



From Canvas to Career

TIPS FOR ASPIRING ARTIST AND ENTREPRENEURS

A Guide to Art School, Entrepreneurship & Building
a Successful Creative Business



Christina Pappion

Owner, Pappion Artistry LLC

New Orleans Live Wedding Painter | 15+ Years in Business

Official Artist: Krewe of Nefertiti, Krewe of Symphony, Mystic Krewe of Femme Fatale

Collaborations with NFL • NBA • Amazon • Olympic Athletes

Presented to the Mount Carmel's Class of Tomorrow

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What's Inside This Booklet



Use this guide as a roadmap — whether you dream of being an artist, an entrepreneur, or both.

1. About Christina — A New Orleans Success Story
2. What Is Art School? Degrees & Programs
3. Classes You Take in Art School
4. The Life of an Entrepreneur
5. The Real Struggles (Nobody Talks About)
6. Tips for Becoming a Successful Artist
7. Building Your Brand & Business
8. Christina's 15 Lessons in 15 Years
9. Resources & Next Steps
10. Scriptures to Meditate and Lean on

MEET CHRISTINA PAPPION



Artist • Entrepreneur • New Orleans Original

Christina Pappion did not grow up in an art studio or a house full of canvases. Her story started much more simply — and much more beautifully.

As a young girl, Christina spent a great deal of time at her grandparents' house while her mother and father worked hard to provide for the family. The house was quiet, and a curious little girl needed something to do. One day, her grandfather handed her a notepad and a box of crayons and told her simply: draw.

So she did.

She spent hours entertaining herself — posing her Barbies and drawing them, sketching families she saw on TV shows, filling page after page with the world as she imagined it. She had no idea in those quiet afternoon hours that she was practicing for her future. She was just a little girl with crayons and a whole lot of imagination.



"I had no idea that those afternoons with a notepad and crayons would become my life's work. God had a plan I couldn't even see yet."



From Nonprofits to Paintbrushes

Christina did not start out as a full-time artist. Before building Pappion Artistry LLC, she spent years working in the nonprofit world — serving her community, developing professional skills, and paying her bills the traditional way. Art was her passion on the side, something she did for love while her career paid the bills.

The turning point came from an unexpected place: a coworker. After seeing a live painter working at a New Orleans Saints game, that coworker looked at Christina and said, 'You should do that.' It was one of those simple, offhand moments that changes everything.

Christina took the idea seriously. She began painting live at events on the side while still working her nonprofit job. Slowly, then all at once, the bookings grew. The clients multiplied. The income from painting began to outpace her salary. One day, she made the leap — and never looked back.

Today, Pappion Artistry LLC is her full-time business, her legacy, and her ministry. What started with her grandfather's crayons became one of the most recognized live painting brands in the country.

Accomplishments & Recognition

Career Highlights

✓ #1 Ranked on Google for 'New Orleans Live Wedding Painter'

✓ 15+ Years in Business as a Fine Art Entrepreneur

✓ Official Artist for Krewe of Nefertiti, Krewe of Symphony & Mystic Krewe of Femme Fatale

✓ Live Painter for NFL (My Cause My Cleats Campaign)

✓ Featured Artist for New Orleans Pelicans & New Orleans Saints

✓ Brand Partnership with Amazon, Dunkaroots, Entergy and many more

✓ Collaborations with Olympic Athletes, Countless Brides, and Brands

✓ 37,000+ Instagram Followers & Growing

✓ Featured Artist for New Orleans Mardi Gras Krewe Costumes & Beads

✓ Owner of Pappion Artistry LLC – Weddings, Commissions & Corporate Events

✓ Etsy Shop: pappionart – Prints, Stationery & Fine Art Products

✓ Mentor to Emerging Artists Through 'From Canvas to Career' Programs

"I didn't just build a business. I built a legacy – rooted in New Orleans, guided by faith, and painted one canvas at a time."

WHAT IS ART SCHOOL ANYWAY?

Degrees & Programs Available to You

Art school is a college or university program focused on developing your creative skills while also teaching you the business and technical knowledge to turn your art into a career.

