

Business of Art Conference 2025

Schedule and Speaker Information

Friday, March 7

Start the day in the Garden Room. Then, Session A and Keynote talks will be held in the Garden Room. Session B will be in the Speer Room, located across the sidewalk in the Mahlstedt Center.

Noon - 1 p.m.

Registration/Welcome

1 - 2 p.m.

A. Keynote Address 1

Switching Your Personal Practice and Finding Success — **Chris Vance**

Finding success begins with developing a daily, personal practice and finding time each day to create. It's important to embrace the process without fear of imperfection. Rather, the intention is to create a body of work that can be reflected upon as you find your creative voice.

About Chris Vance: Chris Vance has worked as a professional artist in the Midwest for the past 25 years. His art is rooted in a blend of cartoons, music, graffiti, and skateboard culture. He described his distinctive style in an interview published on a blog called *Seeds of Fruit*:

"I have four kids, and I've been influenced by skateboards since I was a kid, plus graffiti, cartoons, and the whole Ren and Stimpy type culture. Cartoon characters that aren't really Tom and Jerry but they're a little darker than that, I guess. And I've always been inspired by the way my kids draw things — kind of sketchy but there's an interesting line quality that happens when they're not really aware of making it perfect. All those things kind of intrigue me, all those things kind of crammed into my head and spit back out!"

[<https://seedsandfruit.com/chris-vance-painter>]

Chris works with corporate accounts, art fairs, murals, and galleries. He graduated from Iowa State University in 2000 with a BFA. In college, he was really influenced by the work of the well-known artist Richard Diebenkorn (American, 1922-93) and the abstract expressionists (Mid-20th century American art movement).

2:20 - 3:20 p.m.

A. *Making Connections to Create Opportunity* — **Megan Hammer**

In this session, Megan will share her experience developing a successful art practice and business that blends intention and passion. Using branding, building trust, and forming relationships, she integrates creating art, teaching, and selling her work while staying authentic to her mission. Participants will explore ways to tell their unique story by crafting an artist statement to build confidence, guide decision making, and create opportunities that align with their passion.

About Megan Hammer: Megan Hammer (she/her) is a practicing artist working in the medium of felted wool. She explores the potential for harmony and collaboration with nature through vibrant botanical studies and landscapes, examining themes of conservation and change. A graduate of the University of Northern Iowa (BA, Studio Art), Megan exhibits regionally in galleries and at art festivals. Recent exhibitions of her work include the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, the Oskaloosa Art Center, and the Polk County Heritage Gallery. Megan shares her process while encouraging an appreciation for nature by teaching felting workshops in partnership with organizations such as the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, Polk County Conservation, and the Crested Butte Wildflower Festival. She lives in Urbandale, Iowa with her husband and two sons.

B. *Business Model Canvas: Visualizing Your Passion as a Business* — **Sheri Benson and Leah Locke**

A business model canvas is a visual tool that helps aspiring business owners analyze and visualize their business model. It's a breakdown of a business's key elements and how it plans to make money. The canvas consists of nine fundamental building blocks that describe a company's core aspects. The business model canvas helps businesses identify requirements to deliver their service and keep the bigger picture in mind, even when they're bogged down in day-to-day details.

This session will be a workshop where we will brainstorm your business model canvas together.

About Sheri Benson: Sheri Benson is a business counselor for Mid Iowa and ISU Small Business Development Centers (SBDC). She is a Certified Business Advisor (CBA), Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) and holds a Master of Leadership Studies from the University of Oklahoma. As a small business counselor, Sheri consults one-on-one with small business owners on topics such as best practices, business planning, succession planning,

exporting, finding capital. Prior to joining SBDC, she was very active in public board and nonprofit work. She gained extensive small business acumen while operating a small business herself and then coaching others. In her free time Sheri enjoys golfing, playing with grandchildren, jigsaw puzzles and reading a good book.

About Leah Locke: Leah Locke is the Regional Director for the Iowa State University office of America's SBDC Iowa. Her role supports Boone, Story, Marshall, and Hardin counties. As Regional Director, Leah serves as a resource and advocate for small business start-ups, by developing financial statements, business plans and financing applications; counseling businesses on hiring, training, and motivating employees; advising clients on marketing materials including websites and publications; among other things. After graduating from Iowa State University, Leah spent 10+ years working for start-ups and small businesses in Ames, Iowa. In her free time, Leah enjoys spending time with her family, golfing, cooking, and walking her corgi.

3:40 - 4:40 p.m.

A. *Mingle by Medium* — Group-moderated

Grab a snack and find the table that sounds the most interesting to you and meet others with similar artistic interests.

