

AMP 014: The “Does My Art Suck?” Test - Part 2



Show Notes

- [014: The “Does My Art Suck?” Test – Part 1](#)
- [005: Building Your Email List Offline with the "Fishbowl Technique"](#)
- Coming Soon: Video tutorial of the search techniques mentioned in this episode. Stay tuned.
- Check out [this screenshot](#) for an example of the related search terms Google will provide you at the bottom of the search results. We searched "coastal artworks" for this example.
- [Rate and Review](#) the Art Marketing Podcast on iTunes

Transcribe

Hey guys, welcome to the Art Marketing Podcast. First off, if you're new to the show, if this is the first episode you've ever heard, first: welcome. Secondly, this is part two of a series we're in called the Does My Art Suck Test. It covers how to validate your art on the market and how to see if it will sell. So, if you haven't listened to part one, you might want to stop this now go listen to part one, come back. Let's talk about what we're gonna cover today on part two. We're gonna talk about how you do your homework before you take the test, a part that I'm calling How To Search In 2017. We're gonna cover taking the test, and all the technical elements that we recommend. And then finally, as a third point, the importance of feedback and how to gather it.

We talked about the practical, about the big picture in part one, so we really do want to make part two today, as I promised, more tactical. That's gonna start off with doing homework; with launch prep, with pre show, and I absolutely love this test, because it's how you get your search on. It's how to search in 2017. You mean there's more out there than Google? Yes, there is. But your job in this step, before we get into the tactical elements, is to, before you even think about a venue, or where you're going to exhibit, or what art you're gonna take there is to educate yourself about your market. I love analogies, let me give one: everybody goes to layer one. They go one layer deep. What do I mean? You go and you search, and you look at the results, and you read some stuff, and you educate yourself; you've gone down one layer.

Let's use Wikipedia as an example. Most people search Wikipedia, what they're looking for, whatever it may be, they read the Wikipedia article. "Okay, I feel educated," I leave. That's not gonna work for you in this situation, not if you want to win. You've gotta go a layer deeper. In a case of Wikipedia, in that analogy you're gonna go search Wikipedia, then once you're done with reading that you're gonna go all the way down to those footnotes and you're gonna click on every single solitary one of those links, and then

you're gonna go and read all of those articles. That's going a second layer deep. 99% of people don't ever do that; that's the power in how this search technique works.

when I say search has become so much more than Google, yes, Google is doing still important. It's a great place to start. Let's talk about how you search in this, the year of our Lord, 2017. You start with Google, yes you look at the Google results. Figure out what your niche is, what your subject matter is, start putting some keywords into Google and start looking at the results. What are you looking for? You're looking at the very top to see anyone advertising on your particular terms, you're looking at the search results, you're clicking on a couple of those links and you're even going all the way down to the very bottom of the search results page and you're seeing what the other related search terms were. We should probably put a screenshot of that in the show notes. In fact, I will.

You want to look at all three of those things and start getting an idea of what's out there, what's on the Internet, who's selling it? You want to go to the Google shopping tab. For some your art this might work, for some of it, it might not. But take a look at the shopping tab, see what art they're selling that way. Again, idea: get keywords, see what sites are out there, start your learning journey, see who's selling what. You're gonna get some idea on styles and nomenclature; and who are the vendors in this space, what are the mediums, what are the pricing? All of those things. Next, I kick over to eBay. I start playing with the keywords, what intel that I've gathered from Google, and I start throwing that into eBay. What I love about eBay and some of these other ones that I'm about to get to, is you have the ability to sort highest to lowest, newest to oldest, highest rated to lowest rate, whatever the case may be. Play with that thing, toggle that thing for your various different keywords. See what pops, what's expensive, what's cheap, why; go down the rabbit hole a little bit. All along the way you're learning all this stuff.

Next is Saatchi Art, Fine Art America, Art.com, even Etsy. You're going to do the same thing again; now you're really getting down some layers. You're looking at descriptions, you're looking at sizes, you're looking at prices, you're getting an idea of what's out there. I love the language that you can get, especially from the high-end sites, like Saatchi. "Each print is cut and dry mounted on a white backboard prior to the mounting of the white front mount." They're telling stories about everything that's going. "This art print meets museum longevity requirements and is carefully handcrafted."

Look, educate yourself on that language. Some of that stuff might want to put into your own terms, some of that stuff you might want to use when you're describing your art for when you finally are set up in the booth. Again, check all of those sites. Some are going to be more powerful, depending on what your niche is. But always use their search engine sorters if they have the; high to low, popularity, newest to oldest, all of those things. Now you've got a very good idea of price and medium to style. You've got some great ideas on keywords, you can go and repeat the whole thing, go through the whole thing quickly, see what you learned, go back to the beginning. You can rinse and repeat there.

