

Ten Reasons for the Emerging Artist to Join a Local Art Group

By **Moshe Mikanovsky** on 10/7/2010 8:38:38 AM

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In the past year, I have joined two local artists groups. Both are located in the city where I live, Toronto, and both have small membership fee and no jury process to join in. The first (the Israeli Artists Group of Toronto) is specific to my background and culture and the second (the Artists' Network, Riverdale, Toronto) is more geared towards helping member artists in the marketing of their art.

I have seen many benefits for myself, and for the other members of these groups, in joining and becoming members. Many of the advantages require the member's participation and being a social-animal. In my case – schmoozing, not being shy about introducing myself, telling the other members what I do, take an interest in what they do, try to help, and more. To me it really works and it will continue working and growing.

So, I wanted to summarize and share with you 10 of the reasons why you should join a local art group. Here I am trying to talk to artists like me – either emerging, or “stragglings”. Although I hate the word “stragglings”, I am sure you all know what I mean. We try hard, we try our best, but we still need that day job to keep going. So, with these benefits, and many other things we do, one day we will make it and not be stragglings any longer!

OK, here we go, the 10 reasons to join a local art group for the emerging and stragglings artist:

1. **Socialize** – get out of your lonely studio. I have heard it a lot from other members how being an artist can be a lonely thing, being “stuck” in the studio for many hours, not working in an office environment with other people and water-fountain small talk opportunities. The local groups will usually have socializing meetings where you can meet other artists and just get out there.
2. **Learn** – see what other people are doing and learn from them. The variety of artists and experiences can really make for an excellent place to learn from other artists – talk with them about the way they tackle the business side of being an artist, find who is giving workshops and attend them, or in many cases, come to a group meeting where one of the artists is presenting their art and techniques.
3. **Share your knowledge** – teach other people from your knowledge. If you can learn from others, than there must be something you can teach from your experience. What about art making techniques, marketing ideas, utilizing technology or art shows experience?
4. **Network** – meet people who know other people, in order to enlarge your network. Networking cannot be underestimated. Getting to the right people, such as gallery owners, curators, collectors or licensors, can be done through a network of friends with similar goals.

And although it might seem that the other artists are your competition, the truth is that many are more than willing to share and connect you to the right people.

5. **Opportunities** – One of the end results of growing networking is the opportunities that emerge from many unexpected places. There are many opportunities to be taken, you just have to identify them and make yourself ready for them to call you. You can find new opportunities for business, commissions, art shows, exposure and much more.
6. **Participate in art shows** – many of the local art groups organize group shows and, in some cases, they are not juried. This is an excellent way to start exposing yourself and your art and to start building your resume. The juried art shows are even more important, as their quality is often much higher. Getting to know where the art shows are, what their requirements are and who might participate in them are all integral parts of the local group activities.
7. **Volunteer** – give your time and efforts for the benefit of you and others. You will gain respect of your fellow artists and they will be willing to help you in return.
8. **Practice** – with the many activities that happen throughout the year at the group and volunteering opportunities, you will have the valuable opportunity to practice. Participate in arranging shows, see what happens behind the scenes and learn what is involved. This will give you a great practice that you will need for your own business development.
9. **Expose yourself** – let people know you. There is no better way to sell your art than to be known. And you have to start somewhere. Your local art group can be one such place, where you expose who you are, what drives you, make friends and become known in the local area and community. That will also give you the sand-box playground to practice exposing yourself to the rest of the world, like your clients.
10. **Write about it** – write your experiences in your blog. It will be a great topic to write about and local searches will rate high in SEO (Search Engine Optimization). When you meet other artists, write about them, discuss the group's events, art shows and other promotions - you will get better local results for searches. The search engines do look for localization relevancy and being part of and writing about a local group is a wonderful way to do just that.

I hope this list helps you make a decision and join a local art group. You might already belong to a group, or more than one, and nodded in agreement while reading this list. Or you might not have any particular group in your area that fit-the-bill, so maybe start one...

Do you have more reasons that I didn't mention to join a local art group? Do you have a story to share with us on how joining a local art group helped your career?

Cheers,
Moshe