B. *Running Your Business: Types of Entities* — Joseph Wallace

A review of the different types of business entities: pros and cons and legal pitfalls.

About Joseph Wallace: Joseph Wallace is a 1996 graduate of Northern Illinois University School of Law and is admitted to practice law in the state of Iowa. He is a member of the Iowa and Polk County Bar Associations. Prior to joining HGB, Joseph worked in corporate finance and investment banking for over 20 years. His prior work experience includes Senior Manager of KPMG Economic & Valuation Services Practice (Chicago), Vice President at Houlihan Lokey Investment Bank (Chicago), Director of Capital Markets at Principal Financial Group (Des Moines), and Vice President of Mergers & Acquisitions at Ameriprise Financial (Minneapolis). He has substantial experience in joint ventures, mergers & acquisitions, business valuation and analysis, raising capital, and other business transactional matters.

6 p.m.

Conference Happy Hour (Location TBA)

Saturday, March 8

Start the day in the Garden Room. Then, Session A and Keynote talks will be held in the Garden Room. Session B will be in the Speer Room, located across the sidewalk in the Mahlsted Center.

8 - 9 a.m.

Registration/Welcome

9 - 9:30 a.m.

A. *Take a Seat: Chair Yoga for Everyone* — Claire Krüesel

Chair yoga really is for everyone--whether you've never tried yoga or you're an experienced practitioner, come experience this grounding approach to movement. We'll warm up for the day and open up space (both creative and mental!) through a guided sequence of yoga poses with options for modification and exploration. Expect to start slow and be invited into variations that let you customize your morning movement. (In other words, comfortable stretching is the default, but those seeking more challenge will find it). We'll end with a brief breathing exercise to balance brain hemispheres and leave you feeling centered. You don't need to bring anything but yourself; comfortable clothing is helpful but not required. The instructor is trained in Chair Yoga by YogaFit.

About Claire Krüesel: Claire Kruesel has been practicing and teaching yoga since 2008 and is a 200-hour E-RYT through YogaFit. She currently teaches at Ignite Yoga. Before stepping onto a yoga mat for the first time, she couldn't touch my toes and was very disconnected from her body. She shares this hoping to encourage others—you don't need to be flexible to do yoga; that's what yoga is for! Claire's practice started as a stress release during an intense loss and has extended benefit into every aspect of life: mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, energetic, creative. Claire is also a musician, artist, program coordinator, and dedicated to family, and yoga allows her to be more present in all these endeavors. It is a joy and honor to guide others into exploring the mind-body relationship—while having fun!

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

A. *Daily Creative Practice: Why it Helps Your Work as an Artist and How to Build One* — Susan Norris and Rhonda Scott

As artists, it's our job to be creative. And yet, even for us, it can be difficult to set aside all the other hats we wear and actually create artwork. The longer we are away, the more we can struggle to begin our work. Further, once we are finally in

our studios, we often feel we must be very productive to justify spending our time on art – we must create things that are likely to sell. It can be especially hard to set aside time to experiment, try new things, or learn new skills, activities that take extra time and might not yield sales quickly. As a result, we may make less work, and the work we make may be less innovative.

If you have difficulty carving out time for your art practice, you are not alone. In this session, we will talk about a daily creative practice for artists. We will discuss why a daily creative practice is helpful, look at artists who have established such practices, identify barriers, and explore practical ways to make a daily creative practice more successful.

About Susan Norris: Susan is an assemblage/found object artist and retired art teacher who lives in Ames, Iowa. She endeavors to lead an art-filled life which includes guiding people of all ages to discover the benefits of making art for art's sake.

Susan has completed three 365-day art challenges in the past 6 years; daily mandala drawing in 2018-2019; assemblage/day in 2021 and a daily stitch journal in 2023. Eighty pieces from 2021 Assembled were part of the Octagon "Works in Progress" Exhibit in September 2022.

About Rhonda Scott: Rhonda is a teaching artist from Ames, Iowa who works in multiple media and is passionate about lifelong learning. She is especially fascinated by age-old processes with a modern twist, such as lampwork and paper marbling. Rhonda believes that we all have the ability to be creative and that being creative is deep-down good for us.

Believing it to be key, Rhonda tried (unsuccessfully) to develop a daily creative practice for years. When she finally found a way to make it work, even she was surprised at its power.

B. *There's No Show Business Without Business - Budget, Price, Track Details* — **Valerie Williams**

Valerie's talk will address the nitty gritty of the business, including budgeting, how to use your budget to set your pricing, using software to track income, expenses, and inventory. Bring your questions. Valerie will bring sample spreadsheets.

