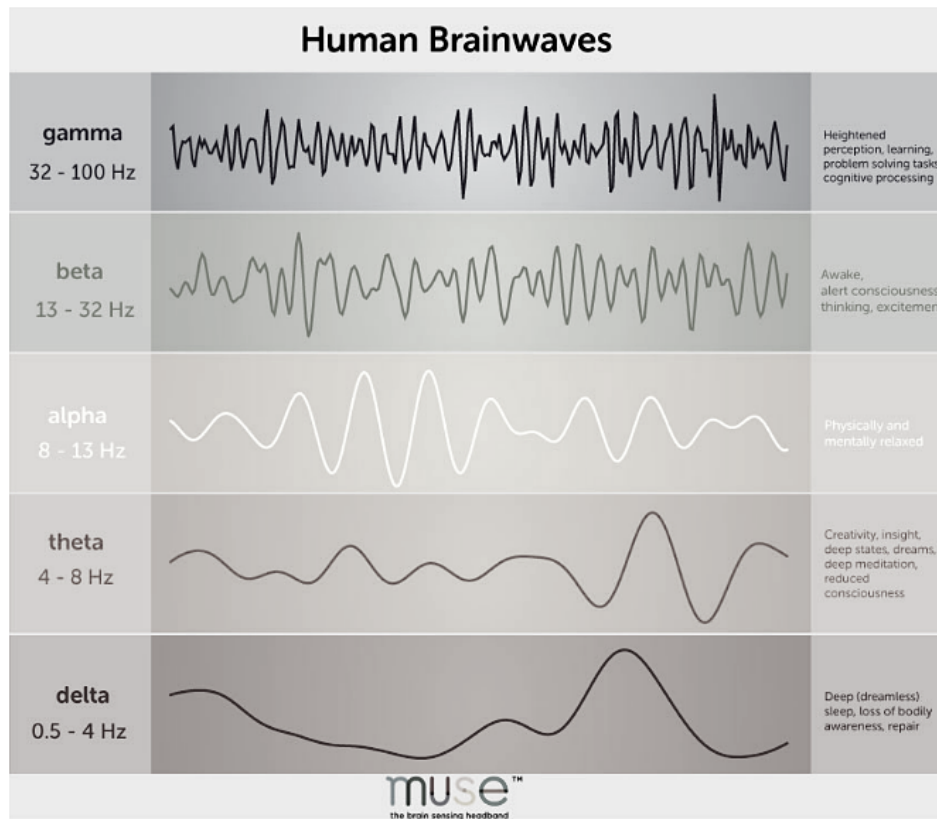


Image by Muse

An artist must be able to manage to enter a flow state and recognize when they have left the flow state. Now, the flow state cannot be forced. It is impossible to think oneself into a flow state. While this sounds confusing, it's the same process as going to sleep.

When you go to sleep, you are moving your brainwaves from beta to theta and then delta (Again, refer to the Human Brainwave chart).

Think about when you are falling asleep. Do you lay down and say "sleep!" No, you have a routine. You brush your teeth, put on your PJs, turn the lights off, plug your phone in, put on your music, tv, or white noise, and snuggle into the covers. Each of these actions is a trigger for your mind. A trigger is a psychological stimulus that causes your subconscious mind to react physically. For example, you automatically stop the car at a red light without thinking or check your phone when you hear your phone buzz. Your mind is wired to respond.

When you put on your PJs and brush your teeth, your mind is triggered to begin shifting down in brainwaves. You don't have to do anything. All you have to do is lay down and your body does the rest.

(Continues on next page)



DEVELOPING YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Find the Flow (Continued)

This is exactly what you need to do for your art. You need to create the mental wiring that triggers your brain into creative mode. This prevents art block, procrastination, and keeping you off the canvas (or whatever medium you use).

Create a Ritual

So how do we do this? Just as you have a bedtime routine, you need to create an art routine. We like to call this a ritual. Don't be freaked out. A ritual is just a sequence of activities set to invoke a feeling or state of mind.

In order to move into alpha, you need to move into a place of "elevated emotion" (Joe Dispenza, *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself*). An elevated emotion is a positive emotion. This can be any emotion that makes you feel good. For younger generations, we call this a vibe.

As my yoga mentor, Chrissie Chung, says, "Find what feels delicious." This is where you get to play. Your creative process is yours and yours alone. There is "no right way" to shift into creation.

