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John F. Kennedy Center

BRAVE NEW WORLD
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR NOT-JUST-YET-PROFESSIONAL LITERARY
AND VISUAL ARTISTS"

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>> LISA DAMICO: Good afternoon. And welcome to "Brave New World, Questions and Answers for Not-Just-Yet-Professional Literary and Visual Artists". I'm Lisa Damico, your moderator and webinar organizer. Today's webinar is part of a monthly series that comes out of the office of VSA and accessibility at the John F. Kennedy center for the performing arts. This series addresses topics related to arts, disability and education.

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You have the ability to submit questions, which is especially encouraged in this webinar, using the chat pane located near the bottom of the control panel.

If you would prefer to say the question, instead of typing it, you can click on the "Raise your hand icon" on the control panel, and I will unmute your microphone. Your questions will come directly to me during the designated question/answer time at the end of the presentation. I will then relay them to our presenters.

I want to emphasize that following the presentation, I will send out a follow-up E-mail with a link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint, helpful handout that our presenters have prepared, as well as a copy of the transcript. This means you don't need to worry about frantically taking notes during the presentation. You can go back and watch the recording and go through the supplemental materials at your leisure.

If you are active in social media, I invite you to connect with us using the #VSA webinar, on Facebook at VSA international, twitter, VSAINTL, Instagram, also VSA international, and with that, I will turn it over to today's presenters, Melissa Haas and Christy Batta. And I think Melissa, or Missa is going to get us started today so I'm going to give you control, and you can give some tips to all of our writers out there.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Is it showing my screen?

>> LISA DAMICO: Yes.

>> MELISSA HAAS: All right. Hello, everyone. I'm Missa Haas. As Lisa said, we have Christine Batta, graphic artist with us today, too. And as Lisa said, our presentation is entitled "Brave New World." And what we mean by that, "New World," is not so much by technology, but the people who are creating communities on the internet using contemporary technology.

Never before have there been a number of opportunities for people to express themselves with such little censorship, and never before has an individual had so many resources so readily available to share their work with what is truly a tremendous amount of people.

Today we are focused on the people who are emerging authors and visual artists, which happens to be you guys. Christine, I believe that art, whether it is painting, writing or digital manipulation, is important to this emerging new world, this society that's growing through international connections. And it's also a new world where you have to be brave not just to exist in it, but to thrive in it.

All right. Christine and I, we really worked at finding the most important resources and Web sites to help you polish up your work to a professional level, and then how to navigate that using the realm of "What comes next."

I'm going to talk about writing for about 15 minutes, and then Christy is going to handle the visual arts portion of the presentation. I'm going to say a few things about working with a disability at the end of the program, but I want you to notice that a good half of our presentation is reserved for questions because we really want to answer things that you might have had a hard time finding answers to.

All right. Christy has suggested that if you are a visual artist, you use these next 15 minutes to do some informal sketching or some doodling, and I will give you a heads up when it's Christy's turn and it's time for the visual arts section of our presentation.

All righty. Authors. I read over the registration information and I saw that quite a few of you already have projects that are completed. Nonetheless, I do want to touch on a few things that are related directly to creating the writing, and then we'll move in to publishing and the typical production of a book. Of course, everything we do here today is geared towards making a memorable book that people will remember long after they have read it and closed the pages, or turned off their eReader.

Okay. First things. Critique groups. Critique groups are an old-school practice that most university writing programs are

based around. It's where you go test your writing. You write something, exchange it with another author, and critique each other.

Now, for online, these are three pretty reputable groups. They each have their own differences that are -- I noted them in the handout. It's best just to join one of them. And the way they work is you upload your work and then you have to critique, like, five other people, and then your work will get critiqued. It's a good system.

You should know that it isn't always a reciprocal system, meaning that you critique Matt's work, Matt might not necessarily be the one critiquing your work.

Let's see. Okay. So I think the most useful thing to kind of hone when you're working with a critique group, whether it's online or in the real world, is a sense of what criticism makes your story more meaningful. What increases its impact versus criticism that might be valid in the sense that yes, those elements can be changed, but they don't necessarily add to your story. Okay?

Different elements -- different genres have different critique elements. Compile a kind of checklist to what to critique for each different genre, and I highly suggest learning how to critique for genres you like to read in, and of course the genres you like to write in. It's a good book. It's listed in the handout.

This is one of those random tips that is incredibly useful but you don't hear a lot, and it is for time management while you're writing. A lot of times, writers will give themselves word count quotas, page count quotas, but that isn't valid for all stages of the writing process. Sometimes, when it's just exploratory writing, you have to get in touch with the feel of a certain idea or a character, or you need to do more research to find what those feelings are. It's not a good idea to use a word count or a page count. It's much more useful to schedule -- set a timer for 25 to 45 minutes and then just hold yourself accountable to showing up for X number of those sessions a week.

