

## BLOGGING ETIQUETTE

This netiquette is my own personal perspective – expressed as policies and principles - about:

- How to relate to other people
- What comments are acceptable/unacceptable
- How to develop and manage a Blogroll
- The do's and don'ts of Blogging

My [Comments Policy](#) was initially derived from the experiences and recommendation of others but has been updated and revised by me during the course of over two years of blogging almost every day. I've also added a [Blogroll Policy](#) (which means I've got something to refer people to if they ask me to link to their blog) and a [Note on Blogging Netiquette for Artists](#).

## MY COMMENTS POLICY

This comments policy is one developed for use on my own blog and is slightly revised and updated from the one published in January 2006. It's essentially an amalgam of the best practice that I am sympathetic to that I can find on the net and my own personal experience of what can happen if comments are not moderated.

## PRINCIPLES FOR INTERACTION AND COMMENTS

- **Mutual benefit:** I hope you will read this journal because you get something out of it and that you want to comment and/or interact with other people who comment on what I post.
- **Relevance:** I will write about things relating to the purposes of this art journal and how they relate to:
  - My own personal development and certain aspects of my life;
  - Wider trends and developments; and
  - Others who are developing their own artwork and careers
- **Learning is a good thing to pursue.** Sharing information for mutual benefit is encouraged as are comments which expand our wealth of information.
- **My blog is a virtual extension of my living space.** Consequently, in this journal we will discuss things as if we were speaking face to face in my living space. Comments will always try to be on-topic, informative and polite. Discussions should always be thoughtful and respectful of others – this is not a debating forum.
- **Private lives and privacy concerns are to be respected.** When writing about personal lives and individuals both you and I will only share what has already been made public on the internet by the individual concerned or what we would share if standing in a queue chatting to a friendly stranger.

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- **Being positive:** Comments about specific individuals will generally relate to sharing information about positive experiences and innovation. However comments about businesses will be business-like and may reflect negative experiences if these are significant.
- **Attribution is important:** Any references to something on another site should have proper attribution and a link.
- **We are reasonable, thinking people:** I will assume you to be a reasonable, thinking person (unless you provide evidence to the contrary) and I expect you to treat me as a reasonable, thoughtful person as well.
- **Moderation:** My aim is run this site with comments enabled and always moderated. I'd like to do otherwise but practice experience has suggested this may not be wise.
- **Don't hog my blog!** If you have a lot to say do please consider setting up your own blog so that you can share your views with others.

## COMMENTS THAT WILL BE REMOVED

This is my blog and, while I welcome comments, all comments will be moderated. Please note that using [Blogger](#) means that I can only delete a comment rather than edit.

- **All abusive comments will either not be published or will be removed** – and I determine what is abusive in my eyes as this is my living space. So any comments that I personally consider to be threatening or offensive if said to me in person in my own living space will be deleted. It is not OK to bristle with hostility or to call either me or other people who comment “names”. Those who indulge in what I regard as anti-social behaviours (e.g. behave like trolls and/or conspire and/or practice deceit such as engineering double acts for false debate or creating conflict) will be banned and their comments will be deleted.
- **Wildly off-topic comments will not be published or will be removed.**
- **Legal, honest and decent:** Any inflammatory statements, allegations or statement likely to generate legal interest and/or action by others will be removed.
- **Reasons why posts will not be published:**
  - inappropriate (eg they breach privacy considerations)
  - very disruptive to the flow (eg they would have been better sent as e-mails or are excessive in length.)
  - rude and/or disrespectful (eg if the poster comments at length on the topic and in a way which indicates they haven't read the post or subsequent comments. Comments are a conversation not an opportunity for some people to get on their soap box.)

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- **Comments** on any post which are suggestions of items which could feature in my weekly "Who's making a mark this week" blog posts. These may be read but will not be published. If you have a suggestion which I haven't invited, please use the '[contact me](#)' mechanism. This is because I sometimes need to ask questions but mostly because I never ever accept a suggestion which are anonymous and lack an e-mail address.
- **Spam will always be removed** (i.e. comments containing completely irrelevant links to commercial sites).
  - I suggest anybody who wants to post a link to a commercial site but isn't sure whether I will regard it as spam checks with me first via e-mail.
  - Any anonymous comments or otherwise suspicious comments which I suspect may be spam will be deleted. I always check who you are when you post. If I don't get an identifiable response your comment may be left in moderation or deleted. However I've just found that some spammers now have a way of masking their identity and consequently in future all such comments may well be deleted.
  - Bottom line - this blog does not provide link love to spammers – even though they appear to be completely unaware that Blogger has a strict 'no follow' code for all links left in comments! (This means that links left in comments have no value to the referenced site in question).

