A hand is pointing at a computer monitor. The monitor displays text and a large title. In the background, there is a keyboard, a mouse, and an alarm clock.

To market your artwork,
you need an online presence.
Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer
or a novice who requires
some handholding,

here's a guide
to going digital.

Get on the Web

By MICHAEL CHESLEY JOHNSON

Back in the days when “googol” was a mathematical term (1 followed by 100 zeros), artists had few ways of promoting themselves. Business cards and magazine ads weren’t necessarily easy, but at least they were no harder than picking up the phone.

But now googol has become Google and the Internet has become a powerful and technical marketing tool. Many of us artists—who think the choice between traditional and acrylic gesso is as technical as life should get—wonder if we need the added complication of a Web site.

Well, the Internet is here to stay, and if you are to thrive as an artist, you must adapt. A Web site is one of your cheapest and most important self-marketing tools. You can use it

both to reach out to the world and to bring the world to you.

If you’re of the DIY mindset, then building your own Web site might be for you. But if you prefer to “call in a contractor,” you might want to look at options like virtual galleries that can help you create a Web site or even do it for you.

Let’s start with the artist who thinks nothing of putting up sheetrock.

All in a name

The first thing you’ll need to create your own Web site is an online domain name. This is a phrase, like www.artistsmagazine.com, that visitors will type in to get to your site. The domain name should be simple, meaningful and, above all, easy to remember. Consider it your brand name, as you’ll include it on your business cards and on all advertising.

Domain names are bought—or, more technically, rented—from a domain name registrar such as GoDaddy. Prices vary, but most cost about \$10 or less per year. Get a domain name that ends in “.com” rather than one of the less well-known domain extensions. You’ll have to check availability; if you find that your perfect domain name is already taken, be prepared with variations on the name.

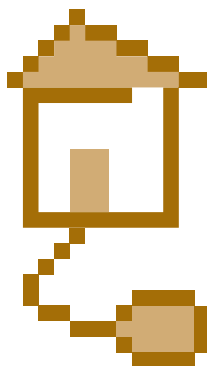
Next, you’ll need a “Web host” or a place to keep your Web site. You can either pay for this service or try a free one. Many domain name registrars also function as Web hosts and will give you a discount if you use their company for both. Prices vary depending on how much space you need, but \$10 per month is average. (See Domain Name Registrars and Hosts, at left.)

Free Web hosts may seem like an attractive option, but there’s a downside. First, you won’t get as much online space as you would from a host that charges a fee. Second, free hosts often place ads (usually through pop-ups) on your Web site, a practice that

Building Sites

Domain name registrars and hosts

Many of the following domain name registrars also serve as hosts, and some offer generic site-building tools or will create a custom Web site for you. Prices vary with different options and promotions, so visit their Web sites for current rates.



Addr (www.addr.com)

877/233-7266

Domain name—not offered as a stand-alone, but is included in premium hosting packages

Hosting—\$7.95/month

Offers custom Web design

BraveNet (www.bravenet.com)

Domain name—\$8.95/year (free with hosting)

Hosting—\$4.95/month (also offers free hosting)

Offers site-building tools

Domain Direct (www.domaindirect.com)

866/337-8633

Domain name—\$14.99/year (free with hosting)

Hosting—\$14.95/month

Offers site-building tools

GoDaddy (www.godaddy.com)

480/505-8899

Domain name—\$8.95/year (free with hosting)

Hosting—\$3.99/month

Offers both site-building tools and custom Web design

IPower (www.ipower.com)

888/511-4678

Domain name—\$8.25/year (less with hosting)

Hosting—\$3.95/month

Offers site-building tools and custom Web design

NameSecure (www.namesecure.com)

Domain name—\$7.95/year (less with hosting)

Hosting—\$7.92/month

Network Solutions

(www.networksolutions.com)

888/642-9675

Domain name—\$34.99/year (free with hosting)

Hosting—\$9.96/month

Offers site-building tools and custom Web design

Register.com (www.register.com)

888/734-4783

Domain name—\$35/year

Hosting—\$14.95/month

Offers site-building tools and custom Web design

WALT GONSKE FINE ART

WALT GONSKE

[MAIN](#)
[ARTWORK](#)
[BIOGRAPHY](#)
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[REPRESENTATION](#)

About Walt Gonske

Gonske studied at the Frank Reilly School of Art in New York City. The late Reilly gave him solid training in illustration. After a number of years as a successful illustrator in New York, he moved to Taos in 1972, where he began to work almost exclusively on location. Frustrated by the limitations inherent in weather imposed on his painting in plein-air, he set about customizing a Ford pickup into a "paintmobile," or rather, a studio on wheels. This mobile studio is stocked with canvases of various sizes and textures, and allows him to go on painting trips throughout California, Colorado, or wherever the road may lead. Gonske continues to live and work from Taos.



