

JAMES CARTER

VISIBLE

SECOND EDITION

*An emerging artist's field guide
to being noticed*



CREATIVE FLAIR

The first chapter, unabridged

This is not a sample or a teaser. It is the complete opening chapter of *VISIBLE*, exactly as it appears in the book, and it does the most important job in it: the diagnosis.

Most artists who feel invisible have been told, one way or another, that the answer is to make better work and wait. This chapter takes that idea apart. It will show you the ten things that sit around the work and quietly decide whether anyone ever finds it, and it ends with a short exercise: score yourself against the ten, honestly, and count the noes.

That number matters. Keep it in your head. It is the most useful thing you will take from the next half hour, and at the end of this preview I will tell you what to do with it.

James Carter · Creative Flair · London

Why you're not being seen, and it's not your work

Good work that reaches nobody is a private hobby. The work is necessary. The work is not sufficient.

VISIBLE

There is a conversation I have had a hundred times, and it always goes the same way. An artist tells me they feel stuck. The work is not landing. No gallery replies, no press, sales are thin, the Instagram account grows by eleven followers a month, mostly bots. They have been at this for three years. Five years. Ten. I ask what they think the problem is, and they always say the same thing. They say the work is not good enough yet.

They say it with a kind of solemn certainty, the way someone might confess to a crime. I am not ready. I am not there. When the work is better, the doors will open. And this is almost always wrong.

Not always. Some artists do need more time at the easel, more drawing, more looking, more failure. Technical competence is real, and a lot of people do not have it. If the work is genuinely not ready, no amount of visibility strategy will save it. But most of the artists I meet are not in that category. They are

competent. They are often more than competent. Their problem is not the work. Their problem is everything around the work.

Good work that reaches nobody is a private hobby.

The art world has a romantic bias. It encourages you to picture yourself as a lone figure in the studio, making, struggling, suffering, and it suggests that if you are patient and true enough, someone will eventually appear with a cheque or a contract or a show. The story is appealing because it means the work is the only thing you have to worry about. The work is holy. Everything else is noise.

I am here to tell you the work is not the only thing you have to worry about. The work is one thing. There are ten other things, and they are the reason some of your competent peers are getting solo shows and you are not.

IN PRACTICE

Two painters. Painter A is technically gifted, studied at a good school, makes observant and intelligent paintings. She posts on Instagram when she finishes something, maybe once every three weeks, captions just the title and medium. Her profile has no link. There is no website, no statement. She enters one or two open calls a year, when her mother reminds her, and has never pitched a gallery. Her CV is in a Word document last updated in 2023.

Painter B is also competent. Not more gifted than Painter A, arguably less. He posts three times a week: work in progress, studio shots, short notes on what he is thinking. His bio links to a clean six page website. His statement fits on a postcard and says something specific. He keeps a spreadsheet of thirty target galleries and sends one pitch a fortnight. He enters six open calls a year and keeps his press kit current.

Three years on, Painter B has had two group shows and a residency, been written about in a small magazine, sold four paintings to strangers, and has a gallerist replying to his emails. Painter A is still in her studio, working, waiting, telling herself the work is not good enough yet. She is wrong. She is making better work than Painter B. Nobody knows.

This is the unpleasant part of the book, and it is unpleasant because it is not what you want to hear. You want to hear that the work is enough, that if you just keep making, the rest will follow. I understand the appeal. I have wanted to believe it myself. It is not true. The work is necessary, and nothing I am about to teach you works without good work underneath it. But

the work is not sufficient. Good work that nobody can find is a rumour. If you want your work to do anything in the world, you have to build the infrastructure that lets it reach the people who might care. This book is that infrastructure.



I said there were ten other things. I have been vague about them on purpose, because the whole book is the long answer. Here is the short one, so you can see the shape of the work before we begin it. Ten things sit around the work, and any one of them, done badly, quietly closes a door you never saw open. Here they are:

1. **Photographs of the work.** The image is what travels, not the painting. A great painting photographed badly is, to everyone who is not standing in your studio, a bad painting. This is the cheapest gap to close and the one most artists never close.
2. **A statement that says something.** Not a paragraph of theory or mist, but a few plain sentences a stranger could repeat. If you cannot say what your work is about, you are asking other people to work it out for you, and they will not.
3. **A website you actually own.** One page of the internet that is yours, that a gallerist can find in ten seconds, that does not disappear when a platform changes its mind. Instagram is a room you rent. This is the room you own.
4. **A coherent body of work.** Five paintings that read as one project beat fifty that read as fifty moods. The art world is looking for artists who are working on something, and a body of work is the only way to show that you are.