Where I have deleted a post and am queried about this I will indicate the reason why – at the highest level only (e.g. off-topic; spam; abusive). I won't enter into any sort of debate about what I consider to be appropriate comment in my journal after the event.

**BLOGROLL**

A blogroll can make life easier for me when I'm checking out other blogs. However I mainly check blogs using a feedreader (either Bloglines or Google Reader). I developed this blogroll policy for my own blog. It's based on some suggestions from elsewhere but mostly on practical experience of blogging.

**BLOGROLL POLICY**

- **Link swaps:** I don't swap links – period. Don't ask. Like Google, I'm not a fan of link farms and practices aimed purely at getting a better profile on Google. This includes indiscriminate linking to blogs I know little about and will probably never visit again.
- **Personal orientation:** What appeals to me is entirely personal and is no reflection on the intrinsic worth of your art. I got started on looking at other blogs by checking out the blogrolls on the blogs I liked and then commenting on the blogs which appealed to me and I recognise that many other seasoned bloggers do much the same thing. So I try to include only blogs in my blogroll which I get value out of or I just like and/or find myself checking on and/or commenting on, on a regular basis.
- **Type of art:** Most of the blogs in my blogroll are linked in some way to my approach to art (focused on drawing; use of dry media etc) but I also include blogs relating to other areas of art where I like/admire the work. I could add lots more links but I'd prefer to keep the blogroll shorter than it could be and change some entries from time to time.
- **Familiarity:** Unless you are an internet chum (and I am already very familiar with your images and narrative), no blog gets added until:
  - Your blog has been up and running for at least 3 months (this is because of the number of blogs which 'curl up and die' during the first 3 months. If you post regularly and consistently for 3 months the chances are that you're likely to continue)
  - You post on a regular basis (this certainly doesn't have to be daily but once a week or once a month doesn't make my blogroll. People who take a break for a long time can be temporarily removed and then reinstated again when they come back)
  - I have subscribed and read your blog. Before I include a blog I subscribe to it and then watch/read it for a while to check regularity of posting; whether content remains consistent and to see whether or not I like it or think it adds value and want to keep reading it.
- **Good writing:** I like reading as well as looking - good narrative works for me everytime! Humour is good when natural and observant rather than forced and constructed. We all get annoyed/irritated from time to time and everybody is entitled to a whinge but if your blog turns into a whingefest you'll find that I start to ignore it and eventually exclude it.
- **Subject matter:** I don't have to like or approve of everything posted on the blogs that I blogroll for a variety of reasons but I usually do.
- **Attribution:** I favour blogs which remember proper attribution and I dislike blogs which don't.

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## THE BLOGGING PS AND QS

Here are some suggestions as to some of the general principles and courtesies which make blogging a more enjoyable and less irritating experience for most artists.

## WHAT TO DO

- **ALWAYS Think before you blog.** Always. This isn't a private journal - we're all reading it - and it's probably going to be around for a very long time! Remember that even if you delete your blog or a post that there are ways of retrieving previously published material. Bloggers tend to be both author and Editor which means that it's generally a good idea to develop the habit of reflection and take a little more time between writing and publishing.
- **ALWAYS Think before you comment.** Many people find blogs for the first time because they follow comments back to their author and that person's blog. You're therefore representing your own blog and blogging practice while visiting and commenting on other blogs.
  - Think about who the blog author is and what sort of tone they set on their blog. I find it always works best if you aim to fit in with this – like when visiting somebody's home.
  - Always stick to the topic. Long rambling comments which are completely irrelevant to the post don't get published on my blog - and my guess is others also do likewise.
  - If you want to be controversial and/or very much disagree then it's probably better to be more explicit about a topic on your own blog and then reference the post you saw and disagreed with. You can always then comment that you have a different perspective and have continued the debate on your own blog and provide a link.
- **ALWAYS Link to your sources and correctly attribute your references.** This means if you read something on another blog or newspaper or journal first then always attribute that as the named source and give them a link. My only exception to this are things that are getting coverage across a range of sources at the same time because they are current "news" and the subject (eg an art gallery) probably issued a press release in the first place! In which case, try and link to the originating source even if you read it first in (say) a newspaper. You can always reference other good coverage of an event or item as well.
- **ALWAYS Correct errors after the event.** For example: last week I realised I've been spelling somebody's name incorrectly from time to time and went through all my posts to correct every instance. Remember people read your posts for some time afterwards and might reference them elsewhere as 'this is how it's spelt/this is a fact/etc.'. Also remember that if you correct in a separate post then the correction might be separated from the original if this is accessed via a search engine.