All right. Flash fiction. That is where you write naked. I just wanted to bring it up. It's very short writing. It's short. It's 100 to 1,000 words. The reason I bring it up is because if you signed up for this workshop today, you should be able to write something within this week and submit it to a professional flash fiction market. I've included three in your handout. They do pay, and it's good for practicing submitting work professionally, finding guidelines, tailoring your E-mails to those guidelines and becoming familiar with how different systems pay different publications. Sometimes flash fiction is discredited. People think that it has grown out of this

tradition of twitter, or kind of our ADD culture where we have so many things to grab our attention. However, here is an example of flash fiction by Ernest Hemingway. For sale:baby shoes, never worn. It's an entire story, and so flash fiction is not necessarily a cheap form. It's as valid as the other form and as challenging. Also, I like to think that that baby has really big feet.

All right. Important choices in publishing. So this is where people -- these are the kind of catch and grab, sticky situations that people have. Once you feel that you've polished a manuscript, but now you want to get it out to different markets, publishers, whatever. And we're going to address all of those different venues in the next few minutes.

This is about what happens between a finished manuscript and a fairly engrossed reader. What goes on in between those two things, which is a lot of things that you don't care about. And this process sort of looks like this. Are any of you at this point right now? It's this. It's a hodgepodge of questions that seem to have no time line, exactly, or next to each other, but there still is, there's a very thin way of going about it that it's worth putting your time in to, and there's some --

Okay. So the first question to ask yourself is, am I going to publish traditionally or am I going to self-publish? Traditional publishing is where you would write query letters, you send out to small literary publications that are very difficult to get in to. Nonetheless, wonderful writing, but with self-publishing, the literary journals are kind of going by the wayside. And then after you would have a portfolio work built up, you contact an agent. You say hey, I've been working on this book in addition to this short story, and then the agent will try to get you a contract with a publishing house.

The current state of traditional publishing right now is that unless you are a Nobel prize winner, or you had your own Christmas special last year or you are well-known in another field, your name is known, then you will most likely be doing self-publishing.

So, you are going to be required to move on your own. A marketer and a paralegal, and a presenter, and look at your next point being selling hundreds to thousands of books, you know, really trying to sell 1,000. Keeping in mind, one sale at a time, so it's just one of those things.

Okay. So most of this information requires extended explanation. That is in the handout. So this is the section where most of the handout applies.

We are going to build a road map, which is kind of the least you need to know so that your manuscript from finished work to actual -- someone actually reading it.

The next thing you're going to do after you work your way up to a level is apply for a copyright. This is one of the places where most people get stuck, and it isn't finding where to copyright, people are very good at doing that. It's filling out the very long form, what to do in certain fields, what problems could arise if I don't fill in this correctly. In our handout, we have the U.S. copyright site, but also a link that details how to fill out the field, so hopefully that will help.

Another question I'm asked a lot regarding copyright is if I have a series, an idea for a series or a title, can I copyright those? No, you can't. You have to have the work.

Finally, there's this idea that's been out in the field for decades, poor man's copyright, and that's where you would mail yourself a copy of something you want copyrighted through certified mail, and then never open it, and this just doesn't exist. You have to do the governmental copyright.

\$35 is for the E copy right. You fill out the whole form online. I recommend it. 55 is if you do the printed form, it's form TX, also in your handout.

Okay. So you've applied for your copyright, and it takes about six weeks, six to eight weeks, to get your approved copyright. However, that doesn't mean you have to take a time to time or anything. You can keep going while you wait for your copyright approval. You want to choose a self-publishing company right now. And the big three are createspace, Lulu and smashwords. Createspace is the one associated with Amazon, and it's nice because you have your book put out in the -- in Amazon's own collection of titles.

I will say for a black and white book, a novel, there isn't a huge difference between these three companies. There is a big difference if you're doing mainly colored illustrations, like children's picture books, between Lulu and createspace. Createspace is much more economical than Lulu, so it's just something worth noting.

So once you have decided on what company you're going to use, you are going to decide on something kind of -- something that doesn't seem important, but it actually is, and that is your book size. Does anyone know why it is important to know your trim size? Well, one of the important reasons is because that indicates whether or not a library or an academic institution will keep your work or even purchase it.

Most people gravitate towards industry standard sizes, and I've listed those on the handout. However, I just want you to know that you will be given many more sizes than industry standard sizes, but go with one of the sizes in the handout so it will ensure that your work will be able to be shelved or purchased by a larger institution.

Okay. The next thing while you are at your self-publishing site, and maybe you've spent two or three days figuring out the price, is this calculator, it tells you exactly how much the book will be, given the dimensions, approximate number of pages.