5. **A presence where the gatekeepers look.** They check before they decide. The grid, the bio, the last few posts are doing the arguing for you whether you tend them or not, so you may as well tend them.
6. **A habit of applying.** Open calls, prizes, residencies, submissions. The artists who get in are the ones who apply, again and again, to well chosen things, and treat every rejection as a free lesson rather than a verdict.
7. **A price that signals seriousness.** Your price is read before your work is. Too low reads as a hobby, too high as delusion, and both close doors that are hard to reopen. Most artists never think about this at all.
8. **A list of people who want to hear from you.** Followers are rented. A list is owned. It is the difference between hoping the algorithm shows your work to the people who already love it, and simply telling them.
9. **A record you keep.** A single spreadsheet of everything you have done and everyone you have met, so that when a curator from a show three years ago emails out of nowhere, you have the memory that turns it into something.
10. **Relationships you tend.** The whole thing runs on people who know your work and think of you when an opportunity appears. That network is built one thank you email and one honest conversation at a time, over years.

None of these is the work. Every one of them decides whether the work is seen. Painter A, from a moment ago, is losing on nine of the ten and does not know it, because she has been told that the only thing that matters is the one thing missing from this list, the painting itself. The painting is necessary. The ten things are how the painting reaches a life outside your

studio. Each has a chapter, or a part, later in this book. For now, just notice how many of them you have never been taught, and how none of them require you to be more talented than you already are.



Here is what we are going to do together, so you can see the shape of it.

The first part of this book, *The Real Game*, dismantles the beliefs keeping you stuck. That the work is the only thing. That you will eventually be discovered. That gatekeepers are a single obstacle rather than five distinct systems on different logics. That the art world looks at artists neutrally, when in fact it looks through a constructed gaze that can be understood and worked with.

The second part, *The Foundations*, describes what makes work seeable, independent of whether it is any good. How to photograph your paintings so they do not look like a crime scene. How to write a statement that does not sound mad. How to build a website, smaller than you think.

The third part, *The Channels*, is where the tactical work happens: Instagram beyond consistency, open calls as a real strategy, galleries when they matter and when they do not, press and how to actually get it, the chapter nobody else could write for you, and do it yourself visibility, where you build your own door when the gatekeepers will not open theirs.

Then two parts that are new to this edition, and that the first edition should have contained all along. The fourth, *Building an Audience*, looks at the engine underneath everything else. The fifth, *The Money*, is the thing artists are told never to think

about and think about constantly. How you price, how one painting pays you for years, where the buyers actually are, and how to get paid without feeling like a fraud.

The sixth and last part, *The Long Game*, describes how visibility compounds, how to protect the practice from the visibility game itself, and how to recognise the moment being seen stops being the thing you need. Because it will, eventually, if you do this well.

Then the appendices, and they are the part you are most likely to actually use. They are not reference material to admire. They are templates, worksheets and scripts with the blanks left in: a first thirty days, pricing worksheets, the emails to send and what to say in them, an agreement to fill in, a bookkeeping setup you can run in ten minutes a week. The six parts are the argument. The appendices are the structure you build a career on, one filled in page at a time.

That is the book. One argument, held from the first page to the last. You do not have to wait to be found. You build the conditions for being found. It is a system, not a reward.



A few things this book is not, before we go on.

It is not a motivational book. I am not going to tell you to believe in yourself, chase your dreams, or trust the process. You already know how you feel about your work. My job is not to manage your emotions, it is to give you tools.

It is not a get famous fast book. Nothing in here works in a month. Anyone trying to sell you a trick is only out for your money.

It is not a general business book repackaged for artists. Art has its own ecosystem, its own gatekeepers, its own logics, and a chapter from a habits book is not an art career.

I run Creative Flair, a London arts platform that has put more than six hundred emerging artists on billboards across the city. I built the whole thing when I had little more than a hunch about artists and visibility. I have been written about, spoken on stages, hung in group shows, taught courses, run open calls, paid for ads, and learned the hard way which tactics actually compound. I am also a painter. I have a studio. I make work. This book is what I wish someone had handed me at the start, and you do not have to take it on faith, because the rest of it earns that.