Types of Art Degrees

- **Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) — The most common. 4-year degree focused on studio practice.**
- Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Art — More flexible, allows more general education courses
- Associate of Fine Arts (AFA) — 2-year degree, great for community college
- Master of Fine Arts (MFA) — Graduate degree for advanced artists & teaching careers
- Graphic Design / Illustration Degrees — Commercial art for branding, advertising, publishing
- Art Education Degree — Become an art teacher at the K-12 or college level

Types of Art Schools

- Traditional Universities with Art Departments (e.g., LSU, Tulane, Xavier)
- Dedicated Art Colleges (e.g., SCAD, Ringling, Pratt Institute, RISD)
- Online Programs (e.g., Sessions College, Full Sail, Academy of Art University)
- Community Colleges — Affordable starting point with transfer options

Specializations to Consider

- Fine Art (painting, drawing, sculpture)
- Illustration & Graphic Design
- Photography & Digital Media
- Interior Design / Architecture
- Art History & Curation
- Animation & Game Design
- Fashion Design

CLASSES YOU WILL TAKE

Art school is not just about painting or drawing all day. You will take a wide variety of classes that build your skills, your mind, and your professional toolkit.

Foundation / First Year Classes

- Drawing Fundamentals — Line, form, shading, perspective, proportion
- 2D Design — Color theory, composition, balance, rhythm
- 3D Design — Sculpture, spatial thinking, three-dimensional form
- Art History I & II — From ancient art to contemporary movements
- Typography — The art and design of letterforms
- Color Theory — How colors interact, harmonize, and communicate emotion

Core Studio Classes (Years 2–4)

- Painting — Oil, acrylic, watercolor techniques
- Figure Drawing — Drawing the human body from live models
- Printmaking — Etching, screen printing, lithography
- Photography — Film and digital techniques
- Digital Art & Illustration — Photoshop, Illustrator, Procreate
- Mixed Media — Combining materials and techniques
- Ceramics & Sculpture

Professional Practice Classes

- Portfolio Development — Building a professional body of work
- Artist Statement Writing — How to talk and write about your art
- Art Business & Marketing — How to price, sell, and promote your work
- Exhibition Design — How to curate and hang a gallery show
- Freelance & Studio Practice — Running your art as a business
- Senior Thesis / Capstone — A major project that defines your artistic voice

What Christina Wishes She Had Learned Earlier:

"Business skills are just as important as brush skills. Learn how to write a contract, send an invoice, and market yourself from day one."

The Life of an Entrepreneur

What It Really Looks Like

An entrepreneur is someone who starts and runs their own business. As an artist-entrepreneur, you are the CEO, the creative director, the accountant, the marketer, and the customer service team — all in one person.

What a Typical Day Might Look Like for Christina:

- Morning — Responding to emails, inquiries from brides and corporate clients
- Mid-Morning — Working on a custom commission painting in the studio
- Afternoon — Creating content for Instagram and TikTok, editing videos
- Late Afternoon — Managing her website, updating Google Ads, reviewing bookings
- Evening — Possibly painting live at a wedding reception or Mardi Gras event
- Ongoing — Bookkeeping, contracts, client consultations, krewe artwork deadlines

The Entrepreneur's Skill Set

✓ Creative vision — knowing your artistic identity

✓ Business management — contracts, invoicing, taxes

✓ Marketing & social media — showing up consistently online

✓ Customer service — communicating professionally with clients

✓ Time management — balancing creative work and business tasks

✓ Financial literacy — pricing your work and managing cash flow

✓ Resilience — bouncing back from rejection and slow seasons

✓ Networking — building relationships with vendors, planners, and clients

THE REAL STRUGGLES

What Nobody Talks About

Let's be honest. Entrepreneurship is hard. Before you see the success, you experience the struggle. Here are the real challenges creative entrepreneurs face — and how to work through them.

1. Inconsistent Income

Unlike a 9-to-5 job, your income as an artist can vary dramatically month to month. Some months are full of bookings. Others are slow and scary.

How to handle it: Build a financial cushion (3–6 months of expenses), diversify your revenue streams (prints, teaching, commissions), and learn to budget carefully.

2. Self-Doubt & Comparison

Social media makes it easy to compare yourself to other artists who seem more successful. This comparison can paralyze your creativity.

How to handle it: Stay in your lane. Your story, your style, and your journey are unique. Run your own race.

3. Underpricing Your Work

Many artists charge too little because they fear clients will say no. Underpricing devalues your work and makes your business unsustainable.

How to handle it: Know your worth. Calculate the time, materials, and skill that go into every piece. Charge accordingly.

4. Wearing Too Many Hats

When you're the artist AND the business owner, you can feel stretched thin — especially early on when you can't afford to hire help.

How to handle it: Automate what you can, use tools like email templates and booking software, and eventually outsource tasks that drain you.

5. Rejection & Criticism

Not every client will book you. Not every piece will be loved. Negative feedback — even from strangers online — can sting.

