

# **SPECIAL REPORT:**

## **Artist and the Business of Art Survey Results**

**April 2010**

**Tammy Vitale**

**[www.tammyvitale.com](http://www.tammyvitale.com)**

## Report: Artist and the Business of Art

This survey was conducted through Survey Monkey and was answered by 174 self-selected artists. The survey was available and mentioned multiple times through my blog and website. It was also posted regularly over 1.5 months on Facebook and Twitter. Respondents were encouraged to share with their artist friends.

If I were to do it again I would add some categories about the folks taking it so I would know the age group and gender I reached. I would also have a category that asked questions about time, and in fact may do another survey just to explore that subject. It seems we all have time constraints but I was very surprised to find that “not having enough art” was the 4<sup>th</sup> highest category in the 10<sup>th</sup> questions about what the responder needed “right now” and it seemed to be separate from the need for time – I am curious about that!

Numbers are numbers and there are limitations to a survey taken in this fashion. Still the trends that started at the beginning mostly held all the way through the survey so I feel comfortable with the results being reflective of the world of artists, including those who see no reason to sell art because being an artist doesn't require that. They are, of course, technically correct, and I will reveal my own bias by adding that I like to eat and I love to make art and I want to be able to follow my soul and passions while still taking care of my physical comfort needs. I am on a constant adventure to create a path that allows me to do that, and for those who wish to do the same, I invite you to join me!

I will present the numbers as they came to me and summarize the individual responses. The rest is up to you to use as you see fit (and, I ask, please give me credit when and if you use pieces of it in your own writing or work).

### What are the 3 biggest challenges to selling your art?

Can't find venues	17.2%	30
Don't know how to approach galleries or shops	36.2%	63
Don't know which fairs and festivals to sell at	21.8%	38
Need more information about setting up a booth or table to sell	9.8%	17
Don't like Marketing or selling my own art	35.6%	62
Am shy	20.1%	35
Don't know how to price my work	41.4%	72
Can't figure out how to do outreach to get people to come to show	19.0%	33
Don't believe my art work is good enough to get juried in shows	10.9%	19
Other (please specify)	39.1%	68
<i>answered question</i>		<b>174</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

“Other” broke out: time, economy, using internet, photos of work, public has not interest, requirements of running a small business, right kind and/or enough work, gallery costs and general fees, where to find venues, self-confidence, no mailing list, don’t know how to market, new to art business, people are cheap, can’t sell high-priced work.

### How do you define yourself as an artist?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I love making art and do it as a hobby	14.9%	26
I sell art part-time, price doesn't matter	5.2%	9
I sell art part-time and want to pay for my art supplies	17.2%	30
I sell art part-time, want to move to full time, income is important but I have other resources	33.3%	58
I want to sell art full time, income must support me	44.8%	78
Other (please specify)		33
<i>answered question</i>		<b>174</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

Here are the actual answers to "other." I am sharing them with you because I think they are interesting and give a good flavor for those who participated in the survey. The answers are copied and pasted directly from the survey:

- I sell art full time and want to pay for my materials
- I create and sell art as my primary income but want to grow, to travel and teach workshops.
- Full time artist producing a part time income these days
- I am a professional artist with a part time work who would like to make enough off of my art to quit my day job.
- am now looking for full economic return
- I create public art as well
- I am also a healer, but it's all artpreneur/healerpreneur, same stuff
- I sell art, price does matter (like size!), I don't HAVE to support myself, but I'd like to know if I could.
- I am just beginning to sell art part time
- But, I take chances by entering art in shows (CAG)
- I sell my art very part time, and that is ok for me
- Passionate
- Art is a part of what I do every day (teaching art, creating) even though I don't concentrate on selling it.
- I am selling "full time" but it is not supporting me.
- My talent is as a festival producer in which I bridge the arts and the sciences.
- I am a full-time photographer and artist.
- Professional artist sick of the art world and its blood suckers. (Note your survey has no check box for 'other' so I had to check another answer to record this!)
- Truly, I am just honored when someone wants to buy a piece that I have created
- Used to have a "business" but did not make a profit do not need the money, but did it for fun
- I love making art would love to sell more so I can make more
- So My choices are "I do it as a hobby" or everything else involves "I sell art". Having multiple income sources means, by definition, you are not dependent on commodifying your work or chasing a market. I make art because I am an artist, sales or not.
- I love making crafts, it is a hobby that sometimes pays for itself, but I would like to do it full time
- I love work and make any type of things and art with my hands
- I am a full-time artist.
- I would like to sell my art to further my instructions
- love doing it as hobby, would like to sell for income
- (I ticked wrong answer here as 'other' didn't have a box and questionnaire would not let me proceed without a ticked box!)
- I do a few different things, and would like art to play a fair part bringing income
- I am a full time artist and my income supports me.
- Art is not a commodity- but selling is always nice.
- This "other" has no check box and the system continued to throw me back here, and instructing me to answer. My answer is not listed, as we are full time artist. So I checked above, just to get out of this, but it is not my answer.  
We are full time artist. Art is our only source of income.
- Want to sell art to be able to quit my merchandising jobs and pay for fun and travel.
- Full time artist
- I work mostly full time but would like to be able to support myself

