

Art World News

AUGUST 2026

THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

FRAMING EXPO MOVES TO BIENNIAL FORMAT

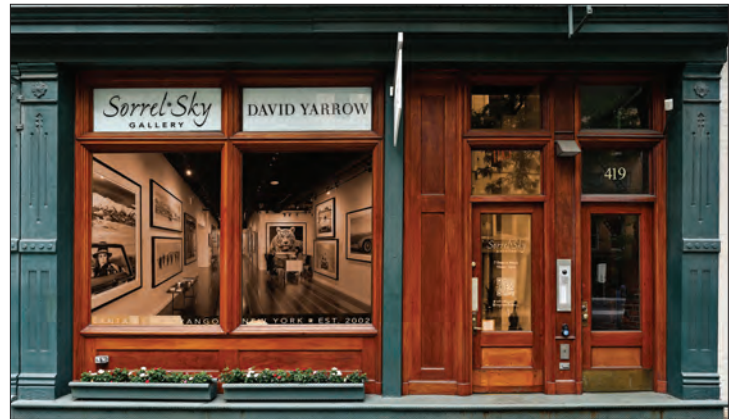
Framing Expo has adopted a new biennial schedule, a strategic shift intended to enhance the long-term impact and value of the event for both exhibitors and attendees. Preparations for the next Framing Expo are already in motion, with the event projected for March 2028. This change reflects the evolving economics of trade shows across all industries. Trade show director Deborah Salmon said the move will create a more sustainable experience. "By shifting to an every-other-year cycle, we're giving exhibitors more flexibility, buyers more value, and the industry a stronger event with greater reach and impact." For more details, go to: www.framingexpo.com.

WHY GALLERIES NEED TO SELL AN EXPERIENCE

ADC Fine Art's Litsa Spanos says that galleries have an opportunity to become something much bigger than just a business to view and purchase art: places where people gather, connect, celebrate and experience art in an entirely new way. Go to page 23.

ARTIFICIAL VERSUS ACTUAL INTELLIGENCE

Strategies for Success' Sheila McCumby says that while using AI as an operational tool, it is important to remember that the fundamental distinction remains—artificial intelligence is not the same as actual intelligence. Visit page 20 for more details.



Sorrel Sky Gallery is located in SoHo, NY.

INCORPORATING AI EASES DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

When it comes to using artificial intelligence (AI) in the day-to-day running of their business, gallery and frameshop owners acknowledge that it can help to make things more organized and run smoother with a small staff. But it is hard to ignore all of the attention AI gets today, good and bad. When it comes to using it effectively, many are finding that it is about learning new ways to do things, and staying up-to-date on the technology. Administrative and operational duties are the most sought after attributes of AI for those in the art and framing business, but are obviously concerned about its use as an artistic technique, as well as its impact on the industry, long-term. Artists are legitimately worried about losing the human connection between art and artist, as well as art and collector. Katherine Hébert, columnist, art gallery business advisor and

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"My customers don't need an AI framing consultant. They need somebody who can look at their piece, listen to its story, understand where it's going. That's still the heart of my business."

SuAnne Martinez, page 18

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Shown is
"The Tune In"
by Nathan Durfee
from Robert
Lange Studios.
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Incorporating AI Eases Daily Operations

When it comes to using AI effectively, many gallery and frameshop owners are finding that it is about learning new ways to do everyday tasks and staying up-to-date on the technology.

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Master of the Line: Guillaume Azoulay

Self-taught artist Guillaume Azoulay has achieved international recognition as an extremely gifted and successful creator whose distinctive style conveys movement, strength and grace.

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AI Versus Actual Intelligence

Sheila McCumby says that when using AI as an operational tool, it is important to remember that the fundamental distinction remains—artificial intelligence is not the same as actual intelligence.

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Why Galleries Need To Sell An Experience

Litsa Spanos says that galleries have an opportunity to become something bigger than just a business to purchase art but a place where people gather, connect and experience art in a new way.

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Struggling to Move Ahead, But Busy

Katherine Hébert discusses how a gallery operating system can bring the many moving parts, that are often scattered around the business, together and alleviate daily workload stress.

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What's Hot in Open Editions

This month's What's Hot in Open Editions features a variety of the latest best selling open edition prints, most available as print-on-demand images, and it includes contact information as well.

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IN OUR OPINION

Go Local

The summer season often blows a cold breeze to folks in the art and framing business. Aside from the traditional "hot spots" that attract holiday makers and their bountiful wallets, it was a season of tough sales for many. So let's welcome Labor Day with a feeling of relief and hope. Even during droughts, the entrepreneurial spirit flows. The creativity and industry among us is what carries us forward. From the simple to the sophisticated, I'm often amazed at what solution folks hatch to build sales. From "following the money" to polo matches to surfing competitions, art sellers move with an alacrity to bond and sell to their patrons.

Less capital intensive strategies exist for everyone. One of the most effective has been how one gallery owner has leveraged creating inexpensive prints of local, now non-existing town landmarks and offering them at almost give-away prices. The result has been waves of new clients coming

into the gallery and a copious spill over into their custom framing business. It has been the most cost-effective promotion that delivered new folks to the gallery. Opportunity always exists. Sometimes it just takes a little more out of us to find it. Even among the downtrodden, hopes are very high for a profitable finish to the year and there is no reason not to think that to be true.

Often the answer may lie on simply doing what you do better. It might not be in the form of a creative revelation or breakthrough into virgin territory. Incremental gains are a bi product of just operating on a higher level by improving staff, systems and commitment to success. Perhaps the source of a gain is by way of AI. This issue of *Art World News* provides thought-provoking advice and observations to help art galleries and frameshops get their heads, and business, around what arguably is an underdeveloped asset in most shops.

John Haffey
Publisher



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Editor in Chief

Koleen Kaffan
kkaffan@optonline.net

Editor Emeritus

Sarah Seamark

Production Manager

Sue Bonaventura

Columnists

Katherine Hébert
publisher@galleryfuel.com

Sheila McCumby
sheila@smcstrategies4success.com

Litsa Spanos
litsa@adcfineart.com

Contributing Writers
Barney Davey
Anita Petersen

Publisher

John Haffey
jwhaffey@aol.com

Information Technologist

Joe Gardella

Editorial Advisory Board

Phillip Gevik, Gallery Phillip, Toronto, Canada
Steven Hartman, The Contessa Gallery, Cleveland, OH
Jeff Jaffe, POP International Galleries, New York
Heidi Leigh, AFA, Belcastel, France
Ruth-Ann Thorn, Exclusive Collections,
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ADVERTISING SALES INFORMATION

U.S. & International

John Haffey, Publisher
Phone (203) 854-8566
Fax (203) 900-0225
jwhaffey@aol.com

Art World News (Volume XXXI, Number 8) ISSN 1525 1772 is published 12 times a year by Wellspring Communications, Inc.: P.O. Box 129, Rowayton, CT 06853.
Phone (203) 854-8566 • Fax (203) 900-0225; To order additional copies or back issues e-mail: jwhaffey@aol.com or fax to (203) 900-0225. Please indicate which month and year you are requesting. Single copy price is \$10.00.

