

Writing & Communicating About Art: A Tip Sheet

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Hi there! Writing and communicating about your art is a central task of promotions, one that is almost as important as creating the actual art! This guide won't capture *all* of the techniques or things to pay attention to as a writer, but it's a really good starting point, and enough to help you improve your focus and apply techniques.

Let's start with some basics that support your communication.


Sentence Structure

Subject and a predicate.

Subject and a predicate for your sentences.

A subject and a predicate create great sentences.

(See what's happening here?). Coordinating conjunctions can also be used to merge shorter sentences together, sometimes pairing like or unlike ideas together, or emphasizing cause and effect relationships.




Develop your
sentences to
support
meaning.

Clarity

Introducing a new art term? A location? Another person? Don't assume that your audience has an understanding of the importance or relevance of such things. Tag, hyperlink, explain, demonstrate.... do whatever it takes to not lose your reader. Your writing should draw the reader in closer, helping them to become knowledgeable about the subject matter.

Details

Who, how, what, where, when, and why. Don't forget to provide the basics. **Being cryptic isn't an engagement strategy.** If you do leave them wanting a little more, it should fit with the overall message, is done intentionally, and there's follow-up soon after.



materials, tags,
price, dimensions,
dates, times,
location....

Literary Elements

You may be familiar with “parts of a story” or “elements of a story” and [these literary elements](#) include just a few more for your knowledge and use. From blogs to websites to social media posts and *the continual narrative* of everything you do, you are telling a story.

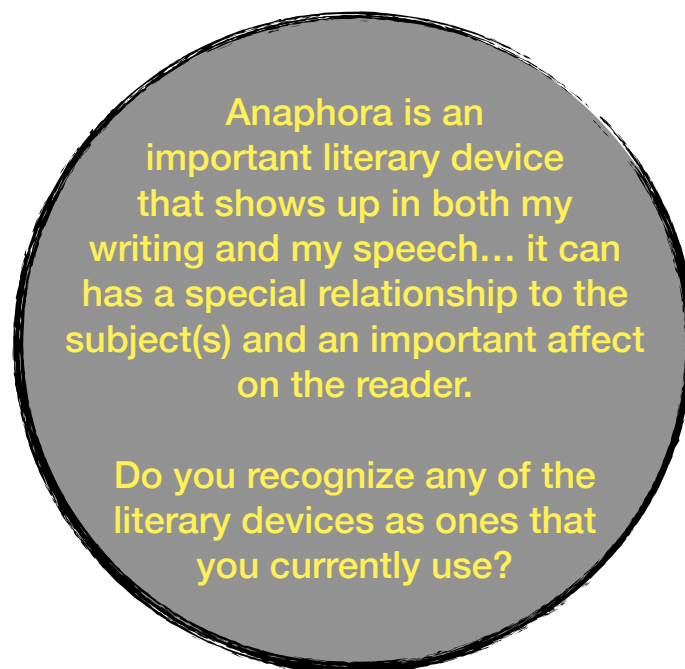


Literary Devices

Understanding art doesn't come **easy** to all. And not all art can be easy to write or talk about. One way to bring about an understanding of your art can be to leverage other, more familiar, related thoughts and ideas through the use of similes, metaphors, and analogies, just to name a few. Literary devices can be an important aspect of writing and talking about art. It offers a new perspective that one doesn't have to have academic experience to acquire. It elevates the art and brings about a sense of poetry and mood.

I like [this list of literary devices](#). Skim through them, read the examples, and notice what can be accomplished by the writer. You don't need to be an expert writer, nor should you try to use all of the literary devices listed. You may already be using some of them often and yielding great results in your writing.

Awareness of what shows up in your writing, and what options you have when writing, what will work specifically for your art and your message, are key.



Diction

Not only does word choice help you align ideas with what you are talking about, bringing your viewer in closer to meaning and to reality, but it also helps you achieve that “authenticity” in your voice. You should always write the way you speak, only a little better of course. There’s a specific set of words you might use, maybe even slang, or syntax (the way the parts of the sentence fit together). Finding your “voice” can mean many things. Diction, syntax, repetition, rhythm, rhyme, length, patterns, balance....all of which are all inherently present in your speaking voice and then make their way over to your ***authentic writer’s voice***.