How to handle it: Develop thick skin. Feedback is information. Rejection is redirection. Keep creating.

6. Loneliness

Running a solo creative business can be isolating. There's no coworker to vent to, no team to celebrate wins with.

How to handle it: Build a community. Find other creative entrepreneurs, mentors, and faith communities that pour into you.

"Every struggle I went through prepared me for the success that followed. Don't run from hard. Run through it."

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From 15 Years of Experience

Master Your Craft First

Before you focus on marketing or money, focus on becoming really, really good. Study the masters. Practice daily. Push yourself creatively.

- Take classes, workshops, and seek critique from people better than you
- Develop a signature style that makes your work instantly recognizable
- Keep a sketchbook or practice journal — creativity is a muscle

Build Your Portfolio Early

Your portfolio is your resume as an artist. Start building it now — even in high school.

- Create personal projects that show range and depth
- Document everything with high-quality photos
- Build a simple website or online portfolio (even a free one to start)

Find Your Niche

The most successful artists are known for something specific. Christina chose live wedding painting in New Orleans — and it made her #1 in her market.

- What type of art lights you up? What story do you want to tell?
- What audience do you want to serve?
- What makes you different from every other artist?

Show Up Online Consistently

Social media is your gallery, your marketing team, and your word-of-mouth — all for free. Use it wisely.

- Post your process, not just finished pieces — people love behind-the-scenes
- Be authentic. Share your story, your struggles, your faith, your culture
- Engage with your followers. Respond to comments. Build community

Never Stop Learning

- Take business classes alongside art classes
- Read books on entrepreneurship, marketing, and mindset
- Find a mentor who has built what you want to build
- Invest in yourself – courses, conferences, workshops

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Turning Your Art Into a Sustainable Career

A brand is more than a logo. It's the feeling people get when they see your work, visit your website, or interact with you online. It's your promise to your audience.

Your Brand Includes:

- Your name and visual identity (logo, colors, fonts)
- Your story — where you come from, what you believe, why you create
- Your voice — how you communicate online and in person
- Your values — what you stand for as a person and artist
- Your niche — who you serve and what transformation you provide

Revenue Streams for Artists

Don't rely on one source of income. Here are ways artists make money:

- Live event painting (weddings, corporate events, parties)
- Custom commissions (portraits, family scenes, pets, homes)
- Art prints & products (Etsy, Shopify, art fairs)
- Teaching (workshops, classes, online courses, mentorship)
- Licensing (selling rights to use your art on products)
- Brand collaborations & partnerships
- Grants & artist residencies
- Social media monetization (brand deals, sponsorships)

Tools Every Artist-Entrepreneur Should Know:

- Website: Wix, Squarespace, or WordPress
- Booking & Contracts: HoneyBook, Dubsado
- Email Marketing: Mailchimp, Flodesk
- Social Media: Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest
- Selling Art: Etsy, Fine Art America, your own website
- Accounting: QuickBooks, Wave (free)



One lesson for every year in business — straight from the source.

Year 1: Start before you're ready. Done is better than perfect.

Year 2: Your network is your net worth. Build relationships everywhere you go.

Year 3: Charge what you're worth — and then add tax.

Year 4: Social media is a tool, not a judge. Don't let it determine your value.

Year 5: Get everything in writing. Contracts protect everyone.

Year 6: Your culture and story are your competitive advantage. Use them.

Year 7: Rest is productive. Burnout is real. Protect your peace.

Year 8: Diversify your income. Never depend on one client or one platform.

Year 9: Invest in your business before you spend on yourself.

Year 10: Rejection is redirection. The right clients always find you.

Year 11: Faith over fear. Every single time.

Year 12: Collaboration over competition. There is room for all of us.

Year 13: Your brand is built in the margins — the thank-you note, the follow-up, the extra detail.

Year 14: Know your numbers. Revenue is vanity. Profit is sanity.

Year 15: Legacy is the goal. Build something that outlasts you.

Scriptures for Meditation and Success

Your Path Forward Starts Today

Your Gift Was Given by God

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." — **James 1:17**

For artists: Your talent is not an accident. It was placed in you on purpose, by God, before you were born.

God Fills Artists with His Spirit

"I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills — to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze." — **Exodus 31:3-4**

For artists: This is God literally describing an artist and calling their work holy. Your creativity is a spiritual gift.

You Were Created as a Masterpiece

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." — **Ephesians 2:10**

For artists: The word "handiwork" in the original Greek is *poiema* — which is where we get the word poem. You are God's greatest work of art.

— Christina Pappion, Pappion Artistry LLC

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