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ARTISTS & PUBLISHERS

Nathan Durfee's 20th Exhibit at RLS

Robert Lange Studios in Charleston, S.C., presents *The Ways We Dream of Home*, a new solo exhibition by Nathan Durfee, marking his 20th solo exhibition with the gallery. Featuring a new collection of paintings in the artist's unmistakable style—a marriage of whimsy, narrative painting and Pop-surrealism—the exhibit explores the many places, people, memories and imagined worlds in which we find a sense of belonging. For further information, call (843) 805-8052 or visit the gallery's website located at: www.robertlanguedstudios.com.



Durfee's "Dreaming in Emerald" is an oil on panel measuring 48 by 48 inches.

Third & Wall Signs Ray Russotto

Third & Wall Art Group, Seattle, WA, announces the addition of Ray Russotto to its curated family of artists. The addition of Russotto's charmingly sophisticated watercolors offers interior designers, architects, design consultants and project specifiers fresh opportunities to incorporate distinctive, high-quality artwork into various projects. Designed with the needs of the design community in mind, the collection is available in a variety of



"Bike" by Ray Russotto.

customizable formats, including print substrates such as ChromaLuxe® metal, acrylic, wood, canvas, framed fine art or other materials. Call (877) 326-3925 or go to: www.thirdandwall.com.

Bruce Silverstein Gallery's Anniversary

Bruce Silverstein Gallery in New York, NY, celebrates 25 years with an exhibition titled, *The 25th Anniversary Presentation*, looking back at some of the most memorable shows which includes more than 150 exhibitions and 75 art fairs. Established in 2001, the gallery's principal focus is the representation of an international roster of contemporary artists, as well as, established artists of great influence. Phone (212) 691-5509 for more details, or go to the website at: www.brucesilverstein.com.



"Untitled (Children at play on rooftops, Paris)" by André Kertész.

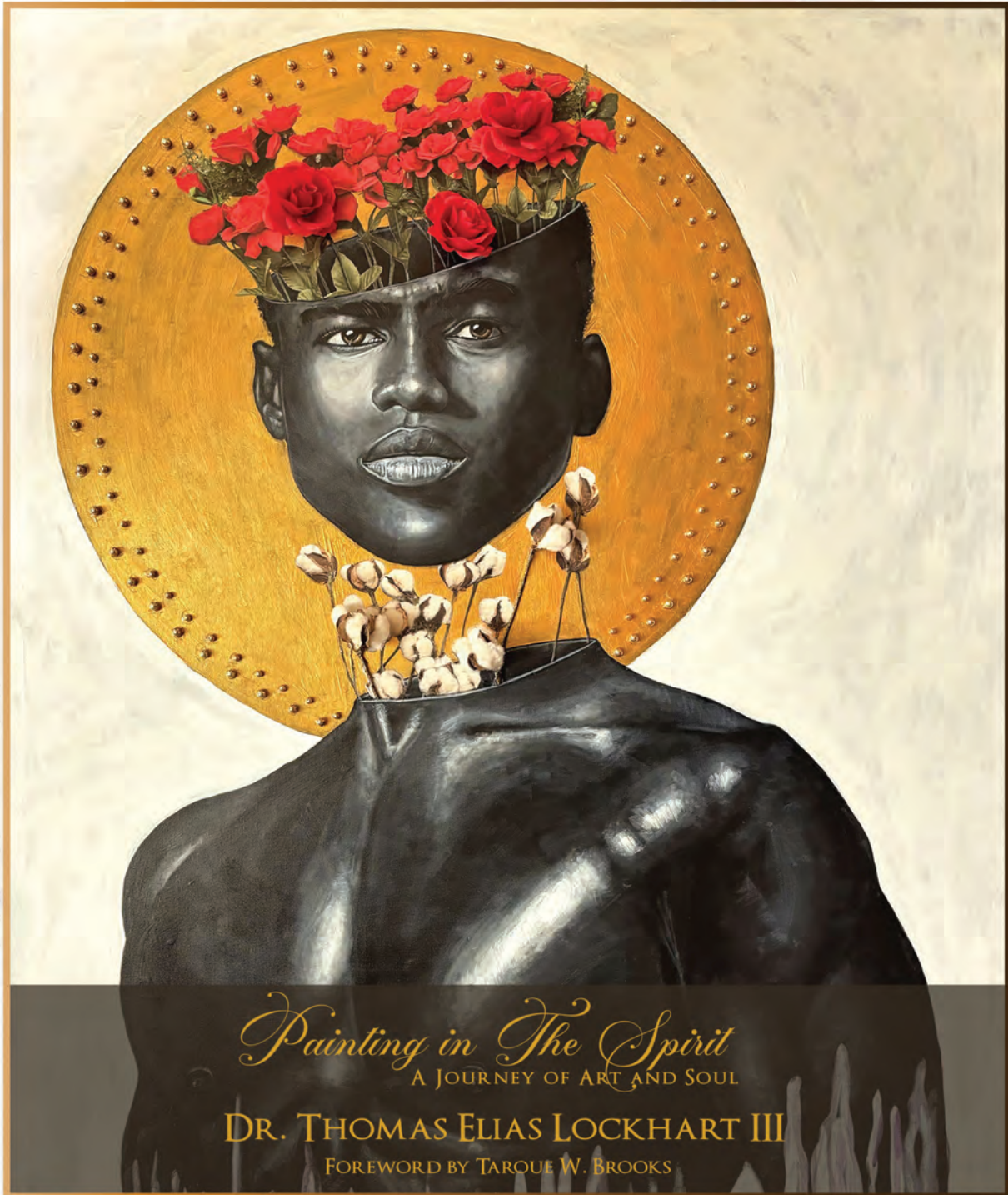
Bentley Art Publishing's Detti Work



"An Elegant Gathering" by Cesare Agostino Detti.

Bentley Art Publishing, located in Elk Grove, CA, has added 28 new images by Italian romanticized historical artist Cesare Agostino Detti to its website at: www.bentleyartpublishing.com. Detti (1847–1914) was an Italian painter known for his romanticized historical and genre scenes, often set in the 17th and 18th centuries. All the new images are available for printing via POD Exchange and can be viewed at the Bentley Art Publishing website. For further information, call (925) 997-7145 or visit: www.bentleyartpublishing.com.

A New Coffee Table Book



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DENVER, CO—Published this month in *Forbes* magazine is an article about the newly released coffee-table book by artist **Dr. Thomas E. Lockhart III** and titled, *Painting in the Spirit: A Journey of Art and Soul*. Co-produced with collector Taroue W. Brooks, and published by Wellspring Communications, sister company of *Art World News* magazine, the book features 80 images from the artist's diverse body of work, and spans two decades of the artist's career. The *Forbes* article tells the story of how the book came to be and puts a spotlight on the art's depiction of Black history and experiences. It also discusses how Black art continues to gain market attention, but how ownership among Black Americans remains limited. Brooks says that the book works to demystify the process of acquiring and collecting work, while encouraging wealth building through art. The article also highlights Lockhart's faith as inspiration for his work as he signs the back of each piece with three letters: "TYG," short for "Thank You, God." Shown is "Roses Redefined I," a mixed media on gallery-wrapped canvas in an edition of 80. Call (720) 219-3460 or go to: www.lockhartgallery.com.