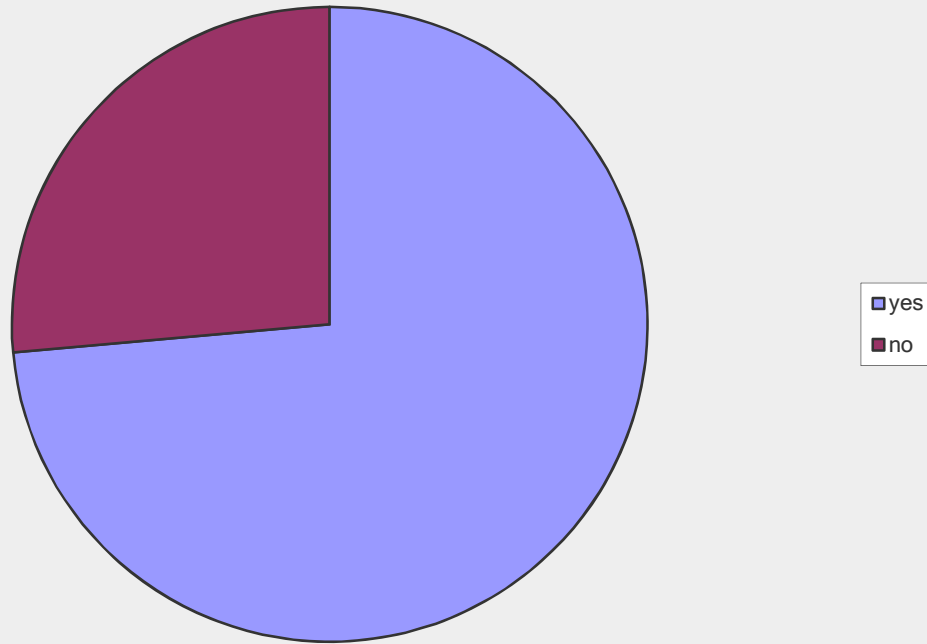
**Do you feel like you have a good support system for making and selling your art?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	20.1%	35
yes and I would like some place to meet other artists socially	13.2%	23
yes and I would like some place to meet other artists to discuss business challenges and opportunities	24.1%	42
yes but sometimes I feel overwhelmed	31.6%	55
yes but sometimes I need a cheerleader	16.1%	28
yes but sometimes I want help identifying bigger opportunities	28.7%	50
no	13.8%	24
Other (please specify)		13
<i>answered question</i>		<b>174</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

**When asked what you do, do you respond “I am an artist”?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	73.6%	128
no	26.4%	46
Other (please specify)		43
<i>answered question</i>		<b>174</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

When asked what you do, do you respond "I am an artist"?