There is no right way to create. For me, I hate using an easel. I work best with my work on the floor in front of me. If I have to stand or sit in a chair, I cannot get into the flow. It makes me feel crazy. However, Alejandro has to use an easel and listen to music in order to create. That works for him. As the great Robin Williams says, "There are no rules. Just follow your heart."

Spend some time developing your ritual. Try things. Go for a walk, listen to music, watch TikTok, light a candle, cuddle the cat. ANYTHING as long as it makes you feel ooey gooey like hot chocolate chip cookie in your chest.

Create a Habit

Now, your ritual will not automatically stick. Your brain doesn't work like that. You've had how every many years you've been alive to create the rituals that you have in your brain. You also have how every many years you've been alive to create insecurities and beliefs that will cause you to procrastinate, avoid, and put off creating.

That's okay! That's what your ritual is for.

By following your ritual and creating an elevated emotion, you will be able to overcome procrastination and avoidance. Procrastination and avoidance come from fear (high beta brain waves). Elevated emotions move you down into alpha. Dispenza explains that if we want to overcome fear, we have to "change some aspect of our reality, we have to think, feel, and act in new ways; we have to "be" different in terms of our responses to experiences." This is what you are doing with your ritual.



DEVELOPING YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Create a Habit (Continued)

However, it will take consistency and time in order to physically rewire your brain to recognize the triggers of your ritual and automatically move into alpha. This is where most artists will give up. They say they can't feel inspired or the muse isn't working for them.

Well, you're gonna have to grab your inner muse, tie them down, and force them to work for you.

This comes from spending months practicing your ritual and moving into creation. As you are consistent, your ritual will become shorter and shorter. You won't have to rely on it near as much. Your brain will have created the physical neural pathways that automatically slide you into creation just as you have the neural pathway that automatically stops at red lights.

We mean it. It takes months. Give it three months before you even begin to just the efficacy of your ritual.

A great resource for creating a ritual is the book *The Art of Learning* by Josh Waitzkin. He really breaks down the ritual process and how to hone it for your own.

Make a Commitment

Now, in order to fully create a habit, you must involve others around you. For those who are single, it means communicating with your work or your family that during set hours, you are unavailable. No, you cannot cover a shift. No, mom, you can't talk on the phone. You are working. You must consider your work as seriously as a job. Schedule time just as you have a work schedule and stick to it. Let others know you're not available.

However, for my singles, do not fall into the pit of scheduling every hour you're not working or sleeping for creating. This will not only kill your soul, but you will create stale work that no one will connect to. You must also schedule time for family, friends, bingeing Netflix, or travel.

Your level of creation is equal to your level of inspiration.

Inspiration/In = Creation/Out.

Your inspiration is your fuel for creation. You, as the artist, are the channel. You must have time to find new books, tv shows, ideas, and art to excite you. Otherwise, you are just acting like a machine.

For those of us with families and significant others, involve them in the process. Let them know the importance of your commitment. It's okay that you are taking time for yourself. Your kids will live.



DEVELOPING YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Phase One

Make a Commitment (Continued)

It is actually beneficial for them to see you devoting yourself to something. It's beneficial for you to also be devoting yourself to something besides your kids. You are teaching them a healthy balance.

By involving your family (or those you live with), you are respecting their input and their emotions. In turn, they will be more likely to respect and protect your time to create. It is imperative that your family is your team, that they have your back as you begin to pursue art.

It will be so much easier for you as an artist to lay this foundation now, rather than having to face a breakdown in communication or your relationship as your business has grown.

Review

Let's review. For this action step, here are the following micro objectives:

Creative Process Objectives:

1. Find the flow and become familiar with what it feels like.
2. Create a ritual
3. Create a habit
4. Make a commitment

If you would like more on these topics, please find our further discussion of each step in our video and podcast below!