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Contact: 505-758-4042 or waltgonskart@msn.com

Ready-made pages

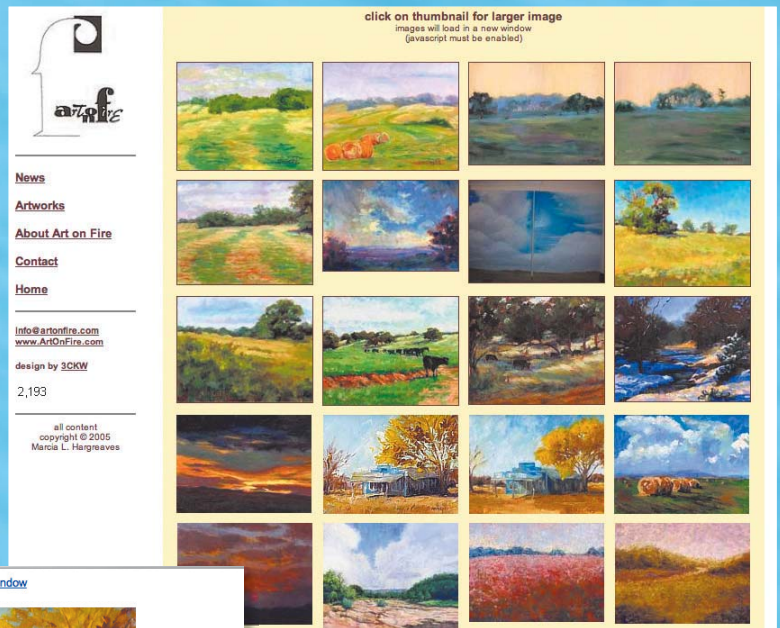
Walt Gonske's site (www.waltgonske.com) was created with MyStudioSite.com, which allows users to build their own easy-to-navigate Web sites. Gonske's bio page, for example (at left), is sophisticated and uncluttered.

makes your site look unprofessional. Many free hosts will let you upgrade to a paid subscription, however, to remove the ads and get more hosting space.

Tool time

One advantage of the free hosts is that they cater to the technically-challenged and provide easy-to-use tools. They offer layout templates so your pages have a more professional look. The problem is that you'll sacrifice some originality and control, as the templates rarely allow much customization. Also, bear in mind that the templates are generic and not geared specifically to the needs of artists.

If you enjoy puzzles—and don't mind poring through a manual—you might consider an off-the-shelf software package with more capabilities (for list, see Software Suggestions on page 22). Microsoft Front-Page lets you create and edit pages, link pages into menus, apply "themes" to your site and upload your




click on thumbnail for larger image
images will load in a new window
(javascript must be enabled)

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[Artworks](#)
[About Art on Fire](#)
[Contact](#)
[Home](#)

info@artonfire.com
www.ArtOnFire.com
 design by 3CKW
 2,193
 all content
 copyright © 2005
 Marcia L. Hargreaves

[close window](#)



Blue House at Round Top
2004, oil, 9x12

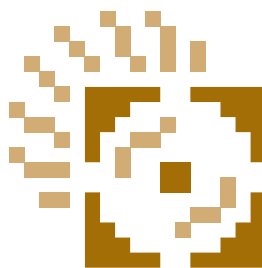
Revolving art

Marcia Hargreaves's site (www.artonfire.com), designed by www.3CrowsKeepingWatch.com, has a simple layout with a custom logo and a central spot on the main page that cycles several of her paintings. Her Artworks page (above) features commissioned and sold art as well as works available for sale.

Do It Yourself

Software suggestions

These are only some of the software packages that can help you get started on the Web. Before buying, make sure you choose the best package for your needs by reading the product reviews online. Note: Some packages work only on certain platforms (Windows, Macintosh or Linux).



