

## Common Culture Tips for Artists

8. Relational aesthetics has a lot to answer for. Never has a practice been so perfectly matched to the guilty conscience of the middle class. It is the ideal vehicle for the chattering classes to have some fun and make a virtue of their chattering in the guise of social engagement and democracy, a bit like amateur dramatics but with less rehearsal. Middle-class management skills are deployed to good effect; and, as this type of 'art' chimes well with the 'happy-clappy' instrumentalisation so favoured by art bureaucrats and funding bodies, it is lucrative, redemptive and lends itself well to the demonstration of 'participation' — a sort of cultural administration with a painted face.



29. A common occurrence at art events is being introduced to someone who refuses to admit they have met you before. These situations can be very awkward. It is deemed polite not to be too insistent. If your "We've actually met before" is greeted with further denial, you must persist. Supply specific details to prove them wrong: "Yes we have, at such and such an exhibition... and we also met at the airport." These types know what they are doing. Obviously, they have made the calculation that you are of absolutely no benefit to them at all. However painful their refusal to acknowledge your previous meeting might be, in such circumstances it is worth dragging out the matter till it becomes awkward and embarrassing in the extreme. This is good. Hold your nerve and refuse to be subjugated and ignored! Go on to the attack, calmly present the details of your previous meeting, embellish them even! But most of all savor their irritation. Choreograph the encounter to flush out their denial of your encounter as either a vivid display of their misjudged arrogance or a demonstration of their cognitive decline. Either way these types need to be taken down a peg or two.

31. Regional accents (which effectively means working-class accents) can be problematic, but also quite attractive. If you have one you will already know the problems it can cause, but moving into the art world will heighten this even more. Middle-class posh, and upper-class very posh, for whom privilege is the norm, populate and dominate the art world. They exude confidence, dress well and tend to be louder and more domineering in conversation. They are also able to act as if they know each other, even if they have never met. A lot of the best artists are working class. You do get working-class curators with regional accents, but they tend to be in charge of galleries attached to libraries.

60. The exchange of philosophical reference can be enriching and pleasurable when discussing your work; a form of intellectual shadow boxing, but take care not to go too far. Any intellectual kudos you might achieve will quickly evaporate if you allow yourself to be maneuvered into a position where you have to give a detailed explanation of how the theories of Deleuze or Derrida actually relate to the artwork.

61. References to Deleuze are particularly effective, not only have most people not read his work, of those who have, only a small minority really understand his philosophy. There's an unspoken agreement that it is in everyone's best interest to keep it superficial; confidently deploy the reference, gather the credit, but quickly move on, leaving an enticing whiff of the exotic in the air. That way everyone can shelter their incomprehension behind anxious nods and communal pretense.

62. But then again, Derrida is such a lovely sounding word. It fills the air with embodied sophistication, so take pleasure in its use - but make sure to get the pronunciation right, Derrida (der-ee-dah). Many a valiant effort to summon up intellectual credibility has been ruined by gauche miss-pronunciation. Goethe and Jung trip a lot of people up.

64. No doubt you will come across a type of man of a certain age, who by virtue of their underwhelming physical attractiveness, and the experience of loneliness this induced in their adolescent years, spent the majority of their time in their bedroom writing lyrics/poetry, listening to Joy Division and mimicking Ian Curtis's dance routine. For some inexplicable reason, such figures have become very influential curators and artists, so it would do no harm to learn a few lines of a Joy Division lyric or remember something about an album cover.

69. It is important to be attentive to body language in order to successfully decode the dynamic of group situations, and individual encounters, but be careful, misreading this can have dire consequences. A lot of this can be resolved by recognizing what Deleuze so astutely reminds us, that most social interaction is predictable repetition with just a little bit of difference. So, on being introduced to someone new, you can reasonably assume that if their hand is moving towards you it is likely intended as a handshake and you should reciprocate the action. If, however, you have misjudged the gesture and realise that they are in fact waving to someone behind you, you can still abort your action by revising it mid gesture. Think of it as a form of improvised 'shape throwing'; confidently mutate the aborted handshake in a smooth movement of your hand up to your face and adjust your hair or glasses. Or if you are in an artists' group with unaddressed internal frictions, manifest the rebuttal as a punch to one of your collaborators, passing it off as a sign of your close, if playfully competitive relationship - remember, a punch is just an unopened handshake.