INCORPORATING AI EASES DAY-TO-DAY TASKS

continued from page 1

founder of Gallery Fuel (www.galleryfuel.com), has studied the use AI in the industry and recently attended a seminar on its newest technology. She says that while it has a lot to offer, it won't likely replace the most important parts of the business. "AI isn't a substitute for good business systems. It actually makes having good systems more important. If your information is scattered across email, spreadsheets, someone's head and six different applications, AI isn't going to magically fix that. It needs good information and context to work from."

"Galleries should be thinking about their operating system alongside their AI strategy," she says. "When you organize your knowledge by documenting your processes, define your brand voice and get your data into a form that is accessible and usable, then AI becomes much more powerful."

Those just getting acquainted with AI for their business should go into it with an open mind, Ms. Hébert says. "Every gallery owner should be experimenting with AI for three things: thinking, creating and organizing. It can be a remarkably useful second set of eyes. Gallery owners can use it to brainstorm marketing ideas, develop exhibition project management or concepts, analyze

sales or inventory data, draft communications, take meeting notes and turn rough ideas into something usable. The possibilities are endless, exciting and sometimes overwhelming."

To get the most out of it though, one must have a solid system for it to work from. "There is an important distinction between simply opening ChatGPT and asking it questions and

comes much more consistent and sounds like you. The goal is to reduce the amount of time spent starting from a blank page, not have AI do everything. Good results still need your judgment. Don't be afraid to question AI and push back if you're not getting what you need."

Ms. Hébert says that a big benefit of incorporating AI into a business is the amount of work that can be accomplished. "I think the biggest opportunity is capacity and that's how I'm using it within Gallery Fuel for my clients. AI has the potential to act like a second employee or even temporary help that you assign a specific role. Small and midsize galleries and frame-

shops are often incredibly understaffed. In many cases, one person may be doing it all, so they often feel completely overwhelmed and like they are constantly playing catch up. That leaves little room for growing the business.

"You might not need another full-time employee, but you may need someone to help prepare for an exhibition, create marketing materials, analyze your sales or inventory data or just help you catch up on administrative work," she says. "AI can increasingly fill some of those gaps when utilized in a smart way. Imagine an AI that doesn't just help you write an email,



Sorrel Sky Gallery is located in Santa Fe, N.M.

actually setting AI up to work for your business. The quality of the output depends heavily on the quality of the information and instructions you give it—garbage in, garbage out. Give AI a clear understanding of your gallery, from your brand voice to your artists and your goals and the results become dramatically more useful.

"I also encourage galleries to create reusable skills and instructions for the things they do repeatedly. Instead of telling AI from scratch every time how you want a newsletter written or how you analyze an exhibition, you can teach it your process once," she says. "Add a clearly defined brand voice and AI be-

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STEPHEN HOLLAND'S THE LONGNECK CIRCUS SERIES



SANTA BARBARA, CA—Artist **Stephen Holland**, a noted figurative artist whose work has spanned six decades, presents a new body of work titled *The Longneck Circus Series*, featuring a radical new perspective for the artist. A huge departure from his previous work, the series delves into his personal psyche and the experiences of people, places and events of a surreal world of characters informed by The Bronx sidewalks of his youth. The acrylic on paper and canvas work are a continuation of his private collection of paintings and drawings done throughout his years of painting commercial and fine art.



"*The Longneck Circus Series* comes from The Bronx neighborhood where I grew up," he says. "There was always drama in the streets, characters hanging out on the corner and older neighbors looking out of windows onto the scene below." Shown is "Louie's in the Bronx," top, and "Yellow Jam." For more details, visit: www.longneckcircus.com.

INCORPORATING AI *continued from page 10*

but understands your artists, inventory, upcoming exhibitions, collector history, marketing calendar and internal processes and can help you identify what tasks need attention and prepare the work for you. I believe that could be transformational for a small or struggling gallery."

Shanan Campbell, owner Sorrel Sky Gallery with locations in Durango, CO; Santa Fe, NM, and New York, NY, says that AI is not necessarily a new technology but a progression of how business is run today. "AI is a wonderful tool, and it's here to stay. I began studying it when ChatGPT launched in November 2022, and within the year I went through private one-on-one training

with business coach Amy Yamada, who was teaching entrepreneurs how to use AI without losing their authentic voice—exactly the balance I wanted," she says. "I think about AI the way I thought about the Web and email when they arrived. If you're not in front of it, using it and understanding it, you're behind the curve. We intend to be one of the first to use it well, not the last to catch up. When we opened 25 years ago, almost no galleries had a real website, and we invested heavily in ours. We were very early to offer online shopping."

Staying up-to-date on the technology and what it has to offer a business is impor-

tant, Ms. Campbell says. "We're exploring quite a few things right now. We use AI to help clients visualize art in their own spaces before it comes home with them, which has been a wonderful addition to the experience. We also lean on it for proofreading and sharpening our communications, not writing them," she says.

"Beyond that, we use it to draft internal policies, staff training materials and to work through logistics and budgets for our shows,



Abbot Art is located in Farmingdale, NY.

presentations and off-site events. One of the first ways I used it was for research: having it study every blog we'd written to see which ones got the most attention, and why. We're continually testing new uses. Anything that helps us serve our collectors and artists better, and run a tighter operation, is worth a look."

When it comes to AI's limitations, she says that the human factor cannot be replicated. "It's a strong assistant and a poor authority. It doesn't actually know our artists or their work, and it will write something fluent that's simply wrong. We tried using it to write descriptions of an artist's work, and the results were

genuinely bad. In a business built on knowing the work, that gap matters," she says. "We use several AI platforms because they have different strengths, and we're careful not to trust any of them blindly. In a sea of AI-written content, we lead with our own words."