The reason I included this was to show you that even if you order -- well, even if you ordered one of these, your price per book would probably go up maybe about five and a quarter. It isn't a huge amount. And none of the companies require you to buy a minimum quantity of books. Okay? So that's just always useful to know, and this will be your lower price point, the least you can sell your book for, and then you compare it to retail standards for your genre or comparable book.

Okay. So at this point, we are going to stop. And why is this a big deal, stop, stop, stop?

You are going to save your work and you're not going to do anything else of a self publishing site once you know your trim size and an approximate price. Why? Because if you just keep on filling out these -- the fields that you know to fill out with a self publishing company, you will run into the situation where you have somehow agreed to have one of the companies ISDN numbers on your book, and that is a terrible idea. It's as good of an idea as seeing your face tattooed.

So we -- after you save your work and you are going to go to your local ISBN agency, which is different for each country.

ISBN stands for International Standard Book Number. It's this big, long enough above the bar code. Not this one, but this one. There are ISDN 9s and ISBN 13s. They're essentially the same thing. The 13 is kind of an expansion of the ISBN 9.

Okay. So think of it as your book Social Security number, where people -- if they want to find your book, they will look for that. In addition to the title, but that's something more specific.

Okay. So why pay for something that you can get for free? Meaning an ISBN number. First of all, if one company changes -- because there's such competition right now for people who publish books with X company. If you make a -- it could make a very big difference if you switch annually from one company to another, and if you have your own ISBN, acquired independently, that's not going to be an issue for you. You can just send for it. It's no big deal. I've done it. It's great.

Secondly, you will be the one listed in the publication hard books E print as the publisher and this will give you the leverage to negotiate the price for bulk orders. Say if, like, a book club wants to adopt your book, there will be, like, best price reductions with a self publishing company. They are not going to try to negotiate with a smaller group and that can be a

factor as to whether the group accepts your book or decides to go with another one.

So it's worthwhile to purchase your own ISBN.

And you will be dealing with -- they sell in blocks of 10. You can purchase 1, 10 or 100. I suggest you purchase the 10 because for one title, here we have "Gone With the Wind," each version you brought paperback or hardback, each requires a different ISBN. You might have heard in the past that Ebook doesn't require ISBN, but they're moving towards requiring it now, so buy the ten and not only will you probably use a couple, like, right off the bat, it will encourage you to write more books.

Okay. So when you are at bar codes, when you're ready to check out, they say here, also purchase this very official-looking barcode, and you used to have to do that, but not anymore. That is something now you can get for free. It's worth getting for free. So purchase the ISBN, but no need to purchase bar code.

Okay. Next big step is creating the physical book.

Okay. So we've done all this stuff. We've done the copyright, we've done the publishing company, made preliminary required choices, saved our work, left the publishing site, found an ISBN agency and gotten our numbers. We've probably downloaded them, but now we're going to go back to the self-publishing site to format our book. Formatting is, of course, having the layout done correctly so the print or the ePrint comes out looking the way you want it on your final product. And it is a period during which you will appear like this to others for an extended period of time. So please tell your family and friends. It isn't all that bad because people think once you're to the upload stage, oh, I'm home free. If you're working on your book full-time a couple weeks, if you are working on your book part-time, up to three months, this is especially important, of course, if your book is a seasonal book.

All of the sites have directions for how to format your book. You can pay someone to format your book. I don't necessarily recommend that because most people I've dealt with when they've done that have gotten their manuscripts back and they're about 70% of how they wanted it to look so then they end up learning how to format anyways, and the problems always seem very, very specific, to your own computer in that a virus scan deleted some file that you never knew existed, and now you have to kind of trace down the files through Microsoft and do all of those sorts of things. That's why it's a big problem. And just know that that is what it feels like. It feels like these random problems

are, it's not you, everyone's going through this, but you should know about it.

Okay. So hopefully, once you are done formatting, you will return to human form. Not everyone makes it back, I don't think, but most of you will.

And the very -- pretty much the last step is to proof your book. You'll get an E-mail saying you can eProof your book. Physically -- always physically proof it. Order copies if you are planning on selling or giving out bound copies. eProofs are good and they will go -- you can approve it the same day for an eBook, but just don't use an eProof for a pound paper book. Not a good idea.

All righty. So we have covered all of this stuff, from finishing a piece of work that should get to a reader to copyrighting, using a company, making decisions, getting ISBN numbers, formatting, approving a book, and that is what I'll go into getting a physical book to a reader. And now that you are once again a human being, you can safely go back to society and promote the book to all types of media, especially social media.

Now, Christy is going to talk about that in her presentation later. Please listen to her ideas. A lot of them can be applied to writing, and I'm going to hand the presentation over to Christy. Thank you so much.