But the next step, you've got some keywords, you've got some language, you've got some style ideas. How is your niche mentioned? You're educating yourself. Next, things start getting real; you search Instagram, which, by the way, is one the single solitary most important search engines right now in the world. I know I've said that before, I'm saying it again, I'm hanging my hat on it; it's absolutely amazing what you can learn on Instagram, more so if you're in an image driven business, which all of you guys are. You're selling art. Next thing you know, go into to Instagram and start searching. Throw those keywords in there, follow those keywords, see where they land, check out profiles, find out content curators, go to the websites of the artists that you really like, see how they're mentioning it, what sizes are they selling, what mediums are they selling, how are they talking about your art. Be copying and pasting, and grab the stuff that you like.

It's time to figure out, if you see somebody that's really big in your niche, and know who those players are. Know who those players are, know what they're selling, know what sites they're listed on. You can learn a tremendous, tremendous amount by running this technique. The end result of this is, you really know your market. You're able to speak intelligently about it, about all aspects of it. You're able to price accordingly, to know what the high is, to know what the low is, the cheap stuff is, to know where in between is. Goldilocks, this one feels just right.

You might spot some trends that were not aware of that you can start giving a shot, and that can be up, down, and around. It can be mediums, or prices, or sizes, or buzzwords, or whatever. But really, at the end of this you find that your confidence has really grown. Because you gone those multiple layers down, you can play with the big boys.

That's how you search in 2017, and come to think of it, that whole technique really requires a video or two. Depending on when you listen to this podcast, check out the show notes. I'm gonna throw some videos in there, I might take a couple in front of Facebook Live. But yeah, we'll do some in-depth videos that talk about that entire thing. End result: you are educated, you are confident, you know your market; you are absolutely ready to go and display your art and take the test, if you will. Let's quickly talk about the location and set up, ID some of the players, and then we'll get into the hardcore tactical of it.

Really, for this next step what do you need? You need your art, a physical location, and some foot traffic. And yes, you're looking for a sale; and yes, you're hopefully looking for multiple sales. The key component here though, is the transaction, the physical exchange of currency is the absolute and real validation. And again, from strangers, not friends, family or mom, that you want, that's gonna give you the confidence to take the next step in your art career, and to really start more actively selling. Now, I think a great example, it's important to take ourselves out of the art sphere. Especially as creators

you're married to this stuff. But in the Internet world, there is there is a school of thought that says, "Okay, I have this great idea," your art. "I'm gonna go sell it, and I'm gonna make millions of dollars." Well, how long is it gonna take you to make? "Eh, it's probably gonna take me like a year and a half to make it."

I have an idea. Why don't, instead of making it ... And let's just switch gears, let's say I'm really good at barbecuing. I love smoking meats, I've got a nice, big green egg in my backyard, and I am going to write a book on how to smoke ribs Southern California-style on the green egg. And I think everybody's gonna buy that book, it's gonna be great. Instead of even writing a chapter, or picking a logo, or designing the cover; I'm going to throw up a landing page, put a 'buy now' button, get an image of the book and throw some cold traffic at it with some barbecue search terms, and see if anybody buys it. If anybody buys it, I'll know that people would actually buy it, and then I'm gonna go and write the book.

It's that same concept of getting the validation, sometimes before you've even made the thing, before you've gone too deep down the rabbit hole and figured out that nobody wants barbecue Southern California-style. That's the concept, that's what you want to be thinking about with this style, is that you just want to get the validation as quickly in the process as you can. And, if for some reason it doesn't work, then you iterate. I do the exact same thing, except this time instead of barbecuing ribs, I'm gonna say barbecuing brisket and see if that does any better, and then I'll know to go in that direction.

The key about this test is it's not a zero-sum game, though; this is really the beauty of it. Yes, you want to get the sale. Yes, you're out to get the sale, but that's not the only line in the water. You still have some winds to go after. In lieu of a sale, you're looking for email addresses, you're looking for social media follows, you're looking for feedback. And really, at the end of the day, even just the experience itself will be valuable. Let's just say you're a quarterback playing football. You yell, "hike," you start dropping back; you're

looking for your receivers. Yes, absolutely, you want to throw it all away into end zone for a touchdown. You want to make some sales. But, if that guy's covered, if the sale is not possible, you have a bunch of other receivers to look out, so start checking down, seeing who else is open and try and complete a pass there.