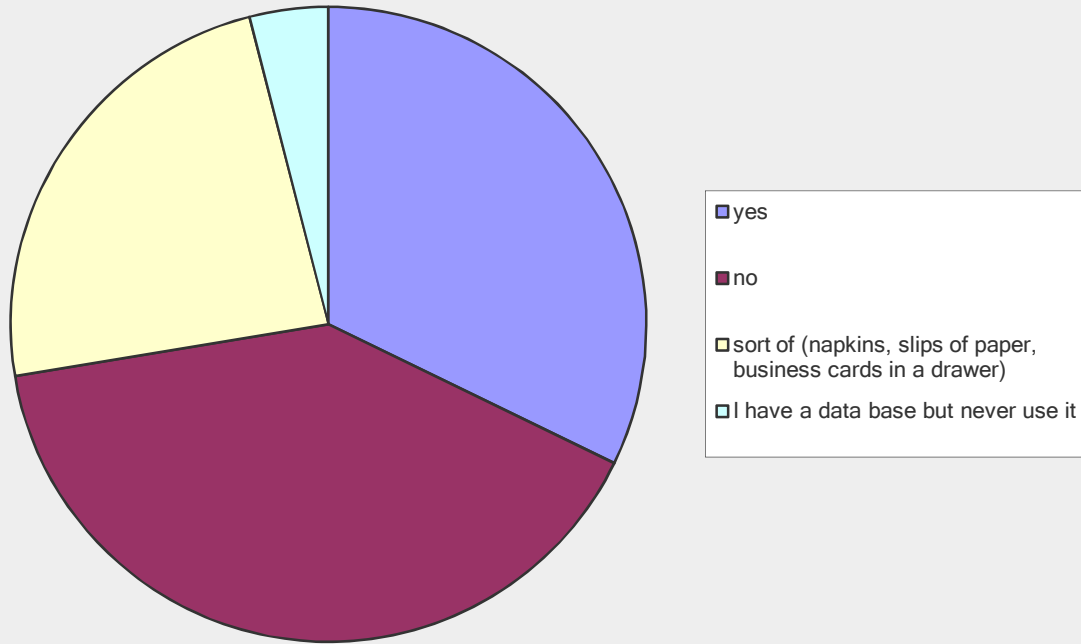
- I get specific because what I do is unique. It encourages further questions from the person I'm talking to.
- sometimes, depending upon the day
- I am a painter. I have problems with that word "artist."
- But it feels awkward
- But it feels awkward
- mostly
- I respond I am a graphic designer
- always
- No, I am a first grade teacher...bummer.
- I'm a sculptor
- I'm a website designer by day & an artist on the weekend & holidays
- I have a hard time getting it out :(
- It depends on the context -- if it's computing-related I don't, if it's art-related I do.
- Yes but I am still growing in my comfort level with this and it depends on who is asking
- I usually go into a long drawn out description of how shitty my 9-5 life is. and then I say I'm an artist
- Have a fulltime job as well.
- I make jewelry
- I say teacher even though I have both a BFA and B.ED
- I am a producer of arts integrated astronomy events.
- Artists are perceived lazy. I respond "I am a commercial photographer".
- Depends on the venue.
- along with art teacher & musician
- sometimes
- AND ALSO AN ART TEACHER
- of many things

- I say that I make leather goods and clothing
- Graphic Designer
- not yet
- I am an artist and a garbage woman
- I am an artisan. I make jewelry."
- I list the other things first, and then add "and I do my own work"...
- I usually say I'm a printmaker or a photographer.
- I take the combo approach - explain day job + artist situation
- And I'm also a health educator and a retired statistician.
- Took me a while to start saying it, though...
- Depends on the context- I have a day job that's unrelated to art.
- I still identify with my full time job, although I've been making art longer.
- Usually a tentative "kind of" as I dislike the stereotype
- Normally, I respond "...I am a starving artist..."
- but I don't feel I do enough work to legitimately call myself an artist
- Not sure that I meet the definition of 'artist'.
- Explain that I am beginning again and in very experimental stage.
- sometimes

### Do you have a database system for clients in place?

yes	32.2%	56
no	40.2%	70
sort of (napkins, slips of paper, business cards in a drawer)	23.6%	41
I have a data base but never use it	4.0%	7
Other (please specify)		19
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>174</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>0</b>

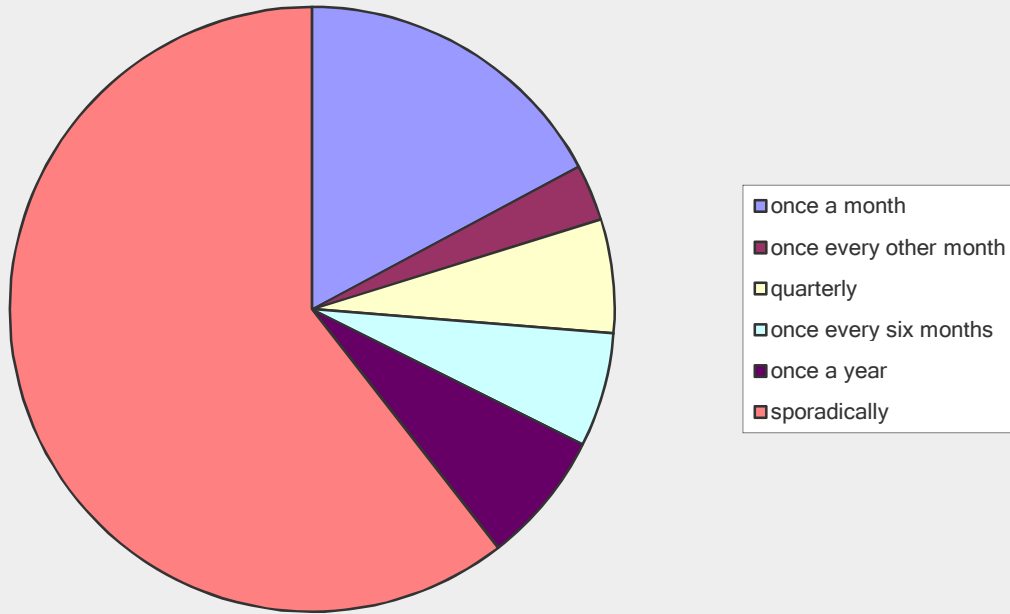
Do you have a database system for clients in place?