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: Am I good?

>> LISA DAMICO: You're good. We can see your screen.

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: All right.

>> LISA DAMICO: Perfect.

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: All right. Yeah, so this is the visual portion, so if you're one of our visual artists, please come back from your doodle, and I'm going to start my part of the presentation. So if you're making visual work and you're looking to up your game, and look toward becoming a pro at what you do, the question you need to start with is to ask yourself, am I ready to share my work with others? And I'm going to tell you that the answer should be yes. This is what my whole presentation is about, and I want to tell you about how sharing your work with others, and promoting yourself is going to help you get better at what you do, learn from others, sell your work and also make connections with people that you can potentially collaborate with in the future. And if you're freelancing, whether it be as a photographer, a designer or a visual artist, I think that when you're starting out, you're probably going to spend roughly 50/50 split of your time making work and then promoting that work. That's just a general, you know, goal to shoot for. And what that means is that you -- what you put in to promoting your work is just as important as what you put in to making the work, and I think that a lot of us like to think

of artists as, you know, the Michelangelo who is alone in the studio creating brilliant work, and, you know, inspired, and, you know, that imagery of Michelangelo working in that exact, precise detail uninterrupted. But that's just not the reality for where we are now. And actually, I'm collaborating with other teamwork and the kind of community building that it takes to promote artwork is actually really fun, and I think it's better than that.

And so you need to promote your work in public in some context. Doing so online is a great place to get started.

Sorry about that. All right. So your Web presence has value. When you have a Web site, this makes you more credible because people can find you online and they also can keep track of you. So you have this home base where people can check in with you if they're just wondering what are they up to, they can always find you. And the style of your Web site really isn't as important as just doing it. So you really don't want to get hung up in the details of what your Web site looks like. You want to just go for it. So here are some examples of some platforms that you can use. So Behance is a portfolio site where you can upload images and it's going to organize it all for you and control the layout and everything. And what's nice about this is it creates a social network where you can "like" other people's pictures and they can "like" yours and it's really valuable place to start. And I really don't think there's anything wrong with starting with putting your work here.

Another option -- oh, okay. Sorry. Another option is Carbonmade, and this is a templated site where you have a little more control over the design, so if you know HTML or CSS, you can use that to control the colors and some of the layout and the fonts. So this is a bit of a step up from Behance, but it's still very manageable and really not that hard to get started and to hit the ground running.

Then the next step up, I would say, is a fully custom Web site design for your artwork. And I really don't recommend starting here. It's a really big time and money investment, and I don't -- it's not necessarily worth it. Unless you're a Web designer, I don't think that you need a custom Web design. Maybe it's something that you work towards, but by using some of the other platforms, you will learn what you really want to get out of a custom Web site.

But most of all, it's important to have your artwork online where it's searchable, and also to have an easy way for people to find your contact information. So that's going to be allowing people to E-mail you, and also links to your social media, which I'm going to talk about soon.

All right. So you have your works online, and now part of being a pro and having your work online is understanding how to protect your images. And you are a pro by doing this because you are ensuring that you're the person that's making money off of your images, and not someone else. So this takes some work, but you have some good options for doing this. So for visual work, the copyright is in place once you make the work. So under U.S. copyright law, you don't actually have to do anything specific in order to ensure that copyright, but what the work goes into is defending that copyright and finding out if there are places that it's being misused.

TinEye is a great resource. It's called a reverse image search. And what you can do is upload an image file that's -- of your work, and it will crawl the internet and give you results that show where that image is being displayed, and then you can find out if someone's doing anything shady. And then move from there. So this is something you actually want to do regularly in order to protect your work, and protect your income.

So if you -- now that you know that you have the copy right ownership of your work, there's some things you can do to defend that copyright. There's something called a legal term, I guess, initiating a takedown, and there's information in the handout about how to do this, and also a template for a letter for a takedown request. But if you find someone who's improperly using your images, under the digital millennium copyright act, you can write them and legally demand that they take it down. And that's something really good to know that if you get in a situation like this, you have options that you can actually do yourself, which I put that in the handout.

You can also register your copyright for additional protection. Things like getting compensation from someone who has used your image improperly. That's what you're going to get out of registering the copy right with copyright.gov, and that information is also in the handout.

So it's important to acknowledge that posting your work online is going to be risky and you're always going to be working out a balance for yourself. That's a balance of reaching out and expanding your network, and, you know, navigating the risks that come with that. So every time you go out to share, there's going to be a risk that you have to acknowledge, and you make the decisions along the way of what you feel is best for you. But the number one rule that I've learned from other artists, talking to other visual artists that know about this is that the only way to prevent your work from being stolen online is don't put it online. So that's a good starting point. You do have some options to protect your

images. I'm going to identify, you know, the plusses and minuses of each of these. So a water mark is when you can put your text or your logo on top of your image, and then whenever someone uses that image, they're going to see your name. There are crafty people who can remove this with photo shop. So know that if you are kind of unhappy with the option of water marks because you don't want to put text on top of your painting, that's okay. It might not be the best protection for your image.

