

The Gallery's Guide to Digital Marketing Fundamentals

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Introduction

Digital marketing is growing in importance across industries, and the art market is no exception. This past year, digital channels became the primary means of communication for galleries, surpassing in-person channels for artwork sales.

It's important to regularly review your gallery's digital strategy. This allows you to focus your resources on efforts that capture the attention of new collectors while also engaging your existing audience. But how can you be sure your digital efforts are successful, and what new trends should you be aware of?

This guide outlines the fundamentals for the top digital sales and marketing channels used by galleries, as cited in our [2021 Gallery Insights Report](#). Read on for our recommendations about common pitfalls, and learn how to channel the performance of your digital marketing campaigns.

Digital marketing definitions to know

Whether you're just starting to plan your gallery's digital strategy or simply want a refresher on digital marketing nomenclature, be sure to familiarize yourself with the following definitions. Keep them in mind when setting goals for campaigns, and report on them when you review performance to ensure your efforts are insights- and results-driven.

Marketing Channel

A specific platform you use to communicate with your audience. The following are some common digital marketing channels for galleries:

- Email (e.g., newsletters, nurture programs)
- Gallery website
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook)
- Online art marketplace (e.g., Artsy)

Marketing Campaign

A coordinated, strategic effort to promote and achieve a specific goal. Digital marketing campaigns for galleries often aim to acquire new collectors and re-engage existing ones. Marketing campaigns for galleries may include:

- Gallery brand awareness campaign
- Collector education campaign
- Exhibition marketing campaign
- Artwork sales campaign

Conversion Rate

(CVR)

The number of visitors who, after clicking on a link in your post or email, take action (e.g. subscribe to your newsletter or purchase an artwork), measured against that page's total visitors. A high conversion rate means the content is resonating with your target audience.

Key Performance Indicator

(KPI)

A way to measure the performance of your marketing campaigns and channel efforts. Think of KPIs as goals that ladder up to a yearly or quarterly strategic goal. Most galleries will have a few larger strategic goals with accompanying KPIs. It is important to have overarching goals to guide your digital marketing strategy.

For example, if one of your gallery's goals this year is to increase brand awareness, your KPIs could include:

—KPI 1.1

Increase newsletter audience X% year over year

—KPI 1.2

Increase sessions to gallery website X% year over

—KPI 1.3

Increase Instagram followers by X% year over year

Conversion Rate

(CVR)

The net income a campaign brings in, considering the investment you make. This will show you which kinds of campaigns are worth investing in. When campaigns cost money, it's essential to track how much you spend and what you get in return.

For example, say you run an artwork sales campaign and spend \$500 on paid advertising on Instagram. At the end of the campaign, determine the ROI by subtracting the advertisement cost (\$500) from the total amount of sales made as a result of the campaign.

A/B Testing

A/B testing is a great technique to bear in mind for campaign optimization. It involves the act of testing one variable of a campaign—say, an email subject line, image, or call to action (CTA)—by sharing two variants to an audience of equal size. You must keep every other aspect of the campaign identical to ensure you know which variable influenced more conversions. Then, see which variable performs better.

Return on investment

(ROI)

The net income a campaign brings in, considering the investment you make. This will show you which kinds of campaigns are worth investing in. When campaigns cost money, it's essential to track how much you spend and what you get in return.

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Now that you're familiar with the quintessential digital marketing terms and metrics to know, let's dig into our top tips on essential digital marketing channels for galleries.

Email Marketing

Email is one of the most cost-effective and important digital marketing channels for galleries. According to the [Data & Marketing Association](#), email marketing brings in nearly £34 for every £1 spent (equivalent to bringing in nearly \$50 for every \$1.50 spent).

Here's how to make the most of your gallery's email marketing.

Determine your goals

Before jumping into any channel, it's important to determine what your gallery's goals are for the year, and outline how that channel is positioned best to support them. For example, do you want to grow your gallery's subscriber list? Do you want people to attend your events? Do you want more collectors to purchase works from your website? Depending on your gallery's goals, your email marketing strategies will be different.