70. Provincial anxieties? They do tend to creep up on you, don't they? Despite knowing that what you do is as good as anything achieved anywhere else in the rest of the country, the niggling self-doubt induced by geographic and cultural isolation makes you a tad touchy. For example, if someone visiting your recently refurbished gallery compliments you on the space and your innovative exhibition programme, don't let your barely suppressed anxiety erupt by blurting out that you see it as your mission "to introduce post-modernism to North Wales", people will just think you live in a bubble.



71. Producing artists' books is a good way to circumnavigate publishers, who will inevitably interfere with a rigorous peer review editorial process, and they tap into a fetishisation of the handmade, appearing anti-consumerist to boot. Innovative or gimmicky materials can be effective and further endorse the book as an artefact that cannot be reproduced through means of mass production. You could, for example, produce something that looks like a punk fanzine. Despite not needing to use a photocopier, as your printer at home is cheaper and easier to access, photocopying your zine will give it the pretense of anti-establishment authenticity and suggest some affiliation to a subculture. As no one reads books anymore, it is best to keep the content light so as to maximise accessibility.

72. If you are asked to contribute to a publication, avoid writing a critical text and opt for an 'artwork in a published form'. This allows you to include it in your CV as both an exhibited artwork and a publication. With the widespread cut in arts funding and the 'output harvest' research culture that prevails in art schools and universities these days, this approach is practically a necessity.

73. It is always best to be nice to curators. They are often quite a fragile and moody lot, so you need to be careful about how you approach them. Don't look as though you are after a show and never talk about art. We find it is a good idea to engage them in chat about their colourful trainers. If you do find yourself talking about their job, commend them for the self-less act of generosity their work entails— remember curating comes from the Latin word 'curare', meaning 'to care'— and how if only your ego was not so big you'd much prefer to be doing what they do. Making art is such a selfish act by comparison.

74. It is important to actively use all current social media platforms. The number of likes or reposts of your recent selfie at the innovative 'cAR booT sale' you organised will contribute greatly to the sense of 'impact' that your artistic processes are having on the public. As all of the dominant current cultural structures clamor to validate their funding from the private sector or government alike, amassing this kind of 'material' is more important than ever. Don't include the video of the fight that you and friends had with the disappointed angry locals who turned up to buy children's clothes, video games and phone chargers.

75. Remember, this is the age of the dominance of neo-liberal thought (and policy) and as a consequence no one trusts artists. If you are invited to a production meeting to discuss your recently accepted artistic proposal, try and remain positive throughout and stick to your guns. However, this won't be easy. It is likely that everyone else at the meeting will assume that you subscribe to the doctrine of 'socially engaged art practice' and think that as they determine the funding their ideas are better than yours and try and convince you to do something that they want you to do instead. You will be confused as to why they have commissioned an artist at all. Don't worry, this is the new norm. Don't be thrown by the fact that anyone who turns up at the meeting is likely to want to join in the discussion and are actively encouraged by the arts outreach officer to do so. This could include the postman, a florist, pizza delivery person, Avon lady or a burglar posing as the gas man, as well as the photographer from the local newspaper who suggest the project needs celebrity endorsement and proposes inviting Rolf Harris\*. All of their views will be considered over yours. Artists have to be very nimble in these situations. Rewrite the proposal, handing over the project to the local community, take the fee and replicate the project in various other 'communities' for a reasonable financial gain and zero artistic effort.

*\* Suggestion made prior to Harris's conviction and imprisonment for sexual offences.*

76. Most curators tend to have had a good education, some of them are intelligent.