Number two, I've identified that you can disable the right click function on your Web site. I have information in the handout about how to do this with java script, but this means that people can't download your images.

Then, the minuses that they can still take a screen shot of your image and they can also use their own code to override yours and download them anyway and then the other down side is that when you disable the right click function, people can't pin your images to pinterest and I don't know about you but pinterest is very important to me as a visual artist and I definitely get bummed out when I can't pin someone's images to pinterest. I've networked professionally using pinterest. I've recently contacted a photographer that I've found on pinterest. So on one hand, you're able to keep you from downloading your images, but on the other hand you're preventing people from sharing them and you kind of have to decide which is more important to you.

Number three is a pretty good approach, which is posting low resolution versions of your images. And this means that if someone's stealing your images and trying to put them on products and sell them without your permission, they're going to end up with crappy products because they're going to be pixelated and they didn't get a good image from you so that's something I would definitely recommend doing. And then always display the copyright language on your Web site. So this would be language you put in the footer, and that just shows people that you mean business.

I wanted to mention that if you're working with clients in a kind of individual relationship, you want the copyright ownership of your work to be clearly defined in the contract. I say this because it can help you get out of some sticky situations, which might harm your business in the long run. I work at SW Creatives. It's a graphic design firm, and we outline in our contracts that SW Creatives owns all the images shared in the whole design process, so if there's an image -- a design concept that we shared that wasn't actually used for the final product, we still retain that ownership so that we can use that, you know, parts of that for future projects if it's

appropriate. And one time we had a client ask, you know, oh, you showed us this other poster. We really liked it for this other thing we're doing, you know, can you just send it over? We know you already made it, and because we had identified that in our contract, we didn't have to send over those images for free. So you might want to check out some of the links I have in the handout that have to do with establishing contracts that are creative businesses, or, you know, if you are able to meet with a business lawyer. But having those things identified in writing is really going to help protect your income in the long run.

All right. So the authors can return. I'm going to talk about social media and why it's important to promoting your creative work. So some of you might already be on social media and some of you may not be on social media. Maybe you've tried it and didn't like it, but this part of the presentation really has something for everyone. I go into detail about how you can use the social media for promoting your creative work and yourself.

So social media is really powerful because it can help you open up, let people relate to you, create a connection with followers, create a, you know, enduring following over time, and you can learn from other people, understand, you know, how they do things, you know, if they have more experience than you, and also, just keep people interested. So I have some basics in the handout about how to start a social media presence -- start your social media accounts if you have never used social media at all. Those are pretty helpful. And also, I have a link to a great article that I referenced before with my clients, and it's just about how you can do social media in 15 minutes a day. If that's all you have, you can still effectively make the connections and do the networking that you need to do in that time.

So I'm going to start with talking about Instagram. I think Instagram is a really great place to begin if you don't have any active social media accounts. And if you already have active social media accounts, I'm going to try to convince you to join Instagram as well. Instagram is really powerful because it has a very intimate network of very passionate people. The hashtags make it really easy for you to have a broad reach so that if people are just looking at #design, #lettering, hastag, you know, any specific thing that you're doing, you're going to get a really wide reach of people finding you. And it's -- I find it to be very simple because you just need to open up, and that's going to allow you to have, you know, like an easy range of options for Instagram posts, so you can show people what you're up to, show people what inspires you, and also show

people your works in progress. If you're having trouble coming, you know, producing photos that you think, you know, like if you're having trouble producing photos that you like, I would recommend just really studying some images on Instagram that you think look great, and try to copy them. Just look at how they're cropped. Look at the angle at which the photo was taken, and look at the coloring, and kind of how the filters were applied. And that's how I've been learning to get Instagram photos that I like is by studying other people's.

Andrea Pippins is an illustrator and designer that I follow and she does a great job of using Instagram. Here's some examples that I'm talking about. She's sharing things in her home, what inspires her, what gets her excited, and then you get, you know, excited with her, too, and you feel like you're a part of her life and really understanding her point of view. And I connected really strongly with her work by following her Instagram.