Monitor important metrics

It's hard to know what a high-performing email is for your gallery if you don't know how your emails have performed in the past. Record your email marketing's performance across the metrics outlined below for at least three months. After measuring these metrics, compare the performance to industry benchmarks. This will teach you where your email performance is strong, and where it potentially falls short.

Open rate

This measures the percentage of emails opened in an email marketing campaign out of the total number of emails delivered. Open rate is a good indicator of engagement and relevance to your audience.

Unsubscribe rate

The percentage of unsubscribes from a specific email.

Deliverability rate

A metric to measure how many emails reach your audience's inbox, rather than a spam folder or inactive accounts. Certain word choices, too many images, and product types can cause certain clients to flag emails as spam. Your email service provider (ESP) also has an impact – select one with at least an 85% delivery success score from a major review site.

Click-to-open rate

Another good indicator of engagement, click-to-open rate (CTOR) compares unique email clicks with unique email opens. To calculate your CTOR, divide the total number of clicks on an email out of the total number of email opens.

Email bounce rate

An email bounce occurs when an email cannot be delivered to the designated address. Your email bounce rate is the percentage of email addresses in your mailing list that didn't receive your email because the recipients' mail servers returned them to you.

How to create high-performing emails

Once you know where your email performance is strong and where it can be better, consider the following approaches to improve performance — and learn how to avoid or fix common weaknesses.

Try A/B Testing

If your email open rate is low, consider A/B testing the following attributes. Remember to only test one variable at a time:

Subject line: The gateway to email engagement. If you don't get subject lines right, your audience won't see your emails at all. Pique your audience's interest with our [10 Tips for Open-Worthy Subject Lines](#).

"From" name: The email address and name that appear when a recipient receives your emails, indicating who the sender is (you).

Preheader: The text section that shows a "preview" of the email's content. It can be used to complement the subject line and further entice your clients to open the email.

Pro tip

Emails sent from a person's name tend to [perform better](#) than emails from a generic email address or company name. Make sure your emails are immediately recognizable by using formats like "Mike at Artsy" in [your from names](#).

If your click-to-open rate is low, consider revisiting your approach for the following:

Email headline: The large text at the top of the email that states the main message you're trying to convey to your subscribers. Make your headlines compelling and concise, and link out to the destination page.

Images or videos: Engage your audience with a compelling image or video in the email that pertains to its message. Be sure to add a link to the asset to drive traffic to the destination page.

Email body copy: Keep the email's copy short and succinct. Conciseness is a copywriting best practice, even for long-form or educational content. Use your email body copy to further entice your audience to click through to the destination page, or to send you a message directly.

[Studies show](#) that the more text you include in an email or a landing page, the less likely it is for a reader to read it all.

Call to Action (CTA): This can be a button or hyperlinked text that prompts an action from the recipient, such as landing on a destination page. Include one or two CTAs to the content you are referencing in your email, and always make sure your header or footer includes a link to your business's website.

How to grow your email subscribers

Building an engaged subscriber list is one the most important aspects of email marketing. Your gallery will reap long-term benefits if you take time to grow your subscribers naturally. Consider the following ways to build – and maintain – an engaged email audience.

Grow your email subscribers

Digital Cross-Channel Promotion

If you or your artists already have an engaged audience on other digital channels like social media, leverage that success by promoting your newsletter on those channels and urging that audience to sign up. Try stories on Instagram, where you can directly link back to your website with the “[swipe up](#)” feature, or put a link in your bio. On Facebook, you can directly add a sign-up form on your page.

Never forget your website. Add a pop-up or a sign-up box on your homepage – as well as a footer link – for visitors who want to sign up for your newsletter.

Pro tip

Services like [linkin.bio](#) and [linktree](#) let you direct your audience to multiple landing pages from just one link, such as a newsletter sign-up page, a current show, and your Artsy profile.

