Peacock Arts Trail - Guide To Using Instagram

It is now thought that Instagram is the single biggest tool for growing small creative businesses. It may take a while to get used to it but it's possible to get many/most of your business opportunities and sales from Instagram, from both locally and further afield. Instagram is very much a visual tool. A beautiful image can gain you many likes and comments way above your following count.

Instagram's big feature is that all images are confined to a square like a Poloroid. You can also alter your images by using a series of pre-set filters (each has a slide bar to increase or decrease its effect).

Setting up your account:
Instagram is for mobile devices, although you can see and search content from a desktop but, to post you'll need to download the app onto a mobile phone or tablet. https://www.instagram.com/

You will be guided through the setup, asking you for a username, profile picture / logo. Keep this consistent with your other social media platforms. You can add a short bio about yourself and add one link to a website (this profile space is the only place that Instagram allows you to add a clickable link).

A good example of an Instagram post

Icons: Home, Explore, +, Like, Your icon.

Home, this page shows you the latest post from those you follow

The **Explore** tab can be used to search people or #hashtags, it will also show you images that it thinks you like, over time this will can more useful as it gets to know what things you like, by what you hover over and click on.

The **+** is where you will post new images and content.

The **Like** button with have a red dot underneath it if you have notifications of likes & comments on your own posts or you can click it to like others posts when browsing through the news feed.

The **circular icon** takes you to your gallery, a page showing your profile and your grid showing all your images in order. The 'grid' is what people talk about when looking for a consistent feel or theme that runs through all your images creating a coherent brand when viewed all together in this grid form.

 This is an example of a Grid

Posting: Click the + button and your latest photographs on your device will appear. You can scroll through your phone camera's 'library / gallery' to select the one you want to use, or click the 'photo' or 'video' tab across the bottom to take a photo there and then.

Once you have the photo you want, click 'next' (top right). You will then have a selection of different editing filters to scroll through across the bottom. If you click on one, you will see the large central image alter. Click it again and a percentage bar will show. You can move the tab left to right to have 100% of the filter applied or less. You can cancel or click Done to move on.

If you don't want one of the pre-set filters, you can simply click next (top right) to move on, or click Edit (bottom right) which allows you to adjust individual aspects yourself, such as angle, brightness, contrast etc.

Once you're happy with your image, click Next (top right).

You can now add a caption, tag anyone else, add a location and choose to share this post directly to your other social media sites. I mostly use Instagram to post to Facebook as the systems work very well (Instagram is now owned by Facebook). Personally I'd advise against direct sharing too much to Twitter as the images don't appear in the feed (instead they are clickable links), so visually your Twitter feed can start to look very uninspiring as it's just a series of text tweets with no images. For a visual creative business this will not encourage engagement.

When you're happy with your post, click 'share' (top right).

#hashtags are very important in Instagram if you want to connect with others and grow your community. One of the easiest ways to work out what hashtags may work for you is to find other users who are working in similar disciplines/ themes as you and who are using Instagram successfully. Look at their posts and what # they are using, then search those #'s and check the theme is right. You can add a list of #'s in your caption box or add them into a comment box below the post after it has been posted. Hashtags really can help your posts be seen further than your following, because people do search under hashtag themes. Without using them you are only ever going to be seen by the number of people who directly follow you.

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Last updated: 18 August 2017