If you have a data base, how often do you contact your clients by email, newsletter, postcards, etc?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
once a month	17.2%	17
once every other month	3.0%	3
quarterly	6.1%	6
once every six months	6.1%	6
once a year	7.1%	7
sporadically	60.6%	60
Other (please specify)		44
<i>answered question</i>		<b>99</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>75</b>

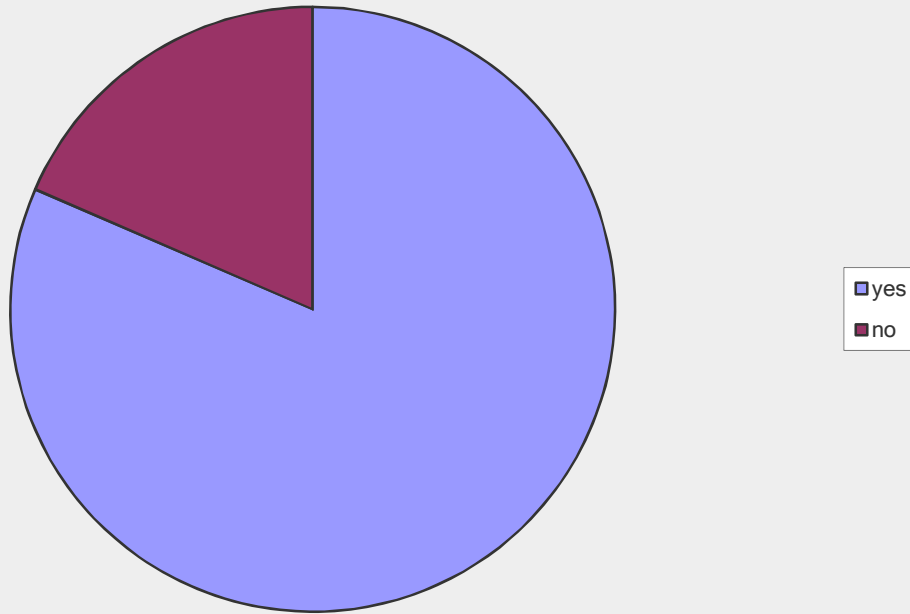
If you have a data base, how often do you contact your clients by email, newsletter, postcards, etc?



**Do you know the difference  
between an Artist's Statement and an Artist's Bio?**

yes	81.5%	137
no	18.5%	31
Other (please specify)		6
<i>answered question</i>		<b>168</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>6</b>

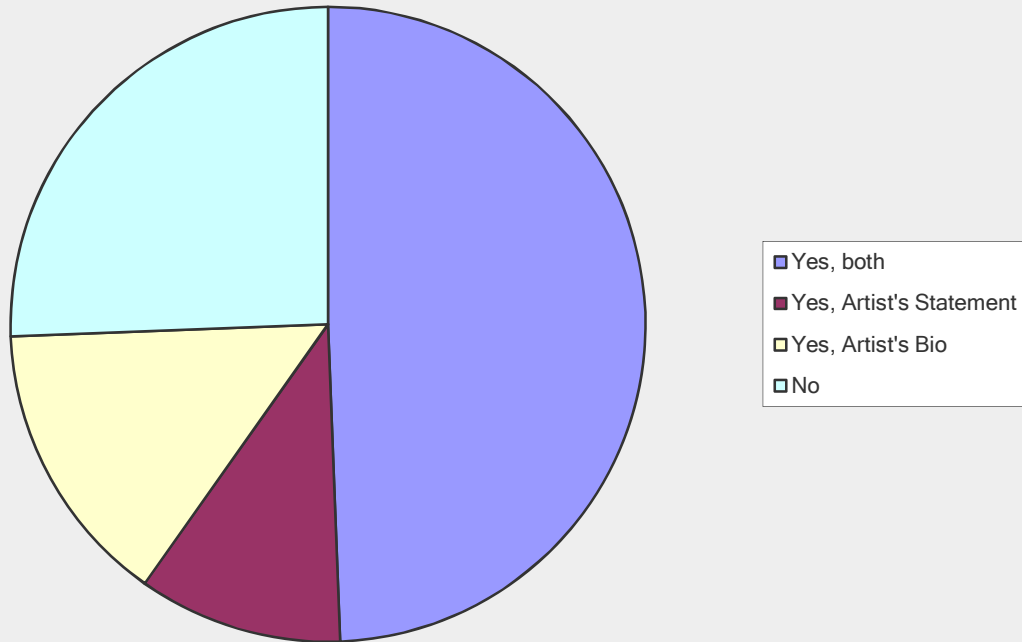
Do you know the difference between an Artist's Statement and an Artist's Bio?