Events

Whether you have a special on-site event, an Artsy Viewing Room, or an online exhibition coming up, tell your followers they'll be the first to know about upcoming gallery initiatives by signing up for your newsletter. At in-person events, provide a newsletter sign-up sheet at a central location. Even today, simply asking someone to provide an email address on a sheet works.

Website

With collectors spending more time and money buying art digitally, it's imperative to craft an authentic representation of your gallery's online storefront—your website. Galleries cited their websites as the second top sales channel in 2020, just behind outreach to existing clients.

Set your gallery website up for success by following these steps.

Hone in your goals for your website

What are your gallery's goals for the year, and how is your website positioned to support them? Do you want to increase page visitors? What about purchases from your website shop?

Once you have determined your goals, look at your website's past performance and compare it to industry benchmarks. (Google Analytics has [a great tool for this](#). To access it, sign into your Google Analytics account, navigate to your view, open reports, and select Audience > Benchmarking.)

Monitor important metrics

To understand your website's success, record your website's performance across the metrics outlined below across a period at least three months.

Website sessions

These help you understand how many visits there were to your website in a given time period, including where they came from (i.e. traffic sources). By default, in a process known as "channel grouping," Google Analytics segments your website's visits into several traffic types including organic search, email, social, referral, direct, and paid channels.

Pro tip

Look at your website sessions by traffic source to understand which channels perform better (or worse) than others. For instance, if an artist in your show promotes your website through their social networks, you might see an increase in social traffic. If your show receives a mention in a large publication, you might see an increase in referral traffic.

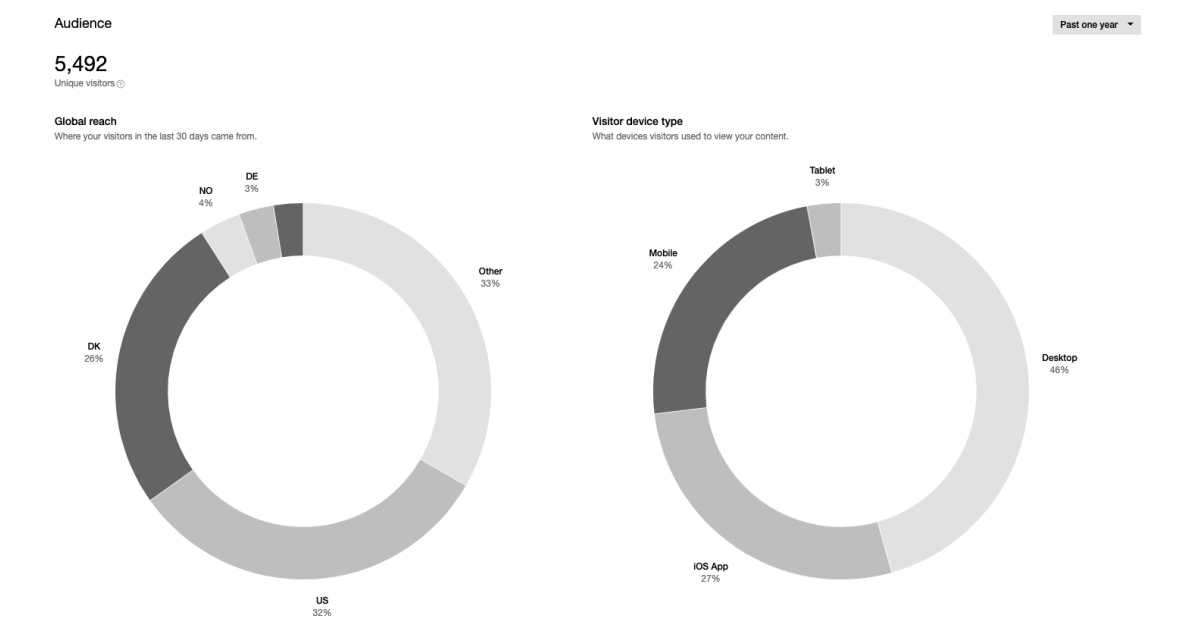
Page views

The total amount of views a page gets. Page views are a good measure of overall subject interest for your audience.