TRY THIS

Before you read another page, go back to the ten things and score yourself honestly, a simple yes or no on each. Do I have proper photographs of my current work. Do I have a statement a stranger could repeat. Do I own a website. And so on down the list.

Count the noes. That number, not your opinion of your paintings, is the most honest measure of why your work is not being seen yet. It is also a to do list, and unlike getting better at painting, every item on it can be fixed in an afternoon or a weekend. Keep the list. We will close it one chapter at a time.

One last thing. You will finish this book with a list. A long one. Things to fix on your website, statements to rewrite, emails to send, photographs to redo, galleries to research, calls to enter. It

will feel like too much. It is not too much. It is the work, and it has always been the work. The artists who get seen are the ones who do it, and most of them are neither exceptionally talented nor exceptionally connected. They are simply consistent, strategic, and willing to do the unromantic things the lone genius myth says they should not have to. You can be one of them. Let us begin.

IN SHORT

- Competence is almost never the problem. Most artists who feel stuck are already good enough.
- Ten things sit around the work, and each one quietly decides whether it is seen.
- Score yourself on the ten. The number of noes is your real diagnosis, and every one is fixable.

You now have the diagnosis

If you scored yourself honestly, you also have a number. Most artists who read this chapter count somewhere between four and eight noes, and had no idea until they looked.

Every no on that list is fixable, none of the fixes requires more talent than you already have, and almost nobody is going to teach you them. The chapter you just read is the diagnosis. The other twenty nine are the treatment, one gap at a time, in the order that compounds. A few of the places it goes next:

What actually happens to your open call entry in the first thirty seconds, and how to survive it CHAPTER X

How to photograph your work so it stops losing on a phone screen CHAPTER VI

What your price says before your work does, and the two numbers that close doors CHAPTER XVIII

The email that gets a reply from a gallerist who has never heard of you APPENDIX F

How one painting can keep paying you for years after it sells CHAPTER XIX

Exactly what to do in the first thirty days, as a plan you can follow APPENDIX A

And underneath it all, twelve appendices built to be used rather than admired: pricing worksheets, pitch templates, a commission agreement, a bookkeeping setup, and a glossary of the art world in plain language.

Everything the book covers

How to use this book

PART ONE · THE REAL GAME

REVISED

- I Why you're not being seen, and it's not your work
- II How gatekeeping actually works
- III The myth of discovery
- IV The institutional gaze

PART TWO · THE FOUNDATIONS

REVISED

- V What makes work seeable
- VI Photographing your work
- VII The artist statement that doesn't sound mad
- VIII Your minimum viable website

PART THREE · THE CHANNELS

REVISED

- IX Instagram beyond 'post consistently'
- X The open call playbook
- XI Getting into galleries, and when not to bother
- XII Art fairs and how to work them
- XIII Press and the media game
- XIV Do it yourself visibility

PART FOUR · BUILDING AN AUDIENCE

NEW

- XV The audience is the asset
- XVI The content engine

XVII The list that is actually yours

PART FIVE · THE MONEY

NEW

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XIX One painting, paid for years

XX The buyers who already want your work

XXI The money you never have to pay back

XXII Work made to order

XXIII Work that keeps earning

XXIV Getting paid for what you know

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PART SIX · THE LONG GAME

REVISED

XXVI Compounding visibility

XXVII Protecting your practice while being seen

XXVIII The business behind the practice

XXIX Sustaining yourself

XXX When being seen stops being the goal

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EXPANDED

A The first thirty days

B Pricing your originals

C Cold pitch templates

D Press release template

E Quarterly review

F The outreach email that gets a reply

G Start your email list this week

H Pricing prints and editions

- I The commission agreement
- J The content bank
- K The simple bookkeeping setup
- L A glossary of the art world
- Find it fast

THE FULL BOOK

If this chapter told you something true, the rest will save you years

VISIBLE is one argument, held from the first page to the last: you do not have to wait to be found. You build the conditions for being found. It is a system, not a reward.

GET THE COMPLETE SECOND EDITION

creativeflair.org/visible/

Thirty chapters · twelve fill in appendices · twenty seven diagrams · 234 pages

Also available on Amazon in paperback, hardcover and Kindle.

One more thing. Come and tell me your audit score at @creative-flairhq. I read everything, and I answer most of it.

All the best,
James