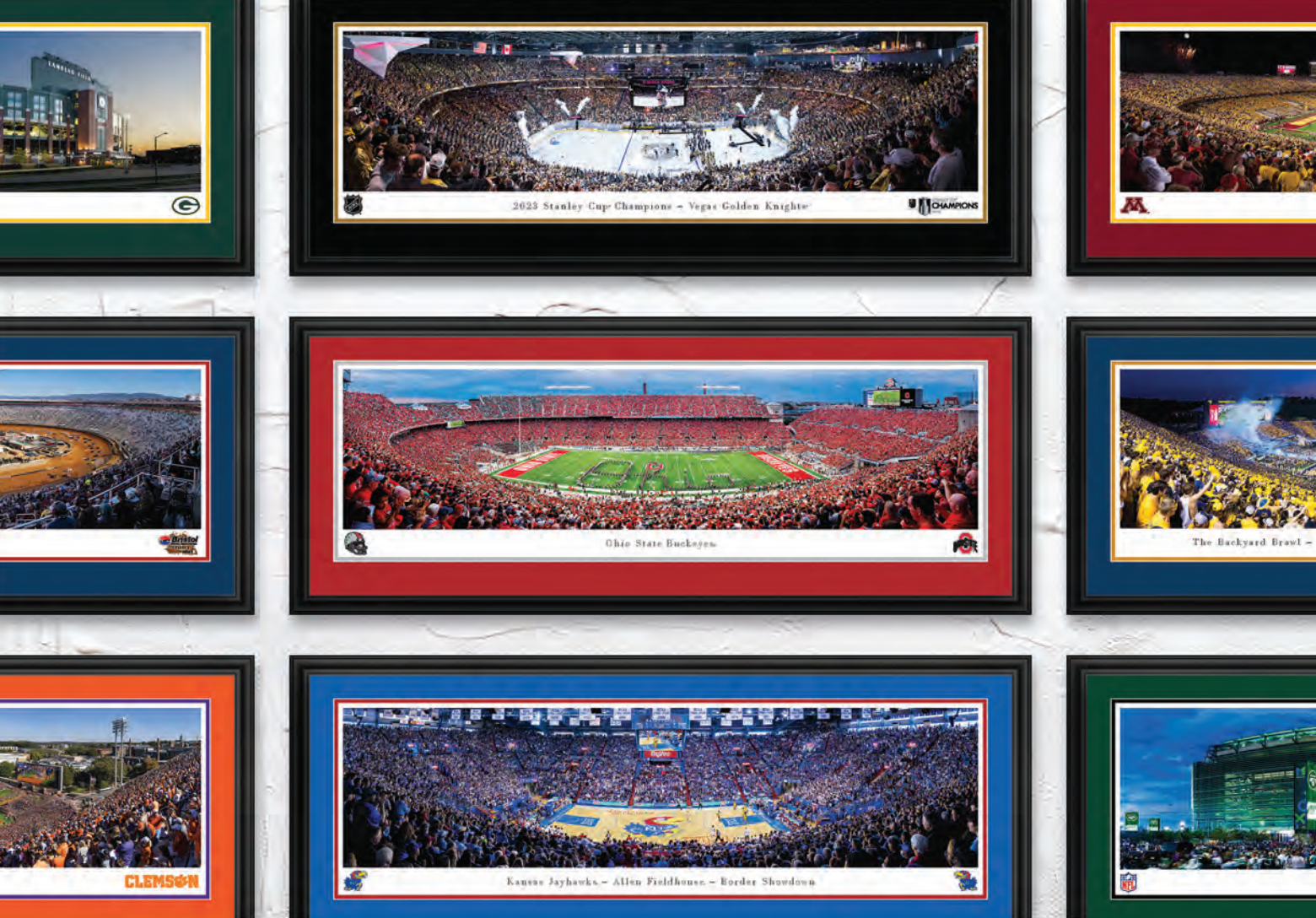
Brand perception in the eyes of a collector needs to remain strong to maintain consumer confidence. Losing that can be detrimental. "That's a real risk, and one we watch closely," Ms.

Campbell says. "I can spot AI-written text a mile away. When I see website copy or content from our team that reads that way, I flag it and we fix it. We hold the same line in hiring: if a cover letter is obviously AI-written, we pass. I want to hear from the person applying, not an AI version of

them. This business was built over 25 years on relationships, not transactions. People can feel the difference when something is personal. It's not unlike a handwritten note, which has become rare and means more because of it. The relationship, the voice and the eye stay human. That's non-negotiable for us."

While it is too difficult to say whether AI has helped to bring in sales, it has played a role in Sorrel Sky Galleries consistent growth over the years. "We've grown significantly since 2002 by embracing everything from social media and Pinterest to our online presence and other digital tools.

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MASTER OF THE LINE

GUILLAUME AZOULAY'S JOURNEY OF 'ENCOUNTER'

Self-taught artist Guillaume Azoulay has achieved international recognition as an extremely gifted and successful creator whose distinctive style conveys movement, strength and grace. Long celebrated across major capitals and prestigious institutions, Azoulay works in a variety of media and commands an avid base of collectors who seek the work of this accomplished "master of the line."

Azoulay's path to artistic mastery is as unconventional as his visual language. Since the age of 13, a relentless thirst for adventure carried him to many parts of the world, earning his way by painting and performing as an actor. His global odyssey took a romantic and pivotal turn when he met his wife, Charmaine Seal, the noted Welsh ballerina. In 1976, the couple arrived in the United States, marking the start of a transformative chapter in his prolific career.

Easily deconstructing the standard approach to the viewing of art, Azoulay states emphatically, "The subject matter is totally unimportant." He explains with a twinkling smile, "Instead, observe the balancing of masses and voids, the in-

teraction between areas of darkness and light. The theatrics of composition are far more compelling than mere anecdote." Indeed, critics and scholars frequently observe that the fundamental key to Azoulay's art is, quite

President Ronald Reagan, former French President François Mitterrand and the prestigious Nelson Rockefeller collection. In 1983, his international stature was further cemented when he was selected to create the offi-

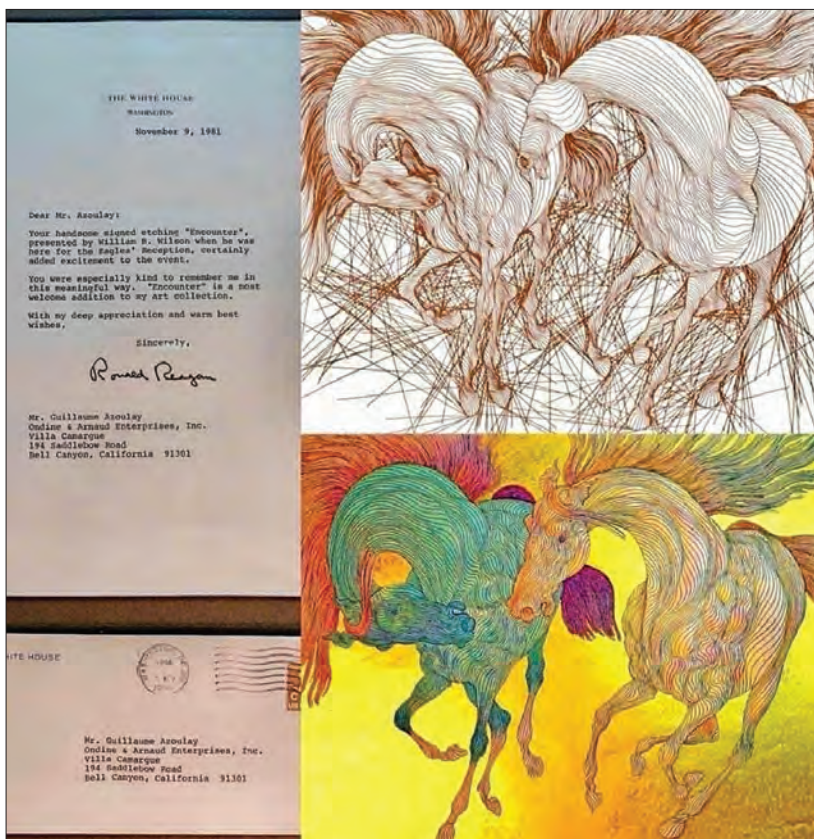
that, unbeknownst to me, was presented by a collector to President Ronald Reagan.

