How to Take an Inventory of Your Art Studio

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A complete studio inventory includes art-making tools, equipment and supplies, artworks, business equipment and supplies and other assets. It's never too late to start a studio inventory. Thanks to technology, this practice is easy to start, maintain and store.

A complete studio inventory includes all your art-making tools, equipment and supplies, artworks, business equipment and supplies and other assets.

Information about your artwork is critical. For each artwork include details such as:

- Title
- Dimensions
- Medium
- Price
- Consignment Record
- Sales record

Cover photo: Artwork by Nora Pineda, Ceramic Artist

Getting Started with Your Basic Inventory

Making a basic studio inventory is as simple as using your everyday technological tools to document your artwork and belongings. The easiest way to store your inventory is by uploading it to your cloud account, an online storage account that allows you to upload your data instead of storing it on your computer. A cloud account can be accessed from anywhere using a computer or other device. Take the following steps to get started with your inventory:

- Use your smartphone video and narrate your inventory, then upload it to your cloud account.
- Take photos with your smartphone, then upload to the cloud.
- Use a camcorder or digital camera to take video or photos. Transfer to your computer and organize before upload.
- Include the make and model of any major tools in the narration if using video or in the file name if organizing photos.

Business Property

A business asset is a piece of property or equipment purchased exclusively or primarily for business use. Business assets span many categories, such as vehicles, real estate, computers, furniture and other fixtures. Read more.

TIP

Services such as Box, Dropbox, Google Drive, iCloud and OneDrive offer free cloud storage as well as paid accounts.

Amber Mustafic, Fiber Artist

Detailed Studio Inventory

Add written business property details to your Basic Studio Inventory. For each business asset include:

- Make, model and description
- Approximate year purchased and cost
- Approximate replacement value
- Condition

What's the Cost?

Take it one step at a time. Finding the value in your work is rewarding.

If you don't have records of the actual cost of everything, find the replacement cost of items on the internet or in catalogs. Check if your insurance coverage is based on replacement cost or actual cost (minus depreciation).

Make it easy on yourself and use a spreadsheet program like Excel or Google Sheets (which can include images or links to them), but it can be done on paper as well. Here's an Art and Art Sales Inventory Template and a Studio Inventory Template to help get you started. (Note: from the File menu, select either Make a Copy or Download to create a copy for your own use.)

All Systems Go

Consider upgrading to software or a cloud-based system designed for keeping track of art and studio inventory.

Resources

Art Inventory Systems

Art Systems – Manage art information, including artwork and images, editions, contacts, transactions, accounting, images, exhibitions, shipments, sales, consignments, resumes, artwork bibliography, provenance and exhibition citations.

artcloud – Art inventory and e-commerce for the artist.

Artlook Software – Manage artwork and art contacts. An optional application is available to link artwork information to an artist's website.

artmoi – Art cataloguing software for artists, collectors and galleries.

Artwork Archive – Manage art inventory, images, exhibitions, location & provenance history, clients and sales, and scheduling. Present work with reports, private rooms, web embeds and a discovery profile.

Getting Your Sh*t Together (GYST-Ink) Track artwork, art supplies and exhibitions along with other artist records.

Tessera – Includes artwork, artists and client management features; collections, consignment and sales tracking; reporting capabilities.

Work by Yara Diaz, Jewelry Artist

Luisa Roque, Jewelry Artist

Career Documentation – The Joan Mitchell Foundation has a workbook including information on many elements key to career documentation.

CALL Estate Planning Workbook – A guide designed to be a practical tool for artists and/or their supporters to use when carefully assessing and identifying the unique estate planning needs and concerns specific to the visual arts.

Accounting systems that have basic inventory systems

QuickBooks Online – The Plus version has inventory management capabilities or a 3rd party app that integrates with QBO and can be purchased for more advanced inventory and/or fixed asset management.

Xexo – Online accounting system includes inventory and fixed asset management.

Work by Danny Cox, Instrument Maker

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Order the Studio Safety Wall Poster (2' x 3') or download free at www.cerfplus.org

Order the Business Insurance Guide or download free at www.cerfplus.org

Visit the Studio Protector website: www.studioprotector.org for more information, details, and resources that are outlined in this guide.