NETWORKING:

network verb, gerund or present participle: networking
- connect as or operate with a network.
- link (machines, especially computers) to operate interactively.
- interact with other people to exchange information and develop contacts, especially to further one's career. “the skills of networking, bargaining, and negotiation”

What is networking?
Simply put, networking is the cultivation of relationships and supportive communities. It is critical to furthering your career by providing professional development but can also serve as a source of motivation and feedback. Connections equal opportunities.

Why network? What’s the purpose?
As a student, you are surrounded by supportive peers and faculty that keep you on track to success. It is important to develop this network, and networking skills, so that when you leave this physical community you have the contacts and know-how to broaden your community as a professional artist. Without networking you can become isolated, loose feedback and support, or miss professional opportunities.

What do I need to successfully network?
Listening might surprise you as one of the most important networking skills. Listening will help to develop connections that are deeper. Knowing more about someone will give you the information to ask better questions.

“How do you foster a real connection when you speak with someone -- whether it’s on Skype or on the phone or in-person? Personally, I think it boils down to these factors:

Ask insightful questions (to get the other person thinking). You can know a lot about a person by the quality of the questions he or she asks. Tony Robbins often shares that the quality of your questions correlates to the quality of your life.

Ask better questions, receive better answers. Peter Thiel challenges us to ask ourselves: “How do we accomplish our 10-year goals in six months?” By asking better questions when you’re speaking with someone, you not only put yourself in a category of someone that thinks differently, but you force the other person to think in a new way that helps him or her grow.

Pay attention (as if your life depended on it). This may come naturally for some people, or be extremely difficult for others. In our smartphone era, paying attention is a demanded “skill” many of us lack. How many times have you spoken with someone who is constantly fidgeting, looking around or interrupting your every sentence? By simplifying maintaining eye contact, listening attentively and responding with relevant questions, you’re separating yourself from the rest of the pack and are well on your way to fostering a genuine relationship.”


Strategy:
- Networking is a gradual process, don’t expect big steps to come immediately and congratulate yourself on little victories.
- Assess your current network and contacts – where are the gaps in your community in regards to career, financial and personal needs?
- Consider all levels of your art community: your peers, professors, the people working in the galleries you visit or _____________. These connections could be vital in 5 years as people enter new careers and levels of influence.
- Do you have desired connections or goals? Make new networks with organizations, trade shows, people and industries that share common themes or goals.
- Keep a list or excel spreadsheet of contacts - people that support you, mentor you, inspire you, important art professionals, gallery owners, etc. (remember to update this as you meet new people and get business cards!)
- the most important thing to remember is to show up!

Preparing for an in-person event:
1. Develop an elevator speech:
“Extract your story’s premise through selection, looking for an insight. Make it pithy. Eliminate extraneous material but retain the fabric of your personal and professional DNA. Also edit for repetitiveness. Write genuinely and specifically--your statement is about you, not suitable for anyone else. If your competition can insert her name into your statement

2. Bring business cards or postcards as a way for people to contact you.

3. Put yourself into the right mindset and try not to go into a event hungry, sick or overly tired.

**Okay, okay, I’m at an event or in a crowded room of people I want to network with. Now what?**

- Think about your body language! Even if you are nervous, fake it until you make it. A slight smile is a universal social cue that tells others you are approachable and friendly.
- Being alone is actually a benefit for networking.
- Bring a sketchbook – this gives you a great platform to take notes on the mechanics of the event. Take a
- What is your elevator pitch? Know this before you start! Once you break the ice, people will want to know more about you!
- How would describe yourself, your artwork and your aspirations in under a minute?
- You want to generate interest and a longer conversation, but keep it concise and professional.
- Always keep business cards or contact information on hand. Networking is all about meeting new people, but if you don’t maintain relationships then there is nothing to be gained from the experience.
- And always ask for someone else’s! You can’t expect them to put all the work into the relationship and reach out to you first.
- Let’s start talking! The low-down on small-talk. “How are you?” “What brought you here?” “What do you think of this artist/exhibit/event?” - be an active listener!

**Tips for introverts:**

- Identify your assets. Introverts tend to be fantastic listeners use this to your advantage.
- Identify your worries before networking so that you can better overcome them.

“I’m going to say something wrong or make a fool a fool of myself” Worry can be a friend, positively frame it. It is an ally, it reminds you to prepare and that something is important to you.

“I don’t feel prepared.” Review the strategies above and ask for assistance. Career services would be happy to help.

“My art is not good enough” Give them your best now, don’t worry about your best in the future. “Every artist at every stage has doubts before they share their work. Just begin. Just take the first step in the direction of what calls to you.

Everything flows from the action we take. One step today, another tomorrow.” Cat Bennett

Bennett, Cat. (2013) Making art a practice: 30 ways to paint a pipe [how to be the artist you are]. Scotland, UK. Findhorn Press.

“I don’t know anyone.” / “I don’t want to bother anyone” Realize that others share similar worries, once you identify and accept your worry you can use it as motivation.

- Plan breaks! Find time in between conversations, workshops or events for alone time. Talk short walk or find a quiet corner to recharge and reflect on conversations. Also a great time to add new business cards or contact information to your sketchbook or phone.
- Ask questions and listen. While networking may at first be awkward – such as introducing yourself and breaking the ice with new people – it is primarily about listening to others and building relationships. By asking questions, you not only find out more about the other person but show genuine interest, build trust and ultimately conserve your own energy. The pressure to talk about yourself is removed and you will likely hear some great stories, ideas and opinions.
- Realize that not every conversation is going to be lively or worth your time, and you don’t have to talk to everyone in a crowded room to feel successful. Use your energy purposefully, seek out and cultivate conversations in which you would feel comfortable enough to email afterwards.

Have fun. Networks are built and cultivated overtime - like dating.

**Resources and Sources:**