Pro tip

Do you notice that certain blog posts or artist pages get the most views? Leverage that information by featuring the posts or pages more prominently on your website, and include them in future marketing campaigns and materials.

Artsy Analytics allows you to review visits from commercially active users across artworks, shows, and your Artsy profile.



Unique page views

The number of views of a page by unique visitors. This is also a good measure of how interested your audience is in a subject.

Visit time/time spent per page

The amount of time a visitor spends on a page, indicating engagement with the page's content.

For example, if a visitor spends three minutes on a page with an article as opposed to 30 seconds, this means that they likely read most of its content, rather than skimming the headline and clicking out of the browser.

Bounce rate

The percentage of people who visit a page on your website and then leave—meaning they didn't click on anything or navigate anywhere else on your website. This is another good measure of a visitor's engagement (or lack thereof) with your website content.

Tips to improve your gallery website

Once you know where your website performance is strong and where you have an opportunity to improve it, consider the following approaches to improve your website—including how to fix common website marketing weaknesses.

Optimize your website for mobile

Today, the majority of internet traffic comes from mobile devices—so make sure that collectors have a positive experience while browsing your website via mobile. If they have a bad experience, they may not return to your website or want to engage with your brand. Uncertain of your web page's mobile performance? Test your website with Google's mobile-friendly test.

Pro tip

Discover how your customers find your website by looking at your traffic sources. Analyze how customers are using your site. Then, develop an appropriate strategy.

Streamline your website's content

If your website has too many competing pages and CTAs, it can confuse and distract visitors. Audit your website's content and remove any pages you no longer want visitors to see. Make sure what you have on your website is directly related to your goals.

Try A/B Testing

A/B testing is a great tool for improving website performance. Test one variable of a landing page—say, images or copy length—and see which performs better given the variable you are testing.

For example, if you're looking to promote a specific artist, test short-form copy and long-form copy, each with a clear CTA, and see which gets more click-throughs. Keep every other aspect of the landing page identical to ensure you know which variable influenced more clicks.

Search Engine Optimization

Online discoverability and visibility are essential pieces of any successful digital marketing strategy. Search engine optimization (a.k.a. SEO) is the process of maximizing your website's visibility on a search engine (e.g. Google) by ensuring it appears high on the list of results. This means that collectors searching for your artists and gallery online can easily find your business.

Artsy invests heavily in SEO, maintaining high-ranking pages for both its desktop and mobile website. Gallery partners on Artsy benefit from these SEO efforts—the higher an Artsy page ranks, the more likely a collector searching for your artists or artworks will find your gallery's Artsy page.

Definitions to know and metrics to monitor

On-site SEO

This includes all of the content—text, images, videos, and internal links—that make up your site. On-site SEO is the easiest way to influence your gallery's discoverability online, as everything is under your control.

Page speed (a.k.a. page load speed)

This measures how long it takes for your pages to load. Search engines prioritize results that will load quickly. There are several tools that can help you understand how fast your pages load, such as [Google's PageSpeed Insights](#).

Keywords (a.k.a. user queries)

The phrases users enter into a search engine that drive them to your site, such as “Yayoi Kusama prints for sale.” This is how your website's organic search traffic is generated. Use [Google Search Console](#) to see which keywords and user queries are already driving traffic to your site—and identify gaps where you would like to rank. Optimize your content on your website to match those queries.

Off-site SEO

This refers to anything off of your website and outside of your direct control. One of the most important areas of SEO, off-site SEO is about understanding how (and which) other websites link to your content, and how to influence those inbound links.

Technical SEO

This relates to how your gallery's website is structured. It includes factors such as your site's URL structure, mobile optimization, and how long it takes your pages to load. Technical SEO helps search engines understand your gallery's website performance and relevance to provide searchers with the best user experience possible.