Worst-case scenario, grab the ball, and run upfield and make some progress yourself. I think that's a fantastic way of looking at it. And you realize in doing that, there's all these different ways you can win, and it's just to get you fired up for it. Let's address all these little tactics and individual things one-by-one. The location, the set up, this is the great part: it doesn't really matter. Anywhere art is sold, art fairs, gallery shows, craft fairs, sidewalk festival, at your mall, wherever. If you can get a niche-specific opportunity, say you paint dogs, then you can go to a dog show. Or, you draw character animation; you can go to Comic Con. Those types of situations are always ideal.

But really, anywhere art is sold will work. It just really needs for foot traffic for that matter. You need a table, or a booth, or the sidewalk, or a crate to sit on, whatever the case may be. I don't want to get bogged down in the true geographical, where you go. There's plenty of places to do this, lots of information online; Google it if you need to. Use my search technique, even better. But figure out somewhere where you can display your art. Everyone's gonna have a different way of getting there and doing that.

The next parts are what I think are the most important. Let's talk about the tradecraft. The most important piece, number one, I believe that it's critical that you're running The Fish Bowl Technique. Now, we covered this in episode five in-depth, if you haven't listened to it go back; really powerfully, really tactical and absolutely works. I'll put a link to that in the show notes. Briefly, you've got your booth, you've got your set up. You need to have a fish bowl, i.e. a bowl for business cards or a clipboard, a way that somebody can write out their email address. Or, if you're digital, put your email address into the iPad to win a free print, to win a free portrait, whatever your art and your situation allots for.

Your location might be busy, people might be engaged in a conversation, they might not have time. There's no way they were buy anything, but they might give you their email address that allows you to follow up. In that fish bowl episode, we also go in-depth tactically, talking about the email follow-up sequence that you want to run after the fact, after you get home you and you gather up those email addresses. I don't care if it's 2, or if it's 200, you need to run that technique.

It's absolutely critical, because it's the difference, oftentimes between making an ROI of that entire investment of getting your butt down to a show and not making the ROI. It just works. Just yesterday, or two days before I was recording this, fired up Instagram, checked the direct messages, and I got a message from my boy, Nicholas Jensen Photography. "Used the fish bowl at my art festival display last weekend. I did a give away of a metal print and tripled the size of my entire email list in one day." Boom, there you go. This technique, like taking the test and displaying, you could potentially triple the size of your email list like he did in one day, so there's lots of wins. Listen to that podcast, get your fish bowl in order, and get set up and get ready to do that.

Now, tradecraft number two: the other thing that's often glossed over is a social follow. Yes, you want to sale. Yes, you want an email address. But you'll take a follow on Facebook or Instagram, right? There's two ways you can handle this. You can put your Instagram handle up, or your Facebook page URL up on a sign, in the back, somehow. "Hey, follow us for more great art. Follow us on Instagram, follow us on Facebook," you can do it that way. Or Snapchat, if you're on Snapchat, you could even have your barcode scanner, whatever. Or, you can get a little tray and get some business cards made. Vista Print has some sort of deal where you can do them for like, 80 bucks or 100 for a thousand, or whatever the deal is. It's just crazy simple. Get something designed up, put a little cardholder down there, have your Instagram, have your Facebook account, have your website ready to go. It's yet another way to potentially capitalize on the foot traffic that you might miss out on.

Maybe I'm down there, and maybe I'm on a date with a new gal, and maybe I don't have the time to buy any art right now, but maybe I saw something out of the corner of my eye that I liked, I grabbed your business card, I took it home with me. I was on the couch watching the Chargers, I looked at your Instagram handle, now I'm on your profile, now I'm on your website; you get the point. It can be powerful, and yet another way that you can get some sales after the fact.

I think, those two techniques alone are critical. So many people ignore them; we talk to so many people that have been exhibiting at art fairs for like 10, 15, 20 years. They call us up, they want to talk about our software platform, and we're like, "What size your email list?" And they're like, "22." You've been exhibiting at art fairs for 10 years and you 22 email addresses? It breaks my heart to hear that. Fish Bowl Technique, the Social Technique, in combination: awesome, amazing.

All right. Location is set, you know about those two pieces of tradecraft there, let's also talk about feedback. This is a tremendous part of the equation. It's time to start having some conversations. You've gone all the way down there with your art, you set up this booth; it's time to start having some conversations. Yes, you're looking to sell your art and that is the goal, but again, every conversation that you have is a great opportunity to have a real discussion with somebody about art, and I think a tremendous amount of people gloss over this aspect of it, top. Yeah, you're gonna go for the sale, but if the sale doesn't look like it's going to happen, go for the email address. If it's not gonna happen, go for the social, then you go for feedback.

