

# How to engineer an artistic career in times of COVID-19: Nina Gospodin on the art of being an artist



Image used with kind permission of Nina Gospodin. Source: Nina Gospodin.

## Sheila Bsteh November 2020

We cannot deny it, a pandemic has hit the world and we will have to live within this situation for a while. Surprise, surprise: The crisis hits the poor harder than the rich. And women are more negatively affected than men. It's sad, and makes one wonder about the impacts of the crisis on different areas of our society. What about, for example, the arts? Or the artists? Nina Gospodin, a contemporary painter and creative from Vienna, joined us for an interview. The present text summarizes her most important findings and wraps up with five tips.

Nina Gospodin is a busy woman and as it turned out, she likes to laugh. After studying process engineering, and before becoming a painter, Nina completed a degree in Fine Arts in Vienna. Her art has won several prestigious awards. For Nina, industrial and economic processes are closely related to artistic production. This approach is clearly visible in her oeuvre. Geometric shapes dominate, along with sensitive, precise choices of colour. Next to painting, she produces photo series, regular networking events and a podcast. "I'm a problem expert."

So, frankly asked, how does one make a living as a contemporary painter? Nina explains to us that she already had various sources of income before the pandemic. According to her, there is art and there is "something you can get money with easily", a job outside of the studio. The latter alleviates the pressure of having to create something strictly for sales.

Between waves of pandemic outbreaks, not much has changed for Nina in financial terms. The marketing agency where Nina works receives support from the governmental COVID-19 fund in Austria, so her regular income has stayed intact. But one thing has shifted positively: There is more time for art. And additional energy to enjoy it. Due to the luck of having this financial security and her new timely resources, Nina was able to channel her creativity and increased her artistic production. As she describes it, "I call this artist in residency by the universe and knowing that I was very, very fortunate."

Since the start of the pandemic, Nina has created more than ever. In fact, the interest in her art has also increased. Since the first lockdown in Austria ended, Nina has got more studio visits and inquiries than in pre-pandemic times. Asking her for the causes of this, Nina told me she believes that people have rearranged their priorities due to the crisis. And value systems are being changed. That, as a result, people take more time to experience art.



Painting by Nina Gospodin: Nuovi Angoli Nuove Forme g#10 | Watercolor on paper, 56 x 76 cm, 2019. Source: Nina Gospodin.

However, the pandemic can also have significantly negative consequences for artists, as shown by the fate of one of Nina's colleagues. As Nina explained, this artist lost his job and received only little state support. He even had to move back in with his mother. However, he managed to turn such high financial pressure into a success story. After having been forced to focus on the monetizing of his art, he saw his sales increase exponentially. In the end, that artist considered the overall impact of COVID-19 positive for his artistic career.

COVID-19 brings huge financial challenges and risks for artists, especially for those who depend on performances or offline events. In the case of Nina, she has been fortunate to be a cultural entrepreneur in Austria, a country with one of the best social systems in the world. It is uncertain how governmental support, grants and jobs will be affected if the pandemic lasts much longer. Regardless, some positive aspects of this crisis should not be neglected. A variety of valuable opportunities for artists is being created, not in the least as a result of an increased appreciation of art. As Nina puts it, the "...artistic process is a process of transformation." This may apply more now than it ever did before.

As promised...

Here are five tips for those rookies who (want to) pursue an artistic career in times of COVID-19:

- 1. You have to love what you are doing.**  
Art is not about titles, it's about passion. If you don't burn for what you are doing, don't start it in the first place.
- 2. Stay Flexible.**  
Not every idea is meant to be monetized. Make sure you have other streams of income to finance them, and other ideas to pursue.
- 3. Keep Going.**  
You will face a lot of criticism. The keyword is resilience. Artists need to believe in themselves and their work.
- 4. Humor.**  
A good laugh can work like medicine in hard times. In Nina's words, "Don't take everything too seriously".
- 5. Listen to your guts.**  
As a creative entrepreneur, there is no well-set path to follow. Despite the well-intentioned advice of others and after obtaining various available information, your personal judgment is the best basis for decision-making in difficult situations.

Nina Gospodin completed a degree in process engineering in Germany, the US and Austria. At the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, she studied a combination of graphic and product design, painting, social design, and multimedia art. She has been awarded several prizes and grants for her art. In addition to painting and photography, she runs the "Salon Gospodin" and the podcast "Kanal Fatal". In her podcast, Nina opens the doors to the studios of other artists. Together, they explore the deeper meanings behind their oeuvres and lives.

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