Do you have an Artist's Statement and/or an Artist's Bio?

Yes, both	49.4%	81
Yes, Artist's Statement	10.4%	17
Yes, Artist's Bio	14.6%	24
No	25.6%	42
Other (please specify)		22
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>164</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>10</b>

### Do you have an Artist's Statement and/or an Artist's Bio?



Here are comments from "other."

- Currently working on both
- Yes, both, but in need of updating
- reworking my statement
- I have an "About Me" on my website, which I suppose is more of a bio than a statement.
- working on it.
- Kind of--I had to do a short profile for Etsy.
- On Etsy where I once listed my pieces two years ago.
- Artist's statement would apply to the specific work going into a show.
- I have them but I don't think they are very good
- Not sure if what I have is a bio or statement
- Artist statements are bulc\*\*p, bios are better.
- Not recent
- Still need artist's statement
- I think so
- working on writing those out
- I create one when asked but am uncomfortable with it... would like help from a knowledgeable person
- Not an up-to-date version!
- I have a couple of paragraph blurb of background but I don't think it qualifies as either.
- Neither is great. Need to update.
- Bio is poor
- Not up to date, but could be rewritten.
- But not happy with the artist statement

**Do you ever take time to celebrate your sales,  
new clients, new shops, gallery shows?**

yes - all the time, with my friends	23.8%	38
yes - with my family	28.1%	45
yes - by myself	15.0%	24
no	26.3%	42
no - I'm always on to what's next	16.3%	26
no - the sale or shop or client or gallery is enough	5.0%	8
Other (please specify)		18
<b>answered question</b>		<b>160</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>14</b>

Most folks recognize the need to celebrate their victories even if they don't do it as much as they think they should.

And then there this thought: *Celebrate? No ...it's a business ...you are supposed to sell. Do you get drunk and depressed when you don't sell and don't show? No...so the opposite sounds just as ridiculous [sic].*

Actually commenter, maybe not drunk but definitely have been known to have a glass or two of wine after a long, too quiet day! And yes, I DO celebrate - calls more of the same to me!

## **What are the top 3 things you need right now to help you better sell your art at the level you want to sell it?**

I grouped answers to this question as best I could and as indicated next to the numbers of respondents. Some folks gave three answers, some didn't, and some gave the same answer 3 times (i.e., "time, time, time") but I only counted it once.

- 82 marketing (pricing, agent, customers who are willing to buy, audience, who to sell to, commissions)
- 61 venues (more, different, better, solo)
- 49 time management (5); more time (44)
- 31 get organized (office, studio, database creation and maintenance)
- 29 motivation, confidence, belief in self and art
- 28 make more art
- 26 more funding (government); more resources, cheaper resources, lower fees for venues, smaller commissions taken by venues
- 19 networking, role models, community
- 11 internet: use it, create website
- 6 display
- 6 more energy
- 5 good photography of work
- 2 ability to travel to different places, ability to transport art
- 1 own gallery



**Artist and Art Business Coach Tammy Vitale** has been a full time artist for almost 10 years. She developed and ran ArtsAlive!, a non-profit venue to bring diverse artists and art to her area. She was also co-owner and curator for The Wylde Women’s Gallery whose goal was to make a place for artists who “didn’t fit.” Her art is represented by a growing number of shops and small galleries in the continental United States and is collected by national and international clients. She likes to color outside the lines, and believes with all her heart that everything is connected and anything is possible.

Tammy uses her BA in Business Administration, her MA in Story and her on-the-ground experiences as a practicing artist to create a delicious how-to mix to help Artists piece together the puzzle of perfect peeps, products, pricing and places to sell.

You can find Tammy hanging out over at her website, <http://TammyVitale.com>,

on **Facebook:** *Tammy Vitale*; and on **Twitter:** *@TammyVitale*