Adobe Dreamweaver

(www.macromedia.com)
800/833-6687
Platform: Windows, Mac
\$399

Coffee Cup HTML Editor

(www.coffeecup.com)
866/734-4865
Platform: Windows
\$49

Create (www.stone.com)

505/345-4800
Platform: Mac
\$149

Freeway Express (www.softpress.com)

800/853-6454
Platform: Mac
\$99

Microsoft FrontPage

(www.microsoft.com)
800/642-7676
Platform: Windows
\$199

Namo Web Editor

(www.namo.com)
Platform: Windows
\$150

Nvu (www.nvu.com)

Platform: Windows, Mac, Linux
Freeware

site to your host. A similar but more powerful package is Macromedia's Dreamweaver. It has more features than most of us will ever use and it's geared to the professional developer.

One last option is to consider your word processor. Most will let you save your documents in Web format, add links to other pages and incorporate basic HTML coding. But when it comes to managing the site, most lack the tools you need. Unless you're creating a very basic site, it's best to stay away from this option.

The best-laid plans

Now that you've chosen your domain name, hosting service and software, what's next? You need to create an overall structure for your site. A Web site consists of pages, usually a main or "index" page and several sub-pages, all linked together with a menu. The simpler the structure, the easier it is for your visitor to navigate.

A Web site that resembles an artist's portfolio works best. You'll need a simple eye-catching

index page (in effect, your cover page), as well as a page for your bio, credits and contact information. You'll also need a page for your images, one for listing your galleries and one for listing upcoming events. You can have more pages, hundreds if you want, but the more you have, the more cumbersome your site will be to maintain.

All of these pages must be linked through a menu. Again, the simpler the better. The menu on your index page should be bold, colorful and obvious. On your sub-pages, put the menu both at the top and bottom. You don't want to lose a sale because a visitor couldn't find your contact information.

Next, you'll want to consider the layout of each page. As an artist, you have a sense of design, but you may not have the eye of an advertising designer. Many artists I know have to work hard at this part of Web page development. Layouts should be eye-catching but simple, consistent from page to page, and, above all, functional. A visitor needs only two things: He needs to comprehend the information you've put on the page, and he needs to find the menu so he can go to another page on your site. If you can keep these two rules in mind, you'll design good pages.

Get the picture?

Nothing raises an artist's hackles more than a reproduction that isn't right. Of course, you want to display the best representation of your work on your gallery page, but artists need to understand that no computer screen will show anything other than an approximation of the real thing. The digital images will be small, of low resolution and, perhaps, not true to the color of the original.

So just what size and resolution should your images be? Screens vary, but a good rule of thumb is to make digital images no more than 600 pixels on one side with 72 dots per

inch (dpi). They should be saved in JPG format and at a compression level that will keep the file size around 100 kilobytes (kb) or less. Any larger, and the images will take too long to load on a dial-up connection. You may also want to create “thumbnails”—tiny versions of the images that link to the larger versions. This will keep your gallery page loading quickly. As for color, you may find that what looks right on your screen may not on someone else’s. There’s not much you can do about this except make sure what’s on your screen is indeed close to the original color.

Although you may be unhappy with small images, know that people who try to steal from your Web site and violate copyright law by printing *giclées* will find your images unsuitable. Keeping the images small is an easier alternative than embedding a digital signature in each image. You should, however, put “Copyright © 2006 Jane Doe” on your index page. Even though you own the copyright, printing the symbols will deter would-be copyright violators. Of course, you’ll use other graphics on your site such as colorful logos and menu buttons. Keep the file size of these graphics very small, say 20 kilobytes or less.

Necessities and accessories: keywords and more

Your site needs to have keywords associated with it. For example, the keywords for *The Artist’s Magazine’s* Web site are: “The Artist’s Magazine, art, fine art, landscape, magazine, book, books, painting, drawing, artists, watercolor, oils, pastel, acrylics.” These keywords go into the keyword metatag—a Web page component—where

search engines such as Google can find and use them for indexing your site. Your list of keywords should be succinct. The keywords should also appear in what’s called the “visible text”—the text you can see on-screen—of your index page.