Another thing that she does on Instagram is she started this we doodle challenge earlier this year, and it's 21 days where she gives you a prompt each day, and everyone shares their doodle. So I participated in the doodle challenge, and what was really valuable for me here was being asked to put things online that were not finished. They're maybe a little ugly, maybe I didn't like them all, but I put them online anyway, and I, you know, made some really genuine connections with other Instagrammers through the we doodle hashtag. I connected with Andrea Pippins herself and she was commenting on my pictures, so you really have the opportunity to learn some new things and find some new people you wouldn't have found otherwise by putting yourself out there. And I should mention that Missa and I met through an online visual challenge. It was the pen pal painting exchange, which is put on by the Brooklyn art Library. Actually, registration is open now, so you can join it, too, this year, but we each made a painting and submitted them, and ours were paired. That's how we met, was by doing something seemingly silly, and now we are friends, we are pen pals, and collaborating on this webinar. So it really is a good example of how you kind of never know exactly what's going to happen, so why not try?

I think that twitter is a good second social media account to start. If you're just starting out and I think that twitter is a little more challenging sometimes because you do have the character limit. You only can write 140 characters, so you have to be very focused and to get your message across in that amount of time. But twitter is very valuable when it comes to links. You should know that Instagram doesn't let you post links with the photos. But twitter, you can post links to your heart's

content. So if you have things happening online, like articles being written about you or especially events, somewhere where you're going to be and your work's going to be there, you want to post those things on twitter. It's much easier for people to access your links on twitter, and also linking to your account or any kind of eCommerce presence you might have is going to be easier on twitter. I also want to mention that twitter is really great for finding local people and, like, understanding the presence of your local community online. In Silver Spring, we are actually very active on twitter and once you kind of start seeing all the people that post regularly with twitter -- I mean with Silver Spring-related hashtags, you can kind of see how people are all promoting each other, and once you get in on that, you can help promote other people, and then they promote you, and just kind of network locally, and I would really recommend investigating that in twitter. I have an example here of Mitch Goldstein, a graphic designer I follow, and I think he does a great job of using twitter to promote himself because he really kind of shows you his personality and tells you things that he's thinking about, so he becomes very relatable and very memorable, and also very shareable. So a lot of the things that he tweets are fun things that you want to kind of put on your own twitter feed. So then he's expanding his reach because people want to share the things that he's saying.

I want to emphasize that one of the things you can do to hurt your social media presence is go real crazy and join too many social media networks at once. So I've focused on Instagram and twitter. I think that starting with one or two is 100% fair, and you should really learn to master those before you move on to anything else. One of the worst things is if someone finds you on their social media of choice and you don't post there, your account is dead. It's not going to reflect well, so really just start small and grow as you're able.

And one note on Facebook. Facebook is harder to expand to a larger audience. The hashtags don't work as well and they're not as powerful there, so you're mostly posting to your existing audience, and you could really just get away with posting there once a week if you really want to start a Facebook page. But I just wanted to make that note. Yes. But really, the social media is about connecting with other people and opening yourself up so that they can learn about your story, why you make the work, and really form a lasting bond with you.

And one of the reasons that bravery is part of the title of our webinar is because this stuff is hard! It might be painful, and, like, really difficult. But this is how you get your work out there to grow and become the artist that you're going to be. And really, it honestly might not get less painful, but it's

something that you're going to, you know, really benefit from, and it's okay to be vulnerable, and there's a lot of people out here to help you do that. One great resource is this book "Show Your Work," by Austin Kleon. I really enjoyed it. My big take-away from this book is that it doesn't have to be perfect to share it. And what that means is you don't -- you don't know what connection people might make with what you have to share, and what it could lead to. So really just find a way to push yourself to put it out there.

But all in all, I wanted to share that there is always going to be some work to do beyond the actual visual work. The work isn't actually done once you've finished the piece of art. Then you have to go out and show it to people and share it and talk about it, but I think that's kind of great, and there's the part of the work that you do on your own, and then there's another part of the work that you get to do with the whole rest of the world.

And yeah, that's my presentation. I'm going to hand it back to Lisa to finish us off.

>> LISA DAMICO: All right. Missa, am I going back to your PowerPoint? Am I going back to your PowerPoint, Missa?

>> MELISSA HAAS: Yes.

>> LISA DAMICO: Okay. Oh, I think you're on mute, Missa. Okay. You're back.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Can you hear me now?

>> LISA DAMICO: Yes.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Okay. Thank you. Finally, I just want to acknowledge that this presentation is for people who are chronically ill or disabled, and I myself have a ton of health problems, mainly cystic fibrosis, but I also have complications from that, including a brain lesion, and just completely random stuff. So when I'm sick, I like to think of it as being "Under the weather," and just realize that you're going to have these periods.

I wanted to talk about a few tips for when you are under the weather, how to still use your life to the best extent that you can.

Okay. So the first thing I would advise you to do is when you are sick, adopt the mindset, or if you've had surgery or you're out of real life for a couple weeks, adopt the mindset of well, the least I can do, if I can only make a call or if I can only E-mail someone, if I can only edit a paragraph, if I can only recall where I was in that project yesterday, these are all things to do. And they will make it so much easier when you get back as you're getting better, getting back into your projects.