Quick analogy, the feedback piece of the equation. I was in the clothing business for a while, had a mentor back then, taught me the power feedback. And I think I mentioned this in an earlier podcast episode too, but it really brought back some fond memories. Back then, God, this was like ... I don't want to date myself, but it was years ago. What you would do is, you would drive up to Los Angeles and you would go to the Fred Segal in Santa Monica. After you were done with the Fred Segal in Santa Monica, you'd drive Melrose and hit like five or seven different spots. I'm sure that's probably no longer the cool spot in LA, in fact, I know it's not, but that's neither here nor there.

You would go into those shops, you would ask every single solitary employee on the floor, and there was like three of us, so when we'd divide and conquer it was really fun. And we wouldn't leave the shop until we talked to every single solitary employee in the store. What was selling? What was the highest selling piece of clothing? Was it graphics? Who made it? Why did they think it was selling? What was unique about it? What are people saying about it? We would ask all of those types of questions, and we would come back with this feedback. We would know the pulse of the market in the hottest place, Los Angeles, capitol of global youth culture, if you would, and then we'd be able to take those and incorporate those into our ideas.

I think you have the same opportunity when you're in your booth, when people are coming by to get that type of feedback. And the types of questions that you can ask: "Hey, have you bought any art recently?" And if they say "no," fine, you can move on; but if yes, dig deeper. "Can I ask what it was? What medium was it? What size was it? How many pieces did you buy? What was the price of it, if you don't mind me asking," depending on the relationship. You can learn all sorts of things by running these techniques. Let's say they bought some [inaudible 00:22:08] art; what size was it? "It was a square, kind of like on Instagram, and it's arranged on a grid on the wall. It was really easy to hang." You're like, "What? Really? What was it called? Really? Who printed it?" You go home, you search, you find it, you realize there's some new guy running these new

prints of Instagram tiles that you can hang on the wall; this is actually a real thing I saw on Instagram.

The point is, that it allows you to laser-focus on something that might be really working, something you can incorporate into your style, whether it's a medium, or an idea, or a concept, or an artist, whatever. And then, the next thing you know you incorporate it, you setup your booth again, and your stuff's selling like hotcakes, all because you're asking these questions. You're learning, you're moving the ball down the field always. Now, as a quick footnote, as I was writing this out and getting ready for the show, it's like, okay, well what if it's just not feasible for you to get to show, period. What if you live in Fairbanks, Alaska, or some such place where there's just really not a lot of art buyers. I get that, and I think I do want to address that.

If I'm gonna be a marketer worth my salt, and a digital marketer, I should probably come up with an all digital version of how to do this, and how to go into the tactical; and it is absolutely possible. You can put your art up on the landing page, drive some cold traffic with some paid ads and see what ends up happening. But it does take some technical acumen, if you will, and I think it's a little more difficult. Perhaps we'll do a part three version of the test as well, and talk about the all digital version, without having to actually go to a show. But I do not believe that there's any more powerful, better way to validate your art than actually doing it physically. I think if you employ the techniques that we talked about today, you really give yourself a great chance on seeing ROI from the effort.

So, the Does My Art Suck Test: let's sum things up a little bit. You gotta do your homework, you gotta find a location exhibit and employ tradecraft, like The Fish Bowl Technique and gathering social follows, et cetera. Lastly, ask for feedback; you really will be, I believe, amazed at what you can learn in these situations. And remember, this test is for you to validate your art and whether or not it will sell. The market is the market, it really has no emotion. It's either gonna sell, or it won't. It's your job to figure out, before

you invest too much time on a particular niche or a particular style, to know whether or not it will sell. If it sells, you could take the next steps and be confident about it. If it doesn't sell, maybe you're okay with that. That's great, but at least you know.

This technique, also I would say it works amazing if you're new, if you're just getting started, if you're just trying to validate your art for the first time. It really works; every aspect of it works for you. But let me tell you, if you're experienced and you've been at this game for a long time, and you know your stuff sells, you might want to reinvent yourself at a period. You might want to try a new style. You might have a couple ideas of some new styles and new directions that you want to go. Run the test with you at the same point. See if whatever that new idea, that new pivot, that new style. Don't be Coca-Cola and come out with new Coke, and invest millions in it, and then realize nobody wants new Coke, have to scrap the whole thing, and then go back to old Coke. You can save yourself a tremendous amount of money, of headache and capital by running the test.

There it is. I hope you guys enjoyed part one and part two, part three will be to come. I want to thank you for listening. If you're enjoying the show, would love, love, love if you left us a review on iTunes. For the show notes, all the links, the videos, you can visit ArtMarketingPodcast.com, again, ArtMarketingPodcast.com and we'll have everything in there. And on that note, thanks again, thanks for listening. Have a great day.