One tool you’ll want is a hit counter, which tells you how many visitors come to your site. It’s more than just a number to feed your ego; many counters, such as the free ones from www.sitemeter.com or www.statcounter.com, give you other useful information. They can tell you what keywords a visitor used to search for your site and what page the visitor came from to get to yours (the “referral page”), such as a painting society’s site. This information will

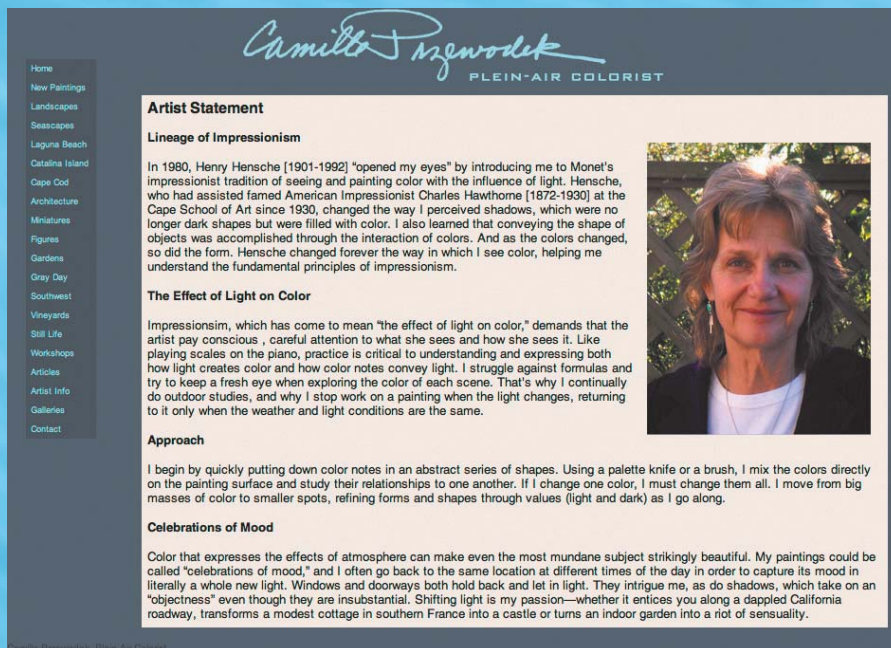


Home anywhere

Robert Genn’s Web site, www.robertgenn.com, designed by Andrew Niculescu, includes painting dimensions and titles with the thumbnail images (above). His contact page (at left) includes a number of ways to reach the busy traveling artist—even by satellite phone.

Making a statement

Camille Przewodek's site (www.przewodek.com), created by Stuart Corwin of Lucky Duck Designs, includes an artist's statement as well as a description of her painting technique.



The screenshot shows the website for Camille Przewodek, a Plein-Air Colorist. The navigation menu on the left includes: Home, New Paintings, Landscapes, Seascapes, Laguna Beach, Catalina Island, Cape Cod, Architecture, Miniatures, Figures, Gardens, Gray Day, Southwest, Vineyards, Still Life, Workshops, Articles, Artist Info, Galleries, and Contact. The main content area features an "Artist Statement" with sections on "Lineage of Impressionism", "The Effect of Light on Color", "Approach", and "Celebrations of Mood". A portrait of Camille Przewodek is shown on the right.

Artist Statement

Lineage of Impressionism

In 1980, Henry Hensche [1901-1992] "opened my eyes" by introducing me to Monet's impressionist tradition of seeing and painting color with the influence of light. Hensche, who had assisted famed American Impressionist Charles Hawthorne [1872-1930] at the Cape School of Art since 1930, changed the way I perceived shadows, which were no longer dark shapes but were filled with color. I also learned that conveying the shape of objects was accomplished through the interaction of colors. And as the colors changed, so did the form. Hensche changed forever the way in which I see color, helping me understand the fundamental principles of impressionism.

The Effect of Light on Color

Impressionism, which has come to mean "the effect of light on color," demands that the artist pay conscious, careful attention to what she sees and how she sees it. Like playing scales on the piano, practice is critical to understanding and expressing both how light creates color and how color notes convey light. I struggle against formulas and try to keep a fresh eye when exploring the color of each scene. That's why I continually do outdoor studies, and why I stop work on a painting when the light changes, returning to it only when the weather and light conditions are the same.