Notes:



DEVELOP YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

More resources at
www.AlejandroCastanon.com

Checklist

FIND THE FLOW

FIND THE FLOW

- LEARN TO IDENTIFY WHEN YOU ARE IN THE FLOW
- LEARN TO IDENTIFY WHEN YOU HAVE FALLEN OUT OF THE FLOW
- NOTE WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES HELP YOU STAY OR GET INTO A FLOW STATE

CREATE A RITUAL

CREATE A RITUAL

- IDENTIFY ACTIONS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL EXCITED
- CREATE A SERIES OF ACTIONS THAT CAUSE YOU TO RAISE YOUR MOOD
- PRACTICE YOUR SERIES OF ACTIONS BEFORE YOU CREATE

CREATE A HABIT

CREATE A HABIT

- PRACTICE YOUR RITUAL EACH TIME YOU BEGIN TO CREATE
- WHEN YOU FALL OUT OF THE FLOW, TAKE A BREAK AND USE YOUR RITUAL TO RETURN TO THE FLOW
- REPEAT PRACTICING GETTING INTO THE FLOW ALMOST DAILY FOR 3 MONTHS

MAKE A COMMITMENT

MAKE A COMMITMENT

- SIT DOWN AND TALK WITH ROOMMATES, FRIENDS, SPOUSES, AND CHILDREN ABOUT HOW IMPORTANT YOUR TIME TO CREATE IS
- ALONG WITH YOUR HOUSEMATES, CREATE A SCHEDULE TOGETHER ABOUT WHEN YOU WILL CREATE.
- DON'T FORGET TO SCHEDULE TIME WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY, DOWNTIME, AND FUN!

More resources at www.AlejandroCastanon.com



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Introduction



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Objective CREATE 100+ ORIGINAL
PIECES TO SELL

- CREATE 100 WORKS IN
VARIOUS SIZES
- DOCUMENT YOUR PROCESS
- DO NOT TRY TO SELL OR
POST TO SOCIAL MEDIA

More resources at www.AlejandroCastanon.com

Inventory Objective: Create 100+ Original Pieces to Sell

This is where your creative process is already going to come into play. It's time to create inventory. This means you are going to create 100+ pieces of work. Remember, you are starting a business. You have to have inventory to open a store. Having over one hundred pieces of work-ready when you open your art business will do many things for you:

- Allow you to spread your art into competitive spaces such as local government buildings, restaurants, vendors, etc.
- Have a show-ready inventory for art shows and local events
- Show a consistent style of art. This will allow clients who want commissions to feel more comfortable hiring you.
- Allow you to create a robust e-commerce inventory of prints, merchandise, and originals.

When you are creating inventory, it's important to remember that your customers are not going to all be able to afford or house your largest pieces. You must create art in a large variety of sizes. It can be tempting to only create large pieces as they sell for the most money. However, this will hurt you in two ways: 1) it will take you too long to create, store, and replace inventory when your pieces are all over 30X40, and 2) you will be losing customers who can afford and house smaller pieces of art.



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Introduction (Continued)

While you are creating your inventory, it will help you out immensely if you document as you create. This means taking process pictures, timelapse videos, videos of you talking about an art piece. You're not throwing up anything on social media yet, but after creating 100 pieces and having documentation for each piece, you will have a surplus of content for social media. This will give you both credibility and your customers will feel like they are getting to really know you.

The last bit of advice we have is: do not get to 3 or 4 pieces and decide you need to try to sell them. You are not to the point where you are publishing or selling your work. This is not the time to post to social media. It's not the time to be getting your art into the community.

Throughout your career, you need to maintain a fresh inventory. This means if you sell 3 or 4 paintings, you'll have to start all over at 0! You need to always have 100 on hand. Any you sell or give away must be replaced. Do yourself a favor. WAIT! The sales will come.

Inventory Objectives:

1. Create 100+ pieces of work in various sizes.
2. Document your process of creating each piece.
3. Do NOT try to sell your inventory before you've even opened.

We'll discuss each of these mini-objectives in further detail in the resources online.

Blog Post

Inventory Objective: Create 100+ Original Pieces to Sell

Now it's time to create inventory! Don't panic. This is where mastering your technique and developing your creative process will make your life infinitely easier. Once you have completed the first two action steps, you will have the mental and physical skills to create a lot of art without burning out or getting into a self-deprecating rut.

I will have to repeat myself several times for this post: Do not create with the intent of selling. This is something all artists fall into and Alejandro recently just found himself guilty of this. It's a very seductive idea. If you know what people around you want, why not create what they will buy?