Adjectives

They’re my favorite part of a sentence. I like them more than nouns and verbs. As artists and creatives, you can really thrive & shine here. Artists find ways to take the obvious and ordinary and make them profound and extraordinary. It’s what you are already doing everyday with materials and ideas in your work. Artists see things differently. Use that in your writing when and where it seems fitting. (Like, *everywhere*).

Just the other day, all the spray paint colors at the hardware store were described as “a *delicious* assortment of colors” and the field of painterly poppies in the painting were “*juicy*” and the shape of the shadow was “*disruptive*” as it obscured the view of the house.

Adjectives can mean and provide something visceral. Sometimes it’s literal and sometimes it’s figurative. Just as your work creates an actual image, what you might say about that image can then create a deeper meaning or means to connection than just the act of looking could provide. That being said...

Avoid “*nice*”

People pay for deeper, grander, and more concrete ideas.

Avoid “*I’m so excited*” in your announcements... or at least explain the meaning behind your grand excitement first. You write for the audience, not for yourself.



Grammar and Punctuation

Check these off your list every time you write:

- **No spelling or punctuation errors**

Read and re-read your posts before publishing. Run them through spellcheck or another processor to catch any errors before publish. The content might be great, but if there are spelling and punctuation errors the reader is distracted.

- **No spacing issues**

Double and triple spacing after sentence endings are “so 1990s.”

- **Artwork dimensions are clear; you are using the proper characters for inches vs.feet.**


- **Punctuation is within the quotation marks**

- **Pay attention to these commonly mis-used (and any misspelled) words:**
its, it’s, its’, and.... there, their, they’re

Here are some ways to elevate your writing:

Segmentation

Creating a visual or written story board that is intentionally organized into chapters, segments, or multiple parts is a great way to captivate an audience, break larger content into more manageable amounts of information, and offer a reader something cohesive to follow along with. A succession of posts or other writing that leads up to one thing, tells a story in parts, can build up interesting tensions. Longer written content like blogs or emails is a great ways to do this, as are smaller posts such as on social media.



The work you’ve come to make is not by accident. **It’s by design.** How you arrived to your *here* and *now* is interesting, with patterns that repeat. It’s the stuff that makes **great stories.**

Understanding Patterns

Check out this video on the [Story Arc](#)

Check out this video on [the patterns that happen in every story](#). Just as archetypes are patterns of behavior, stories also have patterns.

Visual Techniques:

Written text is an opportunity to create a **visual aesthetic** that is also attractive, interesting, and aligned with the subject.

- ✓ **Bold**
- ✓ **Colorize**
- ✓ *Italicize*
- ✓ CHANGÉ FONT TYPE (but don't get carried away)
- ✓ Add *****special***** characters, symbols, or **emojis** :)
- ✓ change **the size** of your font
- ✓ play with S P A C E... Things can be wa aa a a a yyyyyy
more exciting

Page Design and Text Design

Spacing between paragraphs or lines brings attention to a singular thought/idea/phrase/word, literally isolating its appearance and drawing attention to its meaning.

The organization of the text on the page can do the same. Here's an example of an **editorial design** (think of the way newspapers and magazine content is laid out), as well as line spacing and header effects. Your eye can jump around the page. That's a good thing.

Think of This: Structure Makes Things Interesting

You can write a section header or title like the one above, and then a paragraph like this one. Then, by separating your text and making a separated line after the paragraph, as you'll see below, you can ask your reader to isolate a thought or an idea, and the visual spacing that happens is the way to encourage this. Just watch at what the spacing does.

Wait for it.

And here we are, back again. This technique is really appealing to readers, especially those who scan the text for important words and phrases **like this one that's placed in bold text**. Color, bolding, spacing, header text, font size, and font changes can all offer some visual appeal to your text. Lengthy blocks of identically formatted text don't often get read on certain platforms or sources. Today's reader scans the page for the essentials!