Approach

I begin by quickly putting down color notes in an abstract series of shapes. Using a palette knife or a brush, I mix the colors directly on the painting surface and study their relationships to one another. If I change one color, I must change them all. I move from big masses of color to smaller spots, refining forms and shapes through values (light and dark) as I go along.

Celebrations of Mood

Color that expresses the effects of atmosphere can make even the most mundane subject strikingly beautiful. My paintings could be called "celebrations of mood," and I often go back to the same location at different times of the day in order to capture its mood in literally a whole new light. Windows and doorways both hold back and let in light. They intrigue me, as do shadows, which take on an "objectness" even though they are insubstantial. Shifting light is my passion—whether it entices you along a dappled California roadway, transforms a modest cottage in southern France into a castle or turns an indoor garden into a riot of sensuality.

help you fine-tune your keywords and the list of sites you share links with.

You might want to consider other tools for your Web site, such as a place for visitors to sign up for your mailing list and enter their names, and postal and e-mail addresses, which will help you gather contacts for promotional mailings. A guestbook will give you the same benefit, but be aware that you'll want to moderate visitor comments. Finally, a blog (short for "Web log") will let you post a journal on your Web site. You'll find the blog useful for posting images of works-in-progress or paintings done on the road; visitors enjoy these "inside glimpses" into an artist's life. To set up a blog, visit www.livejournal.com, www.blogger.com or www.typepad.com. In addition, Bravenet.com provides a wealth of Web site

tools—a hit counter, blogs and e-mail services—but your Web hosting service also offers many of these, so check there first.

And what about selling your art on the Web? It's your choice to use your site as simply a marketing tool or as a virtual store, but keep in mind that a store requires far more maintenance. You'll have to handle credit card transactions and update your site when inventory changes. If you want to go this route, I suggest you contract a company rather than do it yourself.

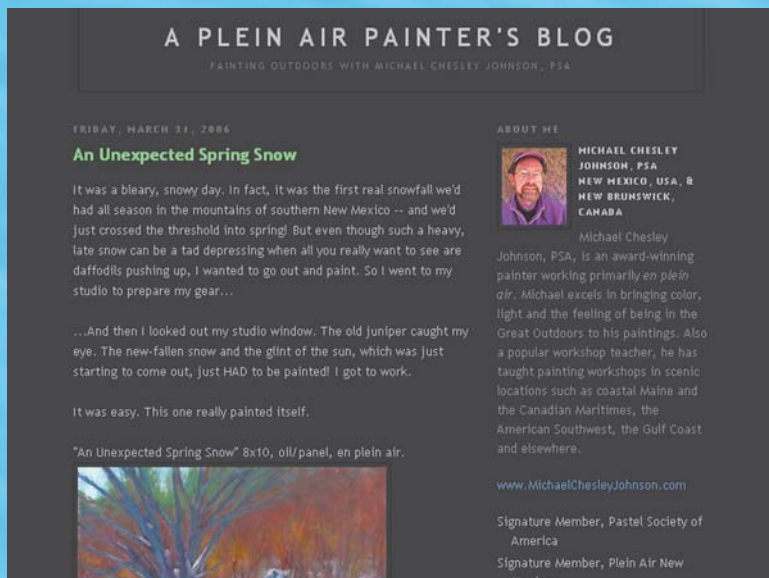
An easier way

Decided you're not a DIYer after all? There's an easier way to go about building your Web site. You can join a virtual gallery. With a virtual gallery, you'll have less control over the look and feel of your site, but you'll also have less agony. Many of these galleries offer simple templates and tools tailored to artists. Some virtual galleries are free, while others charge a monthly fee or a commission on sales (for a list, see Virtual Galleries at far right). Most ask extra for optional features, and many offer full Web design services and, if you prefer, will custom-build a site for you.

One such site is FineArtStudioOnline.com. Although this service isn't free, it offers a one-month tryout. I decided to go through the steps to see just how easy it would be. I was delighted

Blogging on

On my own Web site, www.michaelchesleyjohnson.com, I keep a blog (Web log) on *plein air* painting, hosted by Blogger.com.