The problem is you are playing a game against other artists and corporations. You will be creating art that others will also be creating. This leads to you getting lost in the mass market. The mass market is the largest section of customers and the product is created to maximize the number of people interested in the product. Geoffrey Moore refers to this segment of the market as the Early and Late Majority (see graphic on next page).



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Introduction (Continued)

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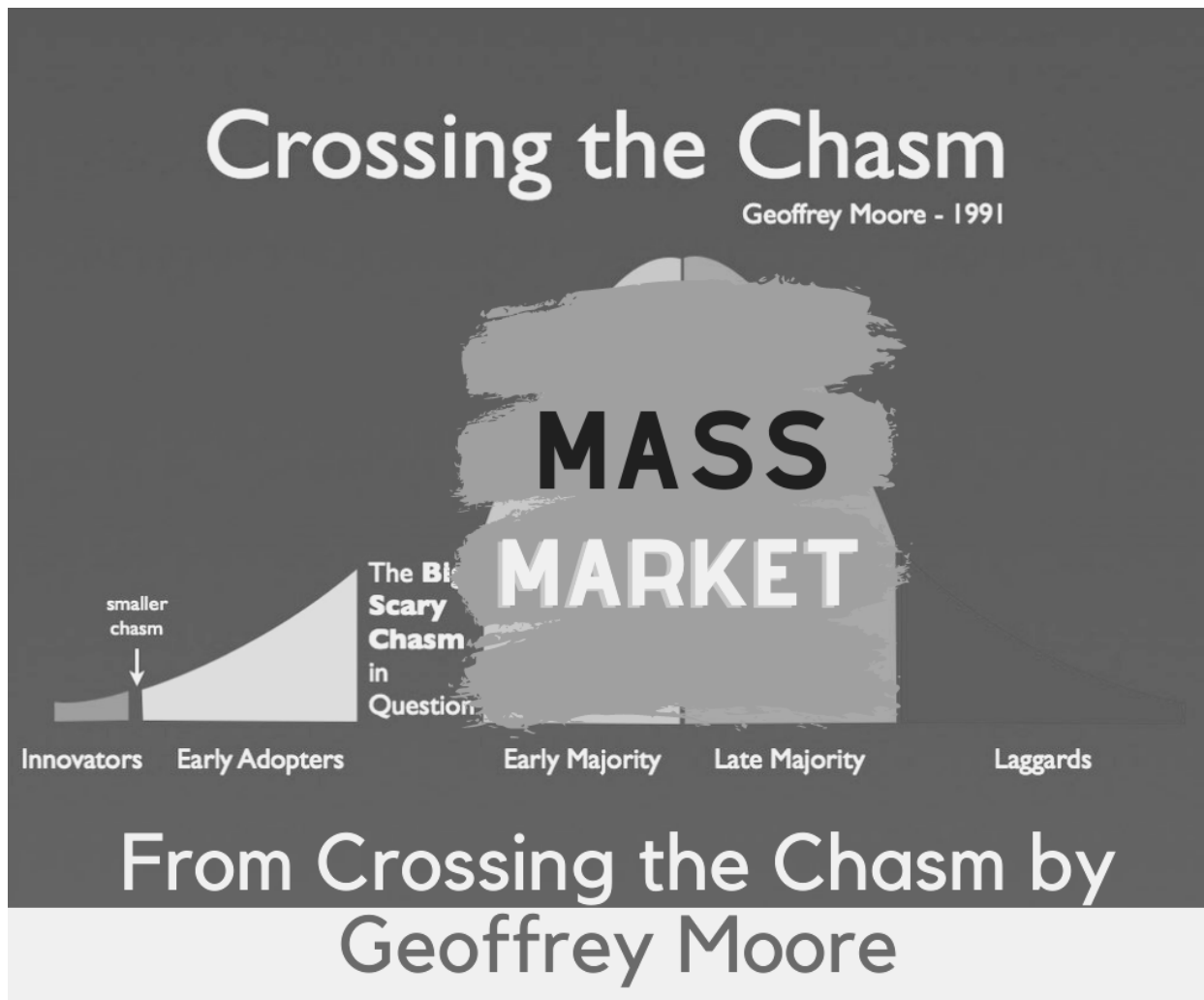
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CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Blog (Continued)



When you target the mass market, you must water down your art so you can maximize who wants it. In doing so, you lose your spark and become just a product. As a product, to the customer, your value is reduced to price. . If you create for mass audiences, you will be playing the lowest price game. This is a game, where the lowest price dominates, you cannot win. Either you will have to reduce your prices or you will not sell.