>> LISA DAMICO: Missa, can I interrupt you for a second? You've got great pictures, especially the cat ones, that I want

to make sure everyone can appreciate to their fullest. Would you mind clicking on the full screen?

>> MELISSA HAAS: Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah. Yeah, that should do it.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Okay. There we are. Sorry!

>> LISA DAMICO: No, no problem.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Okay. The second thing I encourage everyone to do, whether you're ill or disabled or completely fine, is to focus on your progress. Every night I write down three things that I did. Sometimes it's only one or two, but it is easy when you are grounded or you are -- you kind of have this enforced rest period from your health to think about how much life you're missing out on. Oh, only if I was well, I could be up doing this and this and this, but that -- just focus on your progress. It would be the same element that you would be observing if you were a hundred percent well. Review weekly what you've done, quarterly, annually, and you will always come away realizing that you've accomplished more than what it feels like. So that is my second tip. And we're going to wrap things up now. We just wanted to just say how much art is an adventure that never ends. It's a really important part of life, period, to living a full and bountiful life. Jack Kerouac has this great quote. Be in love with your life. Every minute of it. I love that. But it's painfully optimistic. So I like to amend it and say, be aware in your life. Every minute of it. Because every human experience is worth observing. It's just constantly worth chronicling, examining, and art gives us that venue to be able to do that.

We want to leave you with the thought that time spent making art is never, ever wasted because it's a fine use of life.

All right. Thank you. We are going to do questions now, and wrap it up.

>> LISA DAMICO: Great. I'm going to take the screen back. My go to webinar is fighting me.

And to all of our participants, feel free to type in your questions, and I will share them with Christy and Missa. Whoops. Go to webinar is fighting back.

So our first question comes from Honey. When facing creative blocks, any tips to get out of the funk?

>> CHRISTINE BATTI: I could start with this. Yeah. I usually look on pinterest if I'm really stuck just to remind myself of ideas that I might have had in the past that I had logged there. So sometimes I'll scan through that. Also, keeping a sketch book is really helpful so that I can look back and see things that I might have just doodled, or a thought that I had written down previously. And then I can sort of use something there as a starting point, just like any little thing

to, you know, start scratching at it and get back in to the brain storming.

>> LISA DAMICO: Thank you, Christy.

>> MELISSA HAAS: I would agree with that. I like to use a prompt source. I just find a prompt to write in a different style, and it keeps list and I try to update them every Friday. It doesn't happen every Friday, but I have these lists over the years and I just grab something off of that and work with it for half an hour, 25 minutes.

>> LISA DAMICO: Christy this might be outside of the realm of your experience, but we have a question from Gary. Any suggestions in presenting a portfolio to a gallery?

>> CHRISTINE BATTÀ: Yeah, that's an interesting question. I have -- I could ask around the people that I know that have experience with galleries. It really has to -- it probably depends on the gallery, and probably depends on the people who are looking at the work. So one thought that I could give, if you try to find anyone that you can talk to there to sort of get an idea of how they do things.

>> LISA DAMICO: Okay. This one goes perhaps back into the realm of your expertise. How do you transform followers -- I'm assuming on social media -- into customers? That was from Wendy.

>> CHRISTINE BATTÀ: That's a really good question. One -- I mean, one piece of advice regarding this is to make sure that you get a good balance of linking to places where they can purchase your work, and posts that are about yourself, and they're not about purchasing your work. So one way to drive people away is if you only link to your FC page. People will get disinterested really quickly.

I find that if I'm purchasing things from a social media lead, which I do, it's got a story behind it. It's like I just made this because, or this new product is in my shop because. I have a friend that makes candles, and she always posts about the season and inspiration behind her candles, and that always gets me really excited, and I just want to see what's on there. So I think it's a matter of building a whole story of why you're making the work, and having new things for people to regularly look at.

>> LISA DAMICO: I would also add, from my experience as a visual artist, and my work with the social media here at VSA, that I think the big thing is E-mail marketing, and it's capturing the information from those people that are your followers. So I think getting the E-mail addresses so then you know maybe they know about you on Instagram, but they -- Instagram, but they don't know about you on twitter or your portfolio so then you can use that contact information to really

share everything that you're doing and, you know, after seeing your work a couple times, they're probably more likely to become a customer.

So we have a little spirit booster. From Dee Rene. Just wanted to share a little spirit booster I have for those down days and creative slumps. For example, I just came off a very disappointing and financially heavy festival showing. I have a map of the states and every time I make an online sale, I place a sticker in that spot on the map. Those little dots of color bring me some cheer on days when I'm feeling isolated or disconnected. My art does touch people.

Any other questions? For Christy or Missa?