"His gracious letter of acknowledgment remains one of the most meaningful tributes I have received as an artist. I was deeply touched to receive a second letter from President Reagan. I remain profoundly grateful for these two gestures of kindness and recognition."

Over the decades, "Encounter" continued its own rich artistic evolution. The original composition, conceived through the movement and rhythm of line, later became the foundation for a silkscreen in which color entered as another element of expression—transforming the character of the work while preserving the energy and movement of the original image.

Artist Guillaume Azoulay's work, in various mediums, is represented by Bittan Fine Art Inc., located in Valley Village, CA.

For further information on Azoulay's artwork, telephone (866) 219-9161 or go to Bittan Fine Art's website located at: www.bittanfineart.com.



literally, reading between the lines.

Included among the artist's numerous achievements is the acceptance of several of his works into permanent museum collections worldwide. His pieces reside in the esteemed private collections of former U.S.

special Kentucky Derby Festival poster.

Among his most celebrated creations is the iconic 1981 work "Encounter." Recalling its remarkable history in his own words: "In 1981, I created 'Encounter,' a linear etching whose limited edition included a proof

New Release by Guillaume Azoulay Master of the Line



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INCORPORATING AI
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AI is one thread in that picture, not the whole story," she says. "This is a moment of real change, and I find it exciting rather than threatening. AI is going to reshape whole industries, and I expect it to affect the art world in significant ways."

One of those ways is visualization sales tools. "Through our art consulting business, Shanan Campbell Art Consulting, we worked with a collector who asked us to commission five large paintings for an entryway and showed us 'examples.' When I asked who the artist was, they told me it was AI. We used those images as concept only, and found an artist whose work came closest to his vision. For someone who has a hard time describing or visualizing what they want, AI can be an incredibly useful starting point," she says. "Clients now research prices and value often coming to us knowing exactly what to compare against. I think that kind of transparency is healthy. Our artists maintain consistent pricing across their gallery partners, so we're very comfortable operating in a world where clients have more information than ever before."

At Abbot Art in Farmingdale, NY, CEO Rashid Jalili says that using AI in the day-to-day running of a business is inevitable. "I believe every business, in every field, will eventually need to implement AI in some form—not to replace the work, but to advance research, automate what

should be automated and build more efficient processes and standard operating procedures (SOP)," he says.

"At Abbot Art, I don't rely on AI to run the business. I use it to advance ideas I already have: refining procedures, developing more efficient operational workflows for production and tightening the quality control checks that sit around



West Annapolis Artworks & Fine Framing is located in Annapolis, MD.

them. The distinction matters. AI is a tool for sharpening a process I already understand, not a substitute for understanding it."

Mr. Jalili says that he uses AI mainly for developing and refining standard operating procedures, working through production and workflow problems and drafting internal documentation. "It functions as an operational thinking tool. It is not something our customers ever see or interact with, and that is deliberate. If a task is repeatable and

internal, it's a candidate. If it represents the business to a customer, it isn't."

Human input is what makes AI most effective for a business he says. "The clearest limitation is that AI is only as good as the person directing it. To reap any real benefit, the user has to be a genuine expert in the subject being developed—otherwise the output sounds correct and is wrong, and in a production environment that costs you material, labor and a customer's trust. AI can accelerate someone who already knows the answer. It cannot supply the answer to someone who doesn't. That is the single thing I would want other frameshop and gallery owners to understand before integrating it into anything that touches production."

Maintaining customer base confidence is a worry for Mr. Jalili. "This is the real risk, and it's precisely why I keep AI internal. AI imagery and AI-written emails or website copy are off-putting and they will actively deter a customer from purchasing from a vendor. In our industry especially, people are paying for craftsmanship and a human eye—the moment the marketing looks generated, the credibility of the work behind it is called into question. It makes far more sense to implement AI within the internal structure of the business and its op-

erations than at the forefront with clients and customers.

"For the time being—and until market sentiment changes, if it changes—it should not be relied on for phone responses, visual content or online customer communication. The market is currently frightened of AI as the thing that takes people's jobs. Putting it in front of your customers means absorbing that fear into your brand."

Using AI as part of the running of the business becomes part of the vast process. "It does not increase sales by itself," he says. "It can help generate new or existing marketing and branding initiatives and surface opportunities you hadn't considered, but the usage alone doesn't move revenue. Sales come from the quality of the product and the strength of the relationship with the customer. What AI can do is make the operation behind that product more efficient, which protects margin—and that is a very different thing from growth. The internal-versus-customer-facing distinction is the whole ballgame right now. In the hands of someone who genuinely knows their trade, applied to internal operations, AI is a real efficiency gain. Used as a shortcut on the customer-facing side, it undermines the exact thing a gallery or frameshop is selling."

SuAnne Martinez, owner of West Annapolis Artworks & Fine Framing, located in Annapolis, MD, says that such

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WELLSPRING COMMUNICATIONS OFFERS

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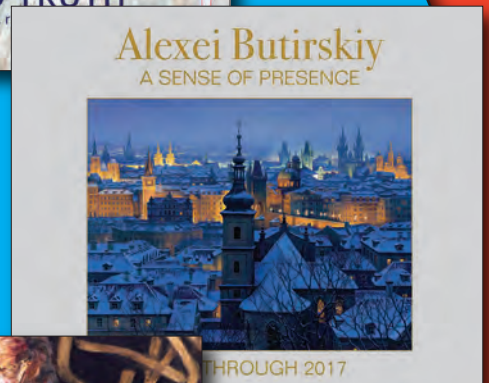
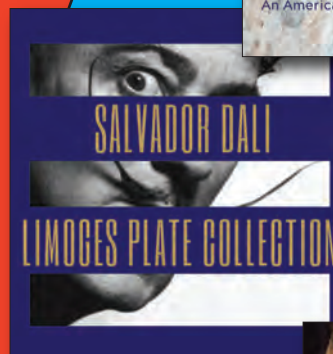
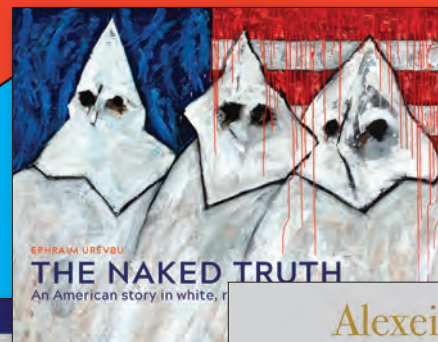
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technology should be used to handle busy work, but leave the creativity to the humans.