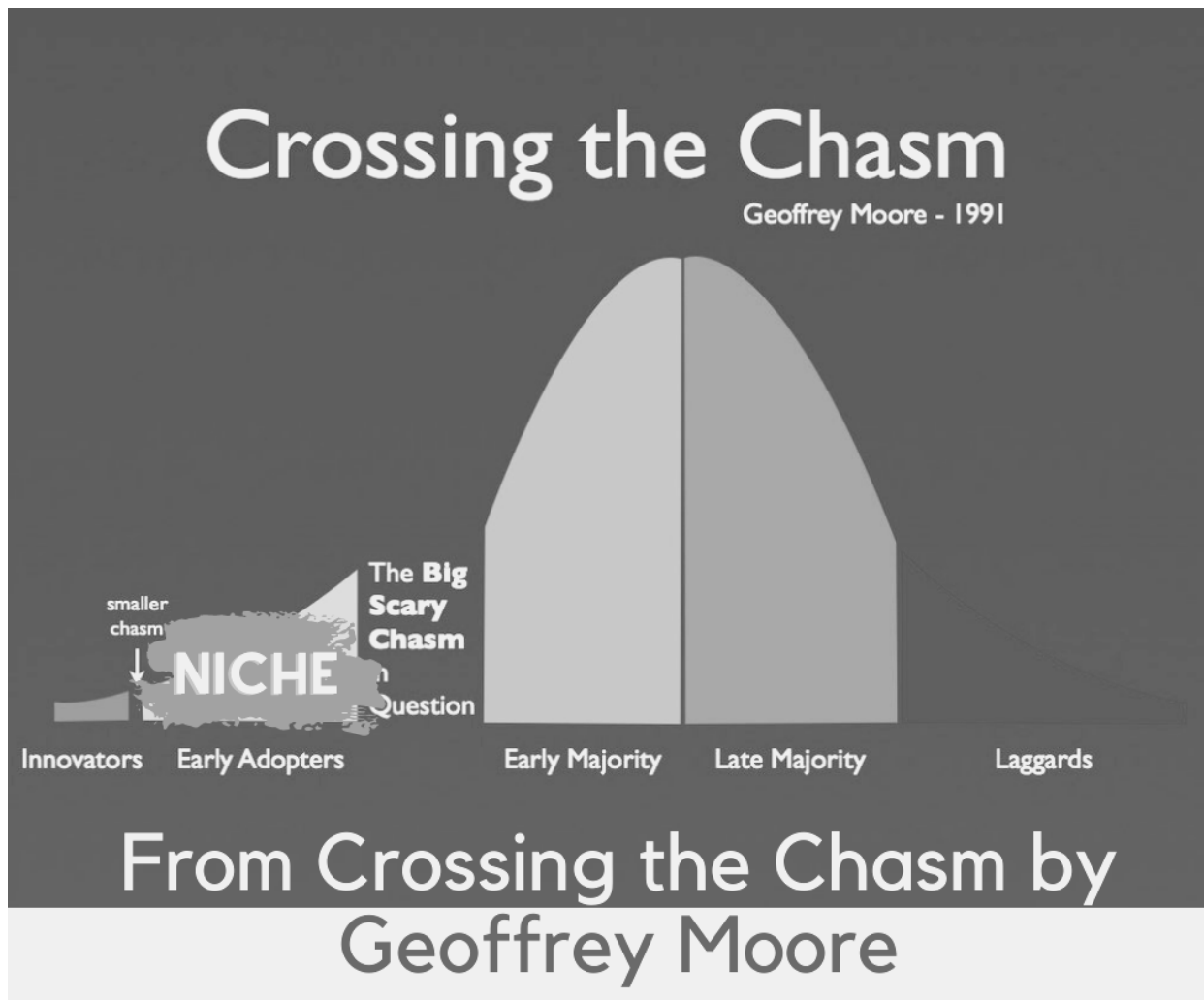
However, when you create what excites you when you create from your center, you are creating something that is non-replicable. When something is non-replicable, its value skyrockets. The scary thing for most artisans is that when you create non-replicable work, your audience moves from mass market to niche. A niche market is a subset of the mass market. This means your audience shrinks, but their interest in your work grows significantly.