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## WHAT NOT TO DO

- **NEVER spam.** Spam comments appear completely random and include links to sites of no relevance to the blog and post in question. Don't post a comment on any old blog you come across and ask them to visit yours. *However*, it's OK to leave a link to a post on your blog *if* it's relevant to the topic of the blog post you are commenting on. What many people don't realise is that links left in comments on Blogger blogs are not indexed by Google in any case. Blogger codes them automatically as 'nofollow' to reduce spam which means they make no difference to your page-ranking in Google!
- **NEVER copy most or all of somebody else's blog post in full.** This is called 'plagiarism' in polite society and 'stealing' when people aren't being quite so restrained.
  - Nobody is impressed with people who copy content in this way. It's what spam blogs do all the time. You risk having your blog eliminated from Google's index.
  - If a post you find is interesting then say so on your blog and provide a link and give the author and their blog the credit AND the traffic they deserve. 'Fair use' provisions only provide for short extracts from text.
  - Never ever do as one person did and copy one of my sketches simply to provide decoration or illustration for her blog post. Illustrated blogs are emphatically NOT an image resource!
- **NEVER ignore a request to remove any content you have copied.** Even if you believe that yours is a 'fair use' within the terms of [copyright law and guidelines](#), it's almost certainly best to remove first and then discuss the situation in a calm fashion.
- **NEVER ask somebody to link to your blog.** If they want to link to you they will. Don't put people on the spot and/or make them indicate that they don't want to. Enough said?
- **NEVER attack a person on your blog.** When I say don't attack I mean don't name call and/or otherwise say things which are not true or are defamatory.
  - The Internet is *not* the equivalent of some sort of 'wild west' in legal terms - the rules of libel apply to everything you write. This is not the same as expressing an opinion where you indicate and evidence the reasons behind your views. I also happen to think internet corporations (Google, eBay, Microsoft etc.) are in a different category to people and you'll come across a few rants about 'the powers that be' from time to time across the blogosphere. However evidencing the views you express is always a very sound rule.
  - If you are the victim of an attack then don't respond - attacks are often perpetrated by attention-seekers. Ignore them.
- **NEVER ever publish while under the influence of any alcohol or narcotic or when you have a temperature.** I'm not saying don't write - I'm just suggesting it's a really, really good idea to wait until you wake up and/or are stone cold sober again before you publish your rant/rhyming couplets/ analysis of what is wrong with the art world/whatever etc. In fact it's generally a good idea to take time out to reflect on your draft about anything controversial even if you have signed the pledge!

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- **NEVER assume debate is welcome.** While comments, suggestions and discussion may be very welcome, not every blog wants to be the venue for the expression of extreme and/or controversial views. See my [comments policy](#) for why this one blog doesn't court arguments or controversy.