"I think AI can be incredibly useful when it's used as a tool rather than a replacement for people. I've found it especially helpful for brainstorming, marketing, organizing ideas and looking at things from a different perspective. But my business is still very hands-on and personal. Someone brings me something that matters to them, and the design decisions we make together are based on experience, instinct and conversation. I don't think AI can replace that," she says.

"I use it quite a bit for marketing—helping with email campaigns, social media ideas, website wording, advertising and even working through ideas for photographs and displays. I also use it when I'm trying to organize an idea or figure out a better way to communicate something to a customer or business group. It's almost like having another person to bounce ideas off of before presenting them to a client.

"I'm a small-business owner, so I wear a lot of hats. AI can help me get through some of those jobs much faster. But, you definitely have to edit it. AI can sound too polished, too wordy or just not like me. Sometimes I'll read something and think, 'I would never say that.' The same thing happens with AI-gen-

erated photographs. They can look beautiful, but sometimes they become too perfect. In my shop, things are layered, a little eclectic and imperfect—that's part of its personality. If an AI image suddenly looks like a perfectly styled showroom, it doesn't represent my business," she says.

"I think the danger is losing authenticity. If every



email sounds AI-generated, every photograph looks artificially perfect and customers only communicate through automated systems, you start losing the personality of the business. That would be particularly damaging for me because people come into my shop for advice and personal attention. They're trusting me with artwork, family photographs, children's art, travel pieces and things that may have tremendous sentimental value. I never want technology to get between me and that relationship.

"What AI has done is make it easier for me to market the business con-

sistently and try things I might not otherwise have had the time or knowledge to do. It helps me create better emails, improve my website, work on advertising and keep coming up with new ways to reach customers. Whether that translates directly into a particular sale is difficult to measure, but it certainly helps me stay more visible. One of the biggest benefits for me has actually been confidence. There are parts of running a business—technology, advertising, websites, social media—that don't come as naturally to me as framing and design do. AI gives me a place to ask questions, experiment and work through ideas without having to know everything beforehand.

"At the same time, I think you have to know when not to use it," Ms. Martinez says. "My customers don't need an AI framing consultant. They need somebody who can look at their piece, listen to its story, understand where it's going and say, 'Here's what I would do.' That's still the heart of my business."

Gallery Fuel's Ms. Hébert says that getting started with AI is a process that business owners need to make their own. "The best way is to start small and make AI earn your trust. You don't have to hand your entire business over to it. Pick one annoying, repetitive task and experiment with it. See what

it does well and where it makes mistakes. This will help you learn where your human judgment is still necessary. I also think some of the fear comes from treating AI as one big, mysterious technology. Try treating prompts like a conversation, instead of something similar to a Google search. Have a back and forth conversation. It's much easier to understand when you think of it as a tool or potentially a collection of tools that can help you with specific jobs. Remember, at this point, no one knows everything about AI. We are all learning," she says.

"I would also encourage gallery owners not to focus exclusively on the fear of AI taking someone's job. For a small gallery, the more immediate question is often 'What could I accomplish if I had an extra 10 hours a week or hired a part-time employee to help with administration?' I think that is a much more useful way to think about it. And don't overlook the small stuff," she says.

"AI can help create checklists, turn meeting notes into action items, draft a follow-up email or organize exhibition information, prepare a first draft of a social media calendar or help document information that currently exists only in your head. None of those things are particularly glamorous. But saving 20 minutes here and 30 minutes there is exactly how you create capacity."

Koleen Kaffan is Editor in Chief of Art World News.

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ARTIFICIAL VERSUS ACTUAL INTELLIGENCE

By Sheila McCumby

Artificial intelligence has officially invaded the art and picture framing industry, igniting a heated debate across social media groups and framing forums. Opinions are radically divided: some framers are enthusiastically embracing AI to automate everything, while others adamantly refuse to bow down to our future robot overlords. We've all seen Terminator, and nobody wants Skynet running their computer mat cutter.

It is easy to see why the tech garners such mixed reviews. On the one hand, every week brings a shiny new application promising to write your web copy, manage social media, forecast inventory and maybe even organize your moulding

scrap pile (okay, maybe not that last one, that would require an actual robot).

On the other hand, AI comes with troubling baggage. It burns through staggering amounts of energy and water, leaving a massive carbon footprint at a time when eco-friendly materials and sustainable wood sourcing are top priorities.

Worse yet, AI is notorious for confidently inventing fake facts, known as "hallucinations," or delivering tone-deaf advice that can be off-putting to customers, or

phones with AI-generated mockups, asking for a frame that defies the laws of physics and a moulding finish that simply does not exist in the real world.



These impossible renderings can be deeply frustrating to replicate, but on the bright side they serve a secret purpose: they are a visual shortcut to understanding your client's underlying taste, color preferences and aesthetic vision before you pull a single sample off the wall.

worse, lose you money.

It is likely you are already feeling AI's presence right at your design counter. Customers are walking into shops clutching smart-

Amid all the hype, fear and legitimate operational headaches, we are overlooking a fundamental distinction: artificial intelligence is not the same as act-

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ual intelligence.

What Is Artificial Intelligence?

In the framing and gallery world, think of AI as an infinitely fast, hyper-caFFEinated intern who has read every book about framing on the internet, but has never actually touched a piece of art or cut a piece of foam board.

AI does not “think.” It recognizes patterns across massive amounts of data and predicts what text or images should come next. When put to work in a small art or framing business, that capability can be amazingly helpful. You can use AI for:

- **Marketing, Visuals & Content Creation:** Map out a full month’s worth of social media captions before your morning coffee cools down. Modern POS software uses AI visualization features to project custom-framed artwork directly onto images of a client’s living room wall, removing hesitation on high-ticket sales.

Meanwhile, design platforms like Canva or Photoshop use AI to clean up artwork glare or swap backgrounds, while AI-drafted blog posts keep your local SEO sharp.

- **Customer Communication:** Think of AI as a polite office assistant who never eats lunch or calls in sick.

Web widgets handle late-night questions about store hours and turn-around times so you don’t wake up to missed voicemails. It can draft classy email quotes and construct gracious responses to Google reviews, especially from “that client” who complains that custom wood moulding costs more than a plastic poster frame.

- **Operations & Admin:** Voice tools like Otter.ai record client consultations



so you never forget whether they wanted a blue or green mat on that complex shadowbox. Intelligent accounting software scans paper receipts and catches duplicate vendor invoices before you overpay. Best of all, POS analytics evaluate historical sales data to stop you from panic-buying three miles of distressed barnwood moulding you’ll never sell.

- **Sales & Staffing:** AI can draft targeted job listings for skilled framing technicians, then scan a mountain of incoming resumes to filter out applicants whose only framing experience is

hanging a poster with thumb tacks. Online intake forms can also automatically separate legitimate, lucrative 50-frame hotel orders from scammers and tire-kickers, letting you jump on those high-value sales instantly.