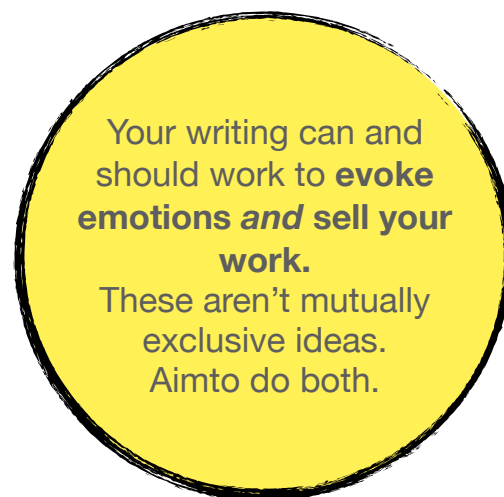
Content Tips for Posting and Promotions

Always ask: **What's the intent... what's the point of this writing?**

Start with a purpose. A singular (yes, just one!) reason for the specific piece of writing. My favorite way to do this is to say to yourself, “*with this promotion, I want people to:_____ or “I want to express_____” or “I want to accomplish_____”.*

Consider that every single post is a promotion, even the ones that seem to be more of a narrative or a story. I know many creatives dread this thought as we have been programmed to be “authentic” and to be “storytellers” and sales pitches with commanding language can feel too pushy or obtrusive, or less focused on the art and more on the sale. Here's the reality: the magic is in the way that you position your text, and those techniques you might use. You'll acquire some great ways to make a statement about a sale while also serving up some great content.

Here's an important idea that I want you to remember:

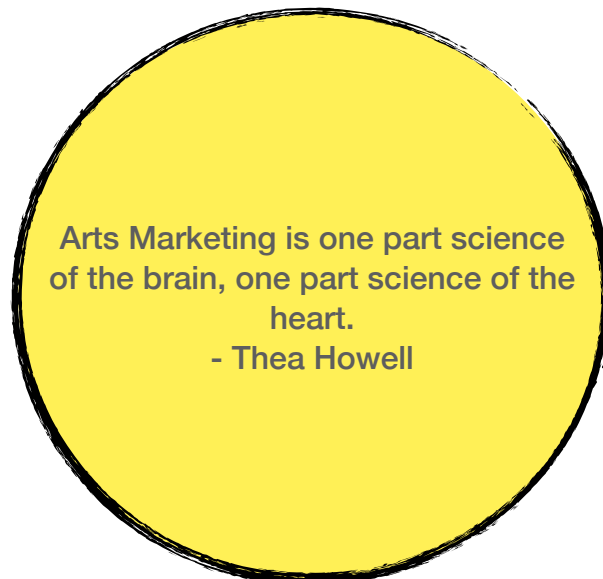


5 Ways to Position Your Writing for a Sale:

1. A sales based promotion. This obvious type of writing includes price, details, and a call to action to purchase. There's no mistaking that *something* is for sale and that there's a process to obtain or purchase it. Subtlety can have its time and place, however this is a direct (and that's not a bad word) way of expressing that an item or product is for sale. Be cautious of using the word "available" in place of "available for sale" or "available for purchase." This type of direct sales approach might often be the hardest one to make for some creators/artists. Sometime this is "inserted" into the larger context and sometimes it stands alone. **If a written text has *too much* story, there may not be enough direction or information calling the reader to make a purchase. If there's *too little* story or emotion, you may not evoke emotion about what you are trying to sell.** Knowing that there's an interplay between these two styles and how to make overall balance across your brand (or within a singular writing piece) is key.
2. Writing that works to make a sale can also leverage one product to talk about another. Using compare and contrast observations or sharing insider's/author's information is an interesting way to encourage readers to inquire more on their own, while also giving them the tools and information they'll need to read on. "This is unlike other works I create in that...." or "For the first time I'm creating this group of works related to...." Or whatever the case may be. **Quite often, artists may focus on writing announcements of a new work of art or a new collection, group, or use of materials but never explain why/what/how it is new or different. Drill into things a little more closely for people.**
3. Have a call to action: watch those verb commands do their thing when you say "click here" and "follow this link" and "explore more here" and "find out why" and "see more of this" and "explore more blue paintings here" and "be the first to know" and "find your favorite painting" in a post. **The more unique, but clear and telling your calls to action can be, the better chance you have of leading people to do the task described!** Maybe it's a price range you can state, rather than 1 specific painting at a time. IG is a great place to post multiple image in one post, therefore creating something *like a gallery within a gallery.*
4. Work to make it clear. Get creative and provide the less obvious but profound reasons your art is important and how it can serve the buyer. Are art buyers offered other ways to view the work in addition to the image you provided?

Virtual settings and A.I. where the buyers can view the work as installations (in settings) are great features that are important to today's consumer and the way they shop. Artists *also* have opportunities to explore aspects like shapes, colors, subjects, and textures with buyers. **Your audience is made up of multi-modal learners; some learn by hearing (auditory), some by seeing/reading (visual), and some by energy and movement (kinetics).** Would a video explanation help them more? Would the ability to upload it into their own space and move it around their room help them? Would multiple images help them? What about all of these, or at least more choices and opportunities to learn?