How to improve your gallery's SEO

Optimize your website for mobile

Mobile optimization is crucial as more people are using mobile devices for purchases and searches. Google uses mobile-first indexing, which means it primarily crawls (or reviews) the mobile version of websites rather than the desktop version. This means if you don't have a mobile-optimized website, it will be less likely to surface in search engines.

To optimize your website for mobile, test your website's current mobile performance with [Google's mobile-friendly test](#). The test will let you know if your website is mobile-friendly, and share where it needs to be improved for mobile optimization.

Update your website content

Content recency (or “freshness”) is one factor that search engines use when deciding which content to rank first in the results. If your site's content is relevant but was posted a while ago, update it with additional new details. For example, you can update an artist bio with new shows, press, awards, and so on. This will signal to Google that your website has new content, which will boost its ranking.

Update your on-site SEO

To improve your on-site SEO, start by seeing how your audiences use search engines; [Google Trends](#) is a great tool for this. Use [Google Keyword Planner](#) to see which keywords your site currently ranks for, as well as potential new keywords you should consider.

Once you identify your target keywords, include them in the content on your relevant pages and add them to title tags and meta descriptions. To optimize your title tags, keep them under 55 characters, and consider adding your brand name at the end. To optimize your meta descriptions, summarize your content in 155 characters or less.

Finally, as an art gallery, images are likely a big component of your website. Be sure to include corresponding keywords in your image names and alt text, which will help them gain visibility in Google's image search function.

Consider the interaction between social and SEO

Search engines take social account signals—such as likes, comments, shares, and retweets—into consideration when prioritizing search results. There's no way to know exactly what level of social activity is required to move a page up in search results, but a general rule of thumb is that the more signals and activity a social account has, the more authoritative it is—and the higher it ranks.

Want to learn more about SEO for galleries? Read our [Gallery's Guide to Search Engine Optimization](#).

The screenshot displays the WordPress media editor interface for an image. On the left, a sidebar shows the following information:

- Title tag**: <https://www.artsy.net>
- Meta Description**: [Artsy - Discover Fine Art](#)
Exclusively on Artsy. First Look | Women Artists to Watch. Seventeen ... Contemporary Art Post-War Art · Impressionist & Modern Art · Pre-20th Century.

On the right, the main editor area shows the following fields:

- Alt text**: Alternative Text: Describe the purpose of the image. Leave empty if the image is purely decorative.
- Title**:
- Caption**:
- Description**:
- File URL**: [Copy URL to clipboard](#)

Social media

Social media platforms are powerful tools which are constantly growing in size and influence. As of January 2021, Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, and TikTok had a staggering 5 billion active users on their platforms combined.

Many of these platforms have made it easier than ever to transact on-platform or link to online storefronts like Artsy, and collectors aren't just discovering art on social media—they're buying it there, too. Galleries cited social media as the third source of sales in our 2021 Artsy Gallery Insights Report—a substantial bump from the previous year, where social media was ranked the sixth source of sales.

Build a strong social media presence for your gallery by following these tips.

Set your gallery's social media goals

What are your gallery's goals for the year, and how is social media positioned to support them? Plan your gallery's social media strategy and goals with your gallery's size, resources, and bandwidth in mind.

Monitor important metrics

Record your gallery's past social media performance across the above metrics over a three-month period, then compare the averages to industry benchmarks to discover your social media's strengths and weaknesses. See the top social media metrics to monitor to monitor below.

Applause rate

The number of positive actions (e.g. likes, favorites, bookmarks) that a post receives relative to your number of followers. To track it, divide the total number of approval actions on a post by your total followers, then multiply that number by 100 to get the applause rate percentage. This can teach you what your audience finds valuable, and should inform your content moving forward.

Average engagement rate

The total number of engagement actions (e.g. likes, shares, comments, bookmarks) that a post receives relative to your total number of followers. Higher engagement rates means your content is resonating with your audience.

Audience growth rate

This measures the speed at which your gallery's followers are increasing. To measure it, note down your followers at the beginning of each month on each platform, then measure your net new followers at the end of the month. Multiply that result by 100 to get your growth rate percentage.

