

SOPHIE NAVARRO
Internship I – Kristin Grieger
Informational Interview

I. Contact information

Professional's name: *Lisa Congdon*

Job Title: *Artist, Illustrator and Author*

Company/Organization: <http://lisacongdon.com/>

Location: *Portland, Oregon*

II. What you learned about the job, career path, organization, and/or internship search

List a few of the key pieces of information you learned from the interview. These might include:

- *Types of projects/daily responsibilities of the job*
 - *Checking emails, coming up communicating with clients regarding jobs that she was working on, following up with galleries, inquiries for interviews, connecting with other artists, doing research on designs, working on her art, managing her Etsey shop and speaking events.*
 - *Your interviewee's career history*

Lisa Congdon is a self-taught artist and she grew up in a home where her mom also made art as well. She made art projects that were primarily for herself, hobbies and having fun with it. It wasn't until she took an art class with her brother in San Francisco. Her brother said "Let's take class" and they both ended up having a great deal of fun in the class. Lisa enjoyed exploring and took 3 more classes. She got more and more into it. Her brother not so much but she continued on and felt like it was a creative explosion. Lisa enjoyed the process of playing with color, drawing, painting and doodling.

34 Years – *Lisa was sewing, painting, drawing and it never occurred to her to become a professional artist. She just enjoyed it.*

In 2004, Lisa created a flicker account and started to post her work on her flicker account. It was work she was creating. By 2005, she created more work, started to show in galleries and many of them started to reach out to her. People were interested in buying her work off her Flicker account. Galleries started show her work and she was trying to figure out how to price her work. She continued to put her work out there consistently.

2007 – More and more things started to happen for Lisa around 2007. She started her blog, starting selling her work in her shop, more opportunities started to happen and art directors started to approach her to show in galleries.

2007 – San Francisco – Chronicle Books is based in SF and they got interested in her work. They approached her for her illustrations. She started meeting more and more artists and eventually got an agent for illustration. She was able to leave her job in 2008 eventually. At first, she went down to part-time and had her art practice. She had her Etsey shop, started doing more and more illustrations and then her illustration career took off around 2009-2010.

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Lisa kept creating art projects while her agent was helping her with media platform and as she was trying different things over time – there was a tipping point in 2011. Emails started to pour in, job opportunities, shows and eventually Lisa was able to rent a studio – and she finally felt like a real artist. She started getting book offers. The first few years was definitely hard. Lisa mentioned she worked at night many times but now that she has an agent, she is able to work from 9 AM till about 4:30 PM – 6 PM. She says having an assistant gives her more freedom. At first she was a little nervous if she could afford having an assistant but she has a diverse income revenue stream that she is able to now work on her art more.

What is a work day look like for Lisa?

- **9 AM** – Lisa starts her day with checking her email, doing administrative work, her assistant helps her out, interview requests, how to promote her business, works on her blog for the week. (She used to do everything herself and now is grateful for her assistant Kristin) She communicates with her clients, reads fan mail, what materials she loves and uses, more and more people pay attention to what she is doing now.
- Kristin helps Lisa Monday mornings they do a work flow meeting. The work flow meeting is a spreadsheet that has all the deadlines in it, events for public speaking, every day is unique. Sometimes Lisa is able to work on her art for a whole day. She likes to work in 45 min chunks of time, works on research, writing, sets her deadlines, does not work in the evenings. It used to really burn her out. Important tips to remember.
 - Tips and Advice – “Share your work, it will pay off, you will eventually get paid to do your art, keep illustrating, No one can do this but you. Prioritize to draw.” – Lisa Congdon
- It can be uncomfortable and scary, but do it anyway! 😊
- Ask yourself - What is the return on my investment?
- Fine Artist/Grants/Residencies – These are great resources that can help fund your business.

- Art Inc. Book is loaded with amazing information on making it as an artist.

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the organizational culture/work environment

- The culture now is Lisa has an assistant that helps her with everything from helping her manage her emails, connections with her clients, helps her strategize her marketing for her website, helps her with following up with interviews, speaking arrangements and other miscellaneous administrative work. She said having an assistant has allowed her the freedom to create more artwork and be able to concentrate on creating new work.

- *skills needed for the job*
 - Lisa mentioned that you need to be able to do a great deal of administrative work as an artist. There is a great deal of answering emails, communicating with clients about work she is doing, networking with other artists, marketing online with social media, strategizing on how to promote her work and needed to do everything herself in the beginning.
 - You can't be afraid to show your work. Keep showing your work. Your work doesn't need to be perfect. Just share it online and continue to build your network with other people, art galleries and prospective clients.

- *advice provided to you by the interviewee about the career path or internship search*

Lisa suggested to continue reading her book, checking out classes she will be offering online and up in Portland.

III. Synthesis of learning/impact on your future

How has this interview impacted your thoughts about your intended career goals, and the field as a whole? Consider the type of work you are planning to pursue, the type of organization you would like to work for, etc.

This interview deepened my appreciation for how Lisa Congdon started her artistic career later in life and did art for fun in the beginning. I loved learning how she took her first art class and began exploring the media. The common theme I saw during the interview is that she never really saw herself as an artist in the beginning and even as she kept exploring different mediums. She just continued to play, enjoy what she was creating and through the process of discovering how much she enjoyed making art – she began to share her work through Flickr.

I feel inspired by her dedication to working on her art consistently, working on projects for clients and how she balanced working part-time in order to do what she loved doing. I think what Lisa does is amazing and I am so grateful she took time out for me to do an interview today!

I view being a professional artist a remarkable and attainable career choice for myself and for many others. I look forward to diving into researching more about how entrepreneurial artists stay committed to their dreams of running their own show, promoting work that is valuable to themselves

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and and sharing with others. It is also a dream of mine and I look forward to connecting with more artists like Lisa Congdon.