5. Work to sell it. Serve as the expert sales person who really exercises all available promotional tools and offers ways for buyers to learn about the product(s) and make educated choices. Sharing your color palette, organizing paintings that have similar shapes, offering size charts/guides, and price lists, etc., are all great ways for you to extend viewers the opportunity to understand and explore your work. Categorize your work for non-artists and artists alike. Is this work in a modern or classical style, mostly geometric, semi-abstract, or minimalistic, for example? These types of information labels are the language of gallerists who converse with potential buyers and clients. They can be as important as color and dimension and price. **Help them help you.** Think of all the tools an interior designer might use when decorating and designing your space; swatches, videos, mock-ups, samples, and detailed images are just some of the ways they may do this. Remember that there is a constant tension (and that's good) between what you intended for the work and the buyer's sensibilities, needs, education, and perspectives.



Ways to Hook the Reader:

1. Use tantalizing, thought-provoking, or an unusual opening remark. These words and phrases are literally called a “hook.”

(a post about new sofa sized paintings could say:)

What would your couch say about this one? OR Your couch will thank you.

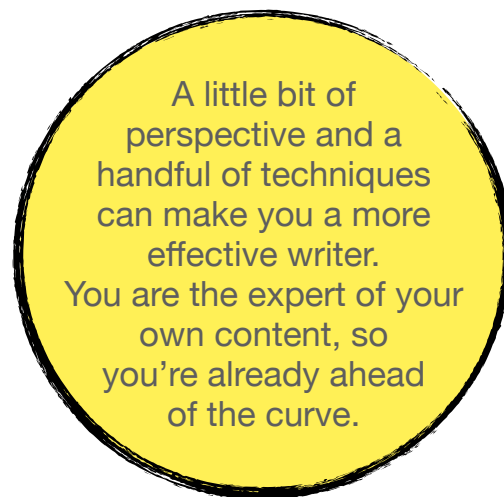
(a post about a new seascape painting could say)

I traveled to Turkey and brought back this color.

You’ll find your voice. You’re an interesting person with interesting thoughts to share and infinite and unique ways of expressing yourself. Don’t second guess yourself— say what you *really* want to say. Convey those emotions!

2. Pose a question. There are some questions that can be a bit over-used as a hook so make sure it’s different than what we usually see: “Get ready for...” “Would you like to...”
3. As previously mentioned, story boarding, and creating chapters or segments can work great on social media and blogs. Make sure readers newly subscribed to your blog or newsletter are “caught up” so they’re not left out of the running storyline. You can conclude posts or newsletters by either dropping some hints or being direct about what will come next, or even leaving a question unanswered. Which leads me to.....
4. Unanswered questions. Calls to action can be fulfilled by offering the reader/viewer a place to go or something to do that will answer an initial question you may pose, or a type of quest for more information. The questions can also be rhetorical. It’s a type of interaction, and like a type of conversation.
5. Upcoming reveals. Make sure it truly is something significant that you think your viewers are going to love and appreciate or be interested in, at the least. I’ve seen people work to build up announcements and the unveiling of information that is kind of *personal*, hugely significant *to them*, but... was it worthy to all? Was it worth the hype? Think critically about what your audience may want and need. Some *will* or *may* enjoy your personal happiness but for the most part they are ego-centered and, whether consciously or subconsciously are asking “*what’s in it for me?*” “*what about that is for me?*”

6. Scarcity. Most of your work may be one-of-a-kind. That's true for many artists. So, technically, many or *all* of your work has an inherent scarcity where it may never exist exactly like that again. However, there's an intricacy about it that's a bit deeper, and if you look a bit closer you might find something more significant than just "one of a kind." What is or could be really "one of a kind" about your work might be found in questions like: Is this the last time you'll paint in this size for a while? Is there a limited quantity to the pieces that have this aesthetic, color, or material? Will there only be 5 works of art as part of this series? Will the first 10 people to make contact with the artist have their first pick of 1 of these 10 pieces? Is this promotion only available for this week?



I hope you have enjoyed this instruction and that you find success with your writing!
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- Thea Fotiu Howell, The Artist's Concierge