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Blog (Continued)



You are not trying to cross the Big Scary Chasm. That's the corporations' mass marketing game. You are aiming for the Early Adopters. The Early Adopters, according to Geoffrey Moore, are the visionaries. This is your audience. Moore explains "Visionaries are not just looking for an improvement, but for a revolutionary breakthrough. Consequently, they are willing to take high risks trying something new, are the least price-sensitive of the adopter groups, and are highly demanding" (Crossing the Chasm).

Early Adopters are not interested in keeping up with trends nor what everyone else has. They are the trendsetters and purchase from a place of emotion. This makes them perfect art collectors. Just as Moore stated above, Early Adopters are looking for revolutionary works, they are willing to take risks on things that spark an emotional response, and are the least price-sensitive.

However, you can only attract these Early Adopters by creating your own unique message and work. They are always looking for something new. You don't need to compete with other artists.



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Blog (Continued)

These collectors always are looking for the next revolutionary idea. You do not need to find them. Just create. They will find you.

Create 100+ Pieces of Original Work

So, now that we know we are looking for Early Adopters, let's talk about how to actually build an inventory. You know how to create art and now let's talk about how to create products. Creating products means creating different varieties and options for your clients. Let's talk about the different kinds of products you can create from your 100 works:*

- Originals
- High-end Prints (Glicee canvas prints)
- Poster Prints
- Merchandise (stickers, t-shirts, mugs, decor, etc)

*Please note, if your medium is 3-D then your products will look a little different. But, keep reading, this will apply to you as well.

Within your niche, you will have collectors who vary in age, financial situations, living situations, and mentality. You will need to provide various tiers of entry for your customers. This means having products of various prices so more of your niche can purchase your art.

- High-end Collectors
 - Your high-end collectors will be the least price sensitive. They will be happy to purchase your originals at full price and commission their own original works.
- Mid-range Collectors
 - Your mid-range collectors will be willing to spend more, but may not be able to afford your biggest works. They will buy your smaller originals and your high-end reproductions. They may even request smaller commissions.
- Low-end Collectors
 - Your low-end collectors will most likely be your youngest collectors. However, this does not at all mean they are your least valuable collectors. They will purchase your poster prints and merchandise because they want to begin collecting your art. Alejandro and I have seen it time and time again that low-end collectors that are treated as valued clients eventually become high-end clients as they become older and more affluent.

Vary Your Sizes

It's very tempting to want to only create giant pieces with delicious prices. Those big checks can be alluring. However, remember, only your high-end collectors will be able to afford these pieces and it will take longer to find a client who both can afford and has the space to house your large work.



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Vary in Sizes (Continued)

In addition, it will take you much longer to create 100+ large pieces. It will also take you an enormous amount of time to replace them when they sell. Do yourself and your collectors a favor and vary your sizes.

For Alejandro, he most often sells 24" by 36" canvas originals. However, he also paints 4"X12" and 36"X48" works. This allows him to span his entire niche and provide art to all tiers.

Work in Series

Working in series has several benefits. A series has a theme for all of the pieces in the collection. The theme is replicated in different, but connected ways. This can be almost anything. Perhaps a landscape series that tells the tale of a country, an abstract series using specific colors or shapes, or a portrait series where each subject is showing the same emotion.

Not only are series great for collectors, as many collectors love to acquire a whole series, but it is wonderful for your artistic skills. When you create a series, it's impossible not to see the improvement from your first painting to the last.

Go with what excites you and inspires you. Do politics inspire you? Make a series. Does Game of Thrones excite you? Make a series. Do dogs excite you? Make a series. Does the color lavender excite you? Make a series.

Prints

I will give you one tidbit of advice from my own personal experience. If you want to create amazing prints, there are two main components to this: camera and size. Now, I have an amazing print that I got from an 8x10 Joker painting with a stellar camera, and an artist friend creates amazing prints from taking pictures of her art on her phone.

Two general rules of thumb:

- Use a DSLR camera
- So, you may not be able to afford a camera. We can't either! Look to your community for help. Partner with a local photographer or check out your local resources! Our library STEM lab provides the latest Canon camera free of charge with a library card.
- Create original works bigger than your print.
- This is an age-old trick that I learned studying comic design. When you create works bigger than their print, you gain quality. It smoothes lines and minimizes problem areas. This is how our friend gets away with using her phone! She paints large and prints small.