AI turns three hours of tedious back-office typing and organizing into 20 minutes. That is real value, as long as you remember to proofread its work.

What Is Actual Intelligence?

Actual intelligence belongs to you, the framer who has built muscle memory, callouses and has thousands of advanced design ideas, that were developed over years of real-world experience.

AI can explain the physics of tension, but actual intelligence is knowing exactly how much pressure to apply when breaking a 40-inch piece of glass on a wall cutter so it does not explode into a hundred-dollar pile of glitter. Human touch is still essential.

Actual intelligence is built on traits no software update can simulate:

- **Tactile Wisdom:** Knowing instantly that a warp in a natural walnut moulding is going to mess up your join, regardless of how long it sits in a vice.

- **Diplomatic Tact:** Tactfully guiding a client away from pairing a bright orange triple-mat with their antique family portrait without hurting their feelings. “Good art doesn’t necessarily need to match your sofa.”

- **Conservation Instinct:** Knowing that just because a glue can stick something down forever doesn’t mean it should.

- **Crisis Management:** Fixing a chipped corner join 10 minutes before the gallery exhibition without sweating (or bleeding) onto the artwork.

Data vs. Taste

One of the biggest traps in modern business is assuming that access to more data leads to better decisions. An AI tool can look at online trend metrics and tell you that pastel pink mats and distressed barnwood are trending in home decor.

But actual intelligence is standing at your design counter, looking the client in the eye, and knowing that specific combination will look atrocious on their vintage concert poster. AI processes speed and options.

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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
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Humans provide taste, context and sanity.

The Goal: Work Smarter, Not Robotic

The trick isn't to fight technology or surrender to it. The goal is to outsource the mundane so you can devote your time to your craft. Let AI draft your promotional emails, summarize vendor updates, transcribe client meeting notes and organize your POS sales records. Then, use the hours you saved to do what machines can't: build gorgeous custom frames, host gallery nights, talk to real human beings and build a

brand based on trust and craftsmanship.

Machines can assemble

of the custom framing industry doesn't belong to software, nor does it belong to shops that stubbornly

more time doing what they do best: applying true artistry, preserving history and building lasting relationships with their customers.



data at lightning speed, but they can't care about the art. And in our line of work, caring about the art is the entire business. The future

ignore modern tools. It belongs to the framers who learn to use both, letting algorithms tackle the digital clutter so they can spend

Sheila McCumby, owner of Strategies for Success, a small business consulting firm, connects with audiences worldwide as a popular speaker, writer, mentor and teacher. Her podcast, 'The Framing Chronicles' focuses on challenges faced by independent companies in the art and framing industry. With decades of experience as a picture framer and shop owner (since the early 90s), she's dedicated to helping small businesses boost profits and streamline operations. For further information, visit her website located at: www.mystrategies4success.com.

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BEYOND THE WHITE WALL

WHY GALLERIES NEED TO SELL AN EXPERIENCE

By Litsa Spanos

For years, galleries were thought of primarily as places to view and purchase art. But today, I believe galleries have an opportunity to become something much bigger: places where people gather, connect, celebrate and experience art in an entirely new way. At ADC, events have become an important part of how we introduce people to our gallery. We've hosted fashion shows, wine tastings, artist talks, workshops, fundraisers, corporate gatherings and community collaborations. This September, we're hosting a Women's Empowerment event that will bring another group together inside the gallery—not simply to shop, but to connect in a beautiful, creative environment.

Every event is an opportunity to introduce your gallery to someone who might never otherwise walk through your doors. Galleries can still feel intimidating to some people. They may assume they need to understand art before visiting or should only come in when they're ready to purchase. Events change that dynamic. Guests come for the speaker, organization, wine tasting or celebration, and while they're there, they experience the art naturally.

They look. They ask questions. They discover a piece they love. They learn about

your framing, installation or consulting services. Most importantly, they become comfortable with your gallery.

For nonprofit events, we take it one step further. ADC donates 10% of any art sales generated through the event back to the organi-



zation. Suddenly, the entire gallery becomes part of their fundraiser. Guests have an added incentive to purchase because they're also supporting a cause they care about. It's a win for the nonprofit and a meaningful sales opportunity for the gallery.

Successful events do require planning. We consider the partners involved, flow of the space, food and beverage, entertainment, promotion and how guests will interact with the artwork. The experience should feel special while still allowing the gallery and art to play a starring role.

Galleries can also benefit tremendously by opening their spaces to outside organizations. Your gallery may be the perfect venue for corporate receptions, nonprofit fundraisers, networking events, client appreciation parties and private celebrations. But don't assume peo-

ple know that.

Make venue rentals visible on your website and social media. Connect with event planners, nonprofits, businesses and professional organizations. Show photos and videos of past events so people can envision their own gathering surrounded by art.

Beyond rental revenue, every event introduces a new audience to your business. One gathering can lead to a new collector, framing client, corporate art project, designer relationship, future rental or referral.

That's why I don't measure an event's success solely by what we sell that evening. I look at the new people who discovered ADC, the relationships we created and the opportunities that follow.

Your walls may be filled with incredible art, but your space itself can be one of your greatest assets. Give people more reasons to walk through the door, and they may discover much more than they came for.

Litsa Spanos is the President of ADC Fine Art in Cincinnati, Ohio, and the founder of Art Design Consultants Inc, SmartSell Membership, author "Secrets of the Art World" and founder of ACA, Art Comes Alive—one of the nation's premier art recognition and sales programs connecting artists with private and corporate collectors. Her mission is to support contemporary, living artists and her company ranks as the top 2% of women-owned businesses in the nation based on revenue. ADC Fine Art has two locations: a 13,000 square foot gallery and custom frameshop in Cincinnati, OH's west end and a gallery and custom frameshop in the heart of Ft. Thomas, KY. Visit the website to learn more located at: www.adcfineart.com.

SALES STRATEGIES

BUSY BUT STILL STRUGGLING TO MOVE FORWARD?

by Katherine Hébert

Small and mid-size art galleries manage an extraordinary amount of information with very small teams. Artist details, artwork records, collector conversations, exhibition plans, shipping arrangements, marketing calendars, contracts, invoices and follow-up tasks all need attention, often at the same time.

As I'm sure you can imagine or maybe are experiencing first-hand, often the gallery's information and workflows are scattered across too many places.

I see it a lot with my clients. One person tracks collector conversations in their inbox. Exhibition deadlines live in the director's head. Artwork information sits in inventory software. Marketing ideas are captured in a separate document on someone's laptop. Tasks are divided among notebooks, email threads and people's memories.

Making the Most of Tools

Each tool may work well on its own, so it might be hard to see the problem. But, the friction appears in the gaps between them. Those gaps create duplicated work, missed follow-ups, inconsistent information and last-

minute scrambles. They also make it harder for gallery leaders to see what is happening across the business as a whole and decide where to focus their time, energy and money next. A gallery operating system can

structure for managing the work of the gallery. It brings together the information, workflows, responsibilities and priorities that help a team run the business. And with so many moving parts, every little bit helps.



bring those moving parts together and alleviate a lot of daily stress managing the gallery.