Well, we have some positive feedback that's already coming in. Jean says I was watching on behalf of my daughter who is mostly non-verbal. You both did an incredible job and I learned many things I'm going to use myself.

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: Great.

>> LISA DAMICO: Missa, our next question is directed at you. This comes from Aaron. Do you have any tips when organizing research when writing?

>> MELISSA HAAS: Do you prefer to do things manually or do you do things computer-wise, mostly?

>> LISA DAMICO: Digitally.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Okay. Honestly, I E-mail files. I upload stuff in the cloud and then I can't access it when I'm in the hospital, using a different computer. I've always just, if I'm interested in something, I just keep a big, long E-mail of the links that relate to a project or a subject.

>> LISA DAMICO: Our next question comes from Susan. Do you have any experience with crowd funding projects?

>> MELISSA HAAS: Not personally, only participant. Is there a specific question on that?

>> LISA DAMICO: Maybe, Susan, you could give us an idea of if you're leaning more towards visual arts, writing a book. While we let Susan respond, we have a question that comes from Wendy. And this is a little bit more technical and perhaps on the business side, but are there networks to share artwork that you would like to donate to charity and what are tax strategies appropriate for charity or donation?

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: That's a good question. I don't know the answer to that since I do the graphic design. I don't make the personal work that I would be donating to charity. It's something I can look in to.

>> LISA DAMICO: That would be good. We could follow up on that. Susan has come back and says I'm a writer. I've heard that there might be a way to get people involved and spread the word. And of course help fund the project.

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: Yeah, I mean, I have -- do you have any thoughts, Missa? Because I have a few thoughts.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Usually to crowd fund, I feel like you have to have a significant work out there, develop a database and spent a couple years developing this audience, and, you know, suggest a project appropriate for crowd funding.

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: Yeah, I mean, Indigogirl, and there's another one that's called crowd -- but Indigo Girl is a good one if you are not sure how much money you're going to raise because you are going to get whatever donations people contribute, whereas the kick starter is where you have to hit the minimum amount, or else you get nothing. So if you don't have confidence that you're going to hit your minimum, Indigo Girl is a good resource to get at least some of the money. The other thing I would mention is managing your rewards. So I've heard a lot about people who get really bogged down by their rewards, but they have promised from a crowd sourcing campaign. So really, like look at what you can realistically accomplish, and enlist people, your friends and family that can kind of commit to helping you fulfill that so that you don't get stuck with, you know, a situation where you've received this money, but now you're not able to do the thing until you've completed this kind of impossible task of fulfilling the rewards.

>> LISA DAMICO: Definitely a good thing to think about. One of our participants suggested go fund me as another site.

And another question for you, Christy. This one comes from Erin. How do you get illustration and design work in front of people who commission or buy artwork for existing publications? Anything one should not do?

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: Hmm. Yeah, that's another question that I'm not sure about. I know a lot of smaller publications use stock imagery now and you can actually contribute your work to a stock photography Web site. And actually, that is kind of a good place to get started because then you can log who's downloading your images and paying for them, and that could be something that you could use to make the case for your work, like this image is really popular. I know so because people are downloading it. But that could be a place to start.

>> LISA DAMICO: Etsy might be a good place, too, when I think of, you know, everyone who searches for things on Etsy. I think that's one possibility.

All right. I'm going to take one more question. And then we are over. So we'll wrap it up. This one comes from Susan. She says thank you. How big of a following do you aim for, for starters? Say an E-mail list of really interested people. Or if we spread that over, you know, perhaps to social media, you

know, what would you -- at what point would you feel like you've arrived in terms of followers?

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: I think it's not as much followers as it is engagement. So you can use the analytics on twitter, or if you use a social media tool like hoot suite to manage your social media accounts, then you can see how people are responding. And so you could have a smaller following that is just so gung ho, you know, you can't even compare it to a massive following that just kind of I mean is not engaged. So I wouldn't really say there's a number. It's really tracking and making sure that people are interacting with your posts in some way.

>> LISA DAMICO: Great. Well, thank you both so much. I think everyone's gotten helpful tips out of this, learned some new information. They'll have the handouts to refer to to really go into more detail. So I want to thank everyone for attending today. And I'm going to ask you to stay on for just a few minutes more. I've got a survey that I definitely read through all of the answers, and then share the feedback with our presenters so that we can provide the best webinars for you all.

And with that, I would like to thank you both, Christy and Missa, and thank you, everyone, for joining us. If you've got questions or comments, feel free to reach out to me at lvdamico@kennedy-center.org so thank you. Have a good rest of your Tuesday.

>> CHRISTINE BATTA: Thanks.

>> MELISSA HAAS: Thank you!

>> LISA DAMICO: Bye!

[Webinar concluded].