#### ALWAYS REMEMBER....

- **Remember cultural perspectives vary.** We may say or hear things in ways which don't 'fit' with the culture of the person listening or writing. If you feel offended for any reason, chances are that this is a cultural or style issue. For example, the English are often criticised for being more direct than others in the English-speaking world. If you feel offended remember you don't have to read a blog and it takes all sorts to make a world.
- **We all make mistakes from time to time.** The important thing is to remember that errors are made mainly because of ignorance and sometimes because of plain stupidity and that we are all capable of making mistakes from time to time. The only people I am critical of are those who should know better and/or are just plain lazy! If you are the victim of somebody else's mistake I suggest you let them know to avoid repetition. If you are the person who has committed a mistake then it's a jolly good idea to say you're sorry as soon as you recognise what has happened.
- **Seek permission first** before quoting more than a few lines or including images from other blogs.
- **Check a blog and its author before you comment for the first time.** Hit and run commenting can lead to you looking silly. If you've never visited a blog before and want to comment, then I suggest you take a look round and look at the evidence that the blog presents. Checking out the blogger's profile is equivalent of 'introductions'
- **Reciprocal comments / e-mails are nice but not required.** Remember we all have lives to lead and not everybody has time to reciprocate comments left on their blogs or e-mails that they are sent. That said it's nice if you do if you have the time.
- **Not every blogger is able to help or even respond to e-mails.** You can but ask. Quite a few bloggers are very happy to share more of what they know or offer an opinion on your work on a one to one basis. *However* not everybody has the time. Do not be offended if you get a 'form' reply or even no reply at all – you can't always tell how busy somebody is.
- **Not everybody wants a critical comment on their artwork**
  - people generally like to receive support for what they are doing - encourage where possible and acknowledge progress
  - Have a mind to what you're saying if commenting on artwork which is displayed 'for sale' - don't harm the chances of a sale.
  - Remember also that if all your work is for sale it's unlikely you'll ever get constructive feedback! By the same token don't ask for honest feedback and then feel hurt if people provide it.
  - If people are pondering process, then it's probably OK to make a suggestion - but I suggest that you get to know the person first. Try and see if they are asking for constructive criticism. When

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commenting in public it's good practice always to find something good to say as a minimum - or say nothing. You can always comment in a more direct way using e-mail if you feel that might be well received.

- **Warn people** if something you post might offend them. My personal view is that it's generally better to be OTT in this area.
- **Don't whine.** Or if you must, try to make sure you don't do it too often. Whining only loses you visitors. Try having a whining pact with a friend instead - and do it in private!

#### UP FOR DEBATE

- **Alterations after publication:** The area where I find it most difficult to define 'good practice' comes in the area of alterations after publication.
  - I often find I need to correct grammar and spelling immediately after publication because of errors and omissions which I missed in the incredibly tiny drafting window provided by Blogger.
  - I also find I sometimes look back and realise I should have said something differently either because it's capable of misinterpretation or creates the wrong impression.
  - My rule is to get amendments done within the hour and before the first comment. If I amend a blog post at a later date I generally provide a note like this [12th February - revised to include.....] unless it's something really minor like a spelling mistake I'd not spotted (and thanks to all those who point these out to me from time to time).
  - Also if I amend if after the first comment I leave a note in the comments as well.

You can quote these commenting, blogging and netiquette policy elsewhere but ***please remember to attribute it.***

**FURTHER READING**

I found it interesting to develop my own policies and it certainly helped me review my own practices. If you're interested in the subject of Blog Netiquette then you'll find some links below which provide some other perspectives on this topic. I'd be very interested to know about any other notes of this sort targeted at and for artists – you can contact me [here](#).

Please note that I reserve the right to update and amend these notes periodically - including the links section. Do please comment and suggest any improvements you can think of.

**INFLUENCES ON MY COMMENTS POLICY**

These are the people who originally influenced by comments policy

- Lisa Williams – the [“Living Room Doctrine”](#)
- the principles of the [“Friendly Stranger”](#)
- Rana’s Frogs and Ravens: [“Benefit of the Doubt”](#)

Other people who say pretty much the same thing include:

- Problogger (guest author: [Elise Bauer](#)) How [Does Your Comment Policy Affect Your Readership?](#)
- Global Neighbourhood’s [Revised comments Policy](#)
- Blog Herald [Does your Blog have a Comments Policy?](#)

**OTHER SOURCES**

These relate to contexts other than those which will be applicable to most artists – but they have useful ideas which can translate to another arena.

- From one of the originals, Robert Scoble ([Scobleizer](#)) on [The Corporate Weblog Manifesto](#) (26<sup>th</sup> February 2003)
- [Weblogs at Harvard Law School – terms of use](#) for those who like the legalese aspects

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Portfolio Website: <http://www.pastelsandpencils.com/>

Publications Website: <http://www.makingamark.co.uk>

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