For example, let's say your gallery started a month with 700 Instagram followers, and by the end of the month, it had 770 followers: $70/700 = 0.7$. Then multiply 0.7×100 and you'll get 10, giving your gallery a 10% monthly growth rate.

Post reach

The number of people who have seen a post. This metric is easy to measure and find. Post reach is affected by the timing of your post (which can tell you when your audience is online) and the content of your post (which can tell you what your audience finds valuable). To measure the post reach, divide the reach by your total number of followers, then multiply that number by 100 to get your post reach percentage.

Pro tip

Facebook has a feature called "When Your Fans Are Online," which can tell you the best time to post. Use this data to increase your reach on Facebook, and make the most of your time and resources.

How to improve your gallery's social media engagement

While there are fundamentals to having a standout social media presence, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy to guarantee success. Try the following approaches to improve your social media engagement.

Post a variety of content, regularly

Take advantage of the available real estate that social media offers on a regular basis. There is no minimum or maximum amount of content to share that guarantees success, but both Instagram and Facebook give more visibility to profiles that post highly engaging content regularly. On Instagram, keep your audience engaged with varying content such as posts, stories, lives, and reels, and post content that you know (and feel!) has a high likelihood of engaging your followers.

With that said, repeat what works. If you find that your audience consistently engages with high-quality photos of artworks in your gallery or Instagram live interviews, prioritize doing them regularly. What's ultimately important is that you find your gallery's niche and build a brand persona that feels authentic to your gallery, engages and grows your audience, and keeps you motivated and interested in creating content.

Post regularly across each social media platform you use to ensure you're connecting with your entire audience. Looking for content ideas for your gallery? See [The Gallery's Guide to Content Creation](#).

Find your tastemakers

Do you have artists or staff members with strong social media presences that align with your brand? Try involving them in your creative process, consider asking them to do a takeover of your account, and ask them to repost your content on their own personal feeds.

Leverage Hashtags, Geotags, and Account Tags

Tags are effective search tools that make your account more discoverable for users. Instagram users can follow hashtags, view account tags, and search geotags and hashtags, making your gallery profile and content more discoverable. When used correctly, posts with these elements will receive more engagement—posts with hashtags receive 12% more engagement from audiences.

Tag your artists with social media followings when you make a post about them, and ask them to repost and tag your gallery in content they share that pertains to you.

Pro tip

Place hashtags that are relevant and specific to your content and target audience at the end of your posts. Be sure to use them sparingly and purposefully.