What is an operating system for an art gallery?

A gallery operating system is basically a connected

Think of it as the working layer that connects your gallery's strategy to daily action.

It can include:

- Artist and artwork information
- Collector and prospect relationships
- Sales opportunity

pipelines and follow-up

- Exhibition planning
- Marketing campaigns and content
- Projects, tasks, and deadlines
- Meeting notes and decisions
- Standard operating procedures
- Business goals and performance measures
- Finance tracking

Value Comes From the Connections

An upcoming exhibition can link to the participating artists, available artwork, collector outreach, installation tasks, press materials, marketing schedule and sales goals. Everyone can see the same picture without searching across several systems. For a solo gallery owner, that connected view reduces the mental load of keeping every detail in your head and makes it easier to see what needs your attention next for optimizing growth.

Outside of the gallery, the same process can work. For arts and cultural organizations, the structure may also connect programs, audiences, donors, grants, partnerships, events and reporting requirements.

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The warning signs of disconnected systems

Of course a gallery does not decide to create a fragmented way of working. It develops gradually. A new tool solves an immediate problem, another spreadsheet fills a gap, and team members create personal systems to keep up.

Building an Information Base

Over time, you may notice that:

- Important information lives in one person's head or inbox.
- Staff enter the same details into several places.

- Tasks get lost after meetings.
- Team members are un-

For a solo gallery owner, a connected view reduces the mental load of keeping every detail in your head and makes it easier to see what needs your attention next for optimizing growth.

- Collector follow-up sometimes depends on someone remembering.
- Exhibition planning becomes urgent too close to opening night.
- Marketing is reactive because information arrives sure which version of a document is current.
- Leadership has difficulty seeing workload, priorities and progress.
- Growth creates more confusion instead of more capacity.

These are systems problems. Adding another disconnected tool may give temporary relief, but it can also add another place the team has to check. And reducing unnecessary surprises is key.

Columnist and industry expert Katherine Hébert helps art galleries improve sales, marketing and operations. She is the founder of Gallery Fuel, a business advisory practice and bespoke gallery operating system that helps small to mid-sized galleries connect strategy to day-to-day execution, create clearer systems and modernize how they run their business. Learn more at the Gallery Fuel website at: www.galleryfuel.com.



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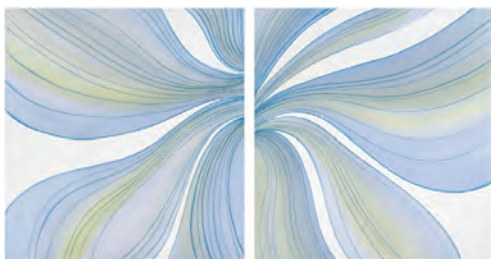


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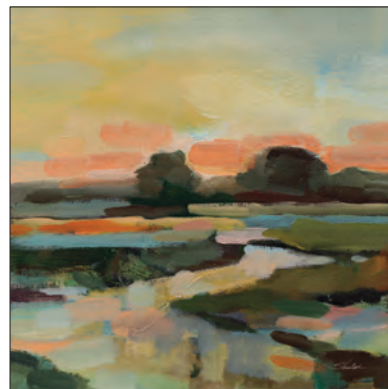
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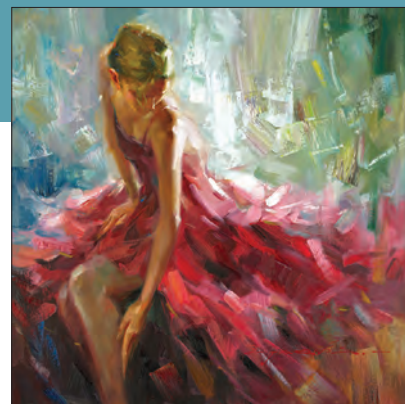
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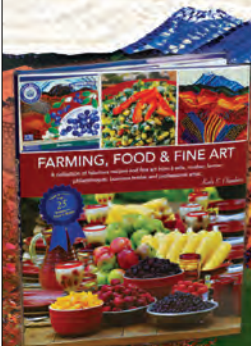
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Art World News, (ISSN 1525 1772) Volume XXXI, Number 8, is published 12 times a year by Wellspring Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 129, Rowayton, CT 06853. (Phone 203.854.8566) (Fax 203.900.0225). Single copy price \$10.
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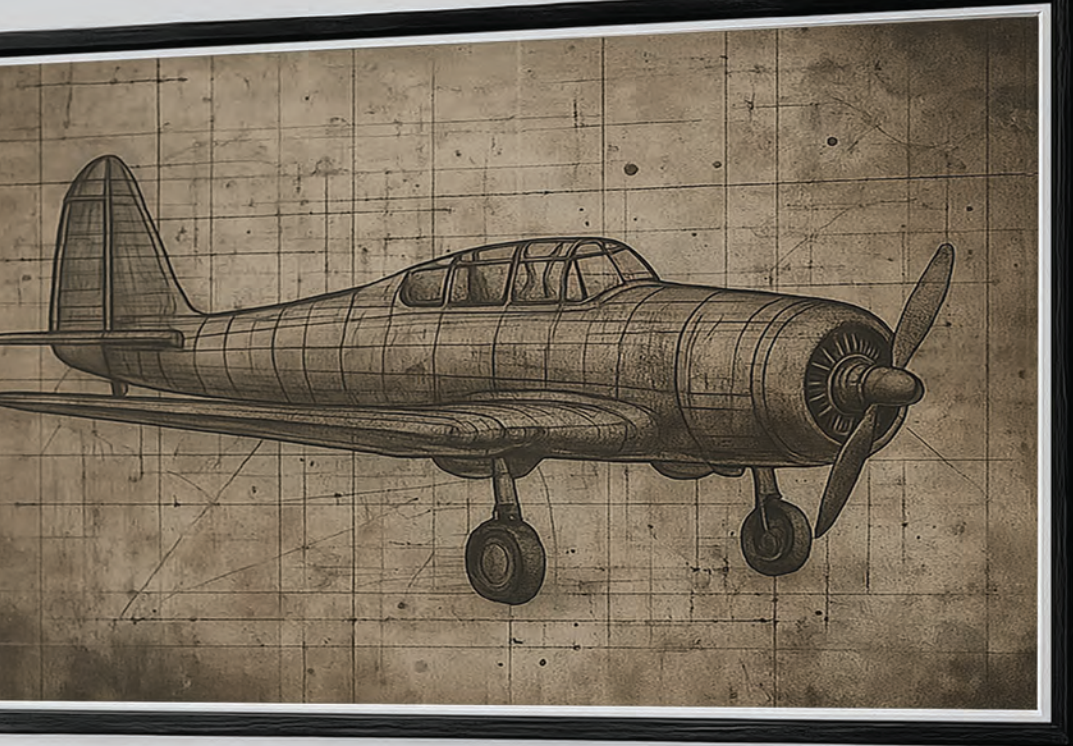
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