The screenshot shows a blog post titled "A PLEIN AIR PAINTER'S BLOG" by Michael Chesley Johnson, PSA. The post is dated Friday, March 31, 2006, and is titled "An Unexpected Spring Snow". The text describes a snowy day in southern New Mexico and the artist's decision to go out and paint. A small portrait of Michael Chesley Johnson is included, along with his bio: "Michael Chesley Johnson, PSA, New Mexico, USA, & New Brunswick, Canada". He is a Signature Member of the Pastel Society of America and a Signature Member of Plein Air New Mexico. The post includes a link to his website, www.MichaelChesleyJohnson.com, and a small image of a painting titled "An Unexpected Spring Snow" (8x10, oil/panel, en plein air).

to find that, after creating my account, I was presented with a simple menu of tasks that go all the way from uploading images to adding PayPal, an online payment service. Clint Watson, creator of the site, has recently developed two new services, MyStudioSite.com and FineArtViews.com. MyStudioSite.com, which also has site-building capabilities for galleries, is geared not just to artists who make original items, but also to those who offer prints and other reproductions.

Build it and they will come?

Having a Web site doesn't guarantee results. Visitors need to be able to find you in the first place! We talked about keywords, and that's a start. Even if you sit on your hands, the search engines will find and index your site—that's what they're designed to do. But you can help them do it faster by submitting your site to places like Google, Yahoo! and the Open Directory Project at DMOZ (www.dmoz.org).

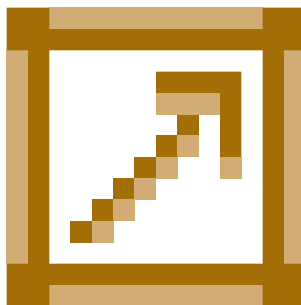
Another way to draw visitors is to talk to other Web masters and ask them to put a link on their sites to yours. The more links, the higher up in the search rankings you'll go. For example, you may belong to several painting societies, which most likely have Web sites and membership lists online. Your site should appear as a link on each of these lists. But think beyond just painting societies. Consider other art groups you belong to, galleries you're in, and art directory sites such as www.paintergallery.com.

Another tip: If you participate in any online discussion groups, make sure you put your Web site address in your signature line. I participate in a community called WetCanvas (www.wetcanvas.com) and, from my hit counter, I know many visitors come from this forum.

Finally, to keep visitors coming back, you should put out a new "model" of your site every year, just

as Detroit does with cars. This doesn't mean an extreme makeover—you don't want repeat visitors to think you're going through a radical personality change—but you should put up images of new paintings and update coming events. People like to see a Web site freshened up. It lets them know that you're an active artist—and someone they should keep an eye on. ♦

MICHAEL CHESLEY JOHNSON (www.michaelchesleyjohnson.com) is a painter and workshop instructor who's been designing Web sites for artists since 1999. For more on his Web design, visit www.3crowskeepingwatch.com.



Picture-perfect Pages Virtual galleries

If wading through help screens and software manuals isn't your cup of tea, you might consider using a virtual gallery. Technically, a virtual gallery offers support for displaying and selling your art; some galleries even charge a sales commission. Other outfits offer site-building capabilities, which just give you the tools to

make your own stand-alone site. Both types often require only a few simple steps to get your art online. As always, check prices and contact the gallery owner before you buy.

Art.com (<http://newartists.art.com>)
800/952-5592
Free. Additional fees for other services.

Artist Portfolio Online
(www.artq.net)
\$35/year

Artmajeur (www.artmajeur.com)
415/508-3665
Free. Additional fees for other services.

Artshow (www.artshow.com)
\$100/year + \$120 setup fee. Additional fees for other services. Juried entry.

Artspan (www.artspan.com)
866/278-7726
\$8.95/month

Beautiful Artist Web sites
(www.beautifulartistwebsites.com)
718/360-5806
\$795+/year

BoundlessGallery.com
(www.boundlessgallery.com)
\$7/month with no setup fee. Or, free with 25 percent commission on sales.

Foliolink (www.foliolink.com)
877/863-6546
\$239+/year + \$149 setup fee

MyStudioSite.com
(www.mystudiosite.com)
210/402-0752
Free. Additional fees for other services.

Sitewelder (www.sitewelder.com)
800/646-7483
\$45+/month + \$250 setup fee

StarvingArtistsGallery.com
(www.starvingartistsgallery.com)
Free. Additional fees for other services.

The Fine Art Originals
(www.thefineartoriginals.com)
Free. Additional fees for other services.