Take better Instagram photos

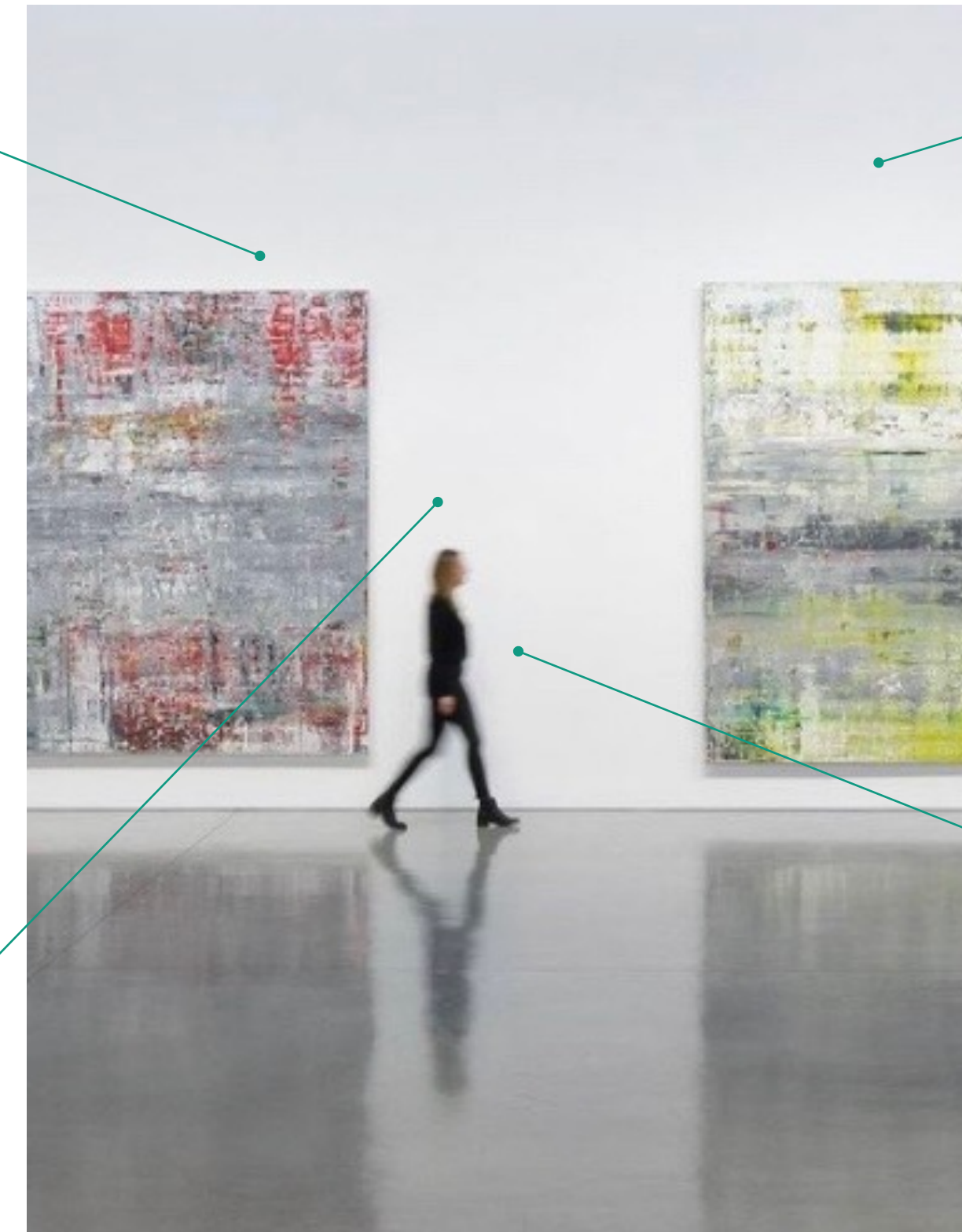
Follow these tips to improve the quality of your Instagram photos.

Straight edges

Illusion is everything when it comes to making photographs have straight lines. You can achieve this by turning on the grid feature in your phone's camera. For example, if you're taking a photograph of a painting, keep the edges of the painting parallel to the lines in the grid on your phone—it's easier to use it and take a photo with straight lines than to try to straighten them later.

Add a figure

By featuring people (or animals!) in an art space, you can give the artwork a sense of scale and setting. Visually, this tactic also gives viewers something to relate to by allowing them to imagine themselves in that space.



Process before posting

Set yourself up for success (and minimize the need for processing) by keeping lines straight, finding the best light, and adjusting the brightness and focus before you snap your photo. Then edit your photos using the Instagram app, or any combination of apps such as Snapseed, Priime, and VSCO. These apps can make your photographs look sharper and more professional in just a few minutes, so take advantage of them.

Experiment with bursts

The burst feature on your phone is helpful for getting multiple shots, but it's also great for getting an intentionally blurred image of a person moving through a gallery space. This gives the image a sense of movement and an extra something that might get viewers to stop and take a closer look.

Conclusion

In 2020, the world was forced to move online almost entirely—and most of these new buying patterns are here to stay. That's why it's important to invest in your gallery's digital marketing strategy—to connect with your audience, introduce your artists and gallery to new collectors, and focus your efforts on initiatives that contribute to your gallery's goals.

We hope this guide has helped you. For more information on Artsy's gallery partnerships, [click here](#).