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Document Your Process

Now, this will be your saving grace when you begin to foster your community. As you create each work, spend time documenting the process of creating it. Photograph sketches, progress shots, and the final piece. Video yourself talking about the work before you paint, as you paint, and when you're finished.

Alejandro's rule is 5 pieces of content for every work. If you multiply that by 100+, that's over 500 raw pieces of content.

When you document your process, you are doing several things for yourself. One, you are creating a sense of trust with your collectors. They will trust the work you produce when they can see how it is made. Two, your collectors will be able to see your excitement as you talk about each piece. That will be what will draw them to purchase from you.

You are not posting your documentation yet. You are archiving it. Buy a hard drive, save it all. When it's time to build a website, create a social media presence, and send your portfolio to businesses and clients, you will have it all at your fingertips. This will save you so much time and money later on.

Do NOT Try to Sell or Post

Here we've come full circle. I warned you! Here I go again. You are not selling or posting any of your inventory yet. Your business is not yet open. That will come when you begin fostering your community.

I know, your friends, your spouse, your kids are telling you to put it online, to start showing. But, we promise, this will hurt you long term. Once you begin posting your art, you will be going to the next step before you are ready. You will have to deal with people commenting (and possibly not liking) your art, people asking you to sell before you've established pricing, and you will be more focused on gathering likes than creating.

This will hurt your inventory and your art. Protect your creativity. Protect your inventory. Do not release it yet. Imagine you are a clothes store. You are not letting people in to look at your new clothes before you get them in from the manufacturer.

So many artists ignore this advice and find themselves faltering and stagnating before they've even begun. We implore you. Wait. It will be worth it.



CREATE A 100+ PIECE INVENTORY

Phase One

Not Every Piece Will Work Out

One last tiny piece of advice. Even though you have mastered your technique and you have honed a creative process, not every piece will be sellable. You may not even finish every piece. It is more likely that before you finish your inventory that you will have created 150 works and have painted over or thrown out 50. That's more than okay.

As artists, we will always have garbage works as our minds try to attempt more difficult skills. It doesn't mean you're a failure, it means you're challenging yourself.

If you find yourself unable to finish a piece or throwing out more than 50% of your work, consider that you are either trying to attempt a skill you have not learned (Ahem, trying to replicate Rembrandt's style) or you are being too self-critical.

If you're trying a skill you have not learned, take a step back. It's most likely because you're trying to compete with other artists or be in a place of mastery (30-40 years of being an artist) too soon. You have to manage your expectations and give yourself a break. Go back to creating what makes you feel good.

If you're being too self-critical, get together with artists and non-artists to critique your art. No, not criticize, a critique. Critique means give feedback. Artists will be able to tell you where you're struggling and help you understand how to perfect what you're trying to do. Non-artists will be able to give you an overall perspective of the work, not a technical analysis of how well you executed it. This will help you better understand where your work stands and will give you the validation to keep creating.

Review

Let's review. For this action step, here are the following micro objectives:

Inventory Objectives:

1. Create 100+ pieces of work in various sizes.
2. Document your process of creating each piece.
3. Do NOT try to sell your inventory before you've even opened.

If you would like more on these topics, please find our further discussion of each step in our video and podcast online!

Checklist

CREATING YOUR INVENTORY

- CREATE 100+ PIECES OF ORIGINAL ART
 - CREATE IN VARIOUS SIZES
 - WORK IN SERIES
- DOCUMENT YOUR PROCESS
 - CREATE 5 PIECES OF CONTENT PER ORIGINAL WORK
 - PHOTOGRAPH EACH COMPLETED PIECE
 - USE A DSLR CAMERA
 - BORROW FROM PHOTOGRAPHER
 - CHECK YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY, SCHOOL, OR COMMUNITY CENTER
 - USE GOOD, MATTE LIGHTING
 - STORE ALL CONTENT AND PHOTOGRAPHS ON EXTERNAL HARDDRIVE AND ONLINE SERVER

REMEMBER!

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- DO NOT POST OR BEGIN SELLING UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED **YOUR ENTIRE** INVENTORY
- CREATE WORKS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL EXCITED, **NOT WHAT WILL SELL.**