About Valerie Williams: Valerie is a dancer, choreographer, director, and potter who has made a living in the arts since 1975. Director of Co'Motion Dance Theater from 1978-2020 Valerie was responsible for the daily running of her company including rehearsing and repertory, and overseeing administrative

activities (booking, payroll, contracts, grant applications, and more). She is interested in artists being successful with the least time spent in the office.

10:50 - 11:50 a.m.

A. *Tell Me a Story* — Matthew McIver

Story is one of the most powerful tools for getting your message out. You have great statistics, and catchy slogans, and all of those can help. But if you want to create powerful alignment, you need to reach not just the head and the heart, but the gut. Learn the basic elements of a story and how to use them to share your message in a way that reaches the intellect, the emotions, and the core identity of your audience. When you align the head, the heart, and the gut, powerful action follows.

About Matthew McIver: Matthew is a communicator, teacher, writer, director, and community builder. After eleven years of training and acting in New York, Matthew came to Des Moines as the Founding Artistic Director of the Des Moines Social Club (DMSC), an innovative multidisciplinary arts venue in downtown Des Moines that garnered national attention. The DMSC spawned creative businesses and programs across central Iowa, and Matthew served as one of the key staff and public faces of the project. Most recently he served as artistic director and resource development director of the Iowa Stage Theatre Company, producing and directing award-winning classic and contemporary theater. Matthew is an active member in the community, having served on the boards of Bravo Greater Des Moines, the After School Arts Program, Pyramid Theatre Company, Girls Rock Des Moines, Hoyt Sherman Place, and the Iowa Cultural Coalition.

B. *Legacy Toolbox from a Fine Art Appraiser* — Lauren Tucci

What happens to an artwork once it leaves the studio? The lifespan of a work of art tends to extend beyond its creator. It may pass through the hands of multiple owners, find a place in a museum collection, or, alternatively, a thrift store. By understanding how choices made in the studio today influence an artwork's future in the market, artists can actively shape their own legacy. This session provides practical advice from an appraiser's perspective to enhance the artist 'toolbox.' Topics include best practices for preservation, documentation, and other key considerations for a long-term professional arts career.

About Lauren Tucci: Lauren is an artist, gallerist, and Fine Art appraiser. Since 2015, she has been a part of Gilded Pear Gallery as Gallery Director, curating exhibitions, managing client interests and artist relations. Her role has led her to oversee restoration and conservation projects and has given her experience in

advising clients on managing their collections. As a Fine Art Appraiser of Personal Property with the International Society of Appraisers, Lauren's field of expertise includes American studio ceramics, printmaking, and sculpture, as well as works on canvas and paper. Lauren has served as advisory council for Excellence in the Arts (Gazette) and has been invited as a visiting artist, juror, curator, and speaker around the Midwest.

Noon - 2 p.m.

A. Lunch and Craft Activity — **Beth Weninger**

Spend some time creating together during our extended lunch break. This is a chance to reconnect with folks you met earlier or to chat with someone new.

About Beth Weninger: Beth is a mixed media artist drawing on inspiration from her family, nature, and her love of craft. Weninger received her BFA in Sculpture and Paper from the University of Maryland and has exhibited her work in Iowa, Maryland, and New Mexico. She loves to create mixed media collages, family portrait puppets, and books in her studio. She has been teaching art to children and adults for 30 years and is currently Education Director at the Octagon Center for the Arts.

2 - 3 p.m.

A. Keynote Address 2

Different Ways to Sell Artwork — **Chris Vance**

In this session, we'll explore your artistic voice and authenticity in your work. As you navigate your journey, it's crucial to understand the various avenues for selling your art: art fairs, galleries, dealers, interior designers, and trade shows. We'll discuss the pros and cons of each option and highlight the importance of finding the right fit to succeed with your own work.

About Chris Vance: Chris has worked as a professional artist in the Midwest for the past 25 years. His art is rooted in a blend of cartoons, music, graffiti, and skateboard culture. Chris works with corporate accounts, art fairs, murals, and galleries. He graduated from Iowa State University in 2000 with a BFA. In college, he was really influenced by the work of the well-known artist Richard Diebenkorn (American, 1922-93) and the abstract expressionists (Mid-20th century American art movement).

3:20 - 4:20 p.m.

A. Iowa Arts Council Resources for Artists — **David Schmitz**

In this interactive workshop, Iowa Arts Council (IAC) staff will present an overview of current IAC grants and programs and will offer practical tips and

advice for preparing a competitive application for grant funding. The session will be geared towards individual artists and creatives, though the content will also be relevant to artist-centered organizations.

About David Schmitz: David Schmitz has led the Iowa Arts Council since 2020 and after an earlier role with the council focused on supporting community arts and public art in Iowa. Schmitz' passion for the work stems from his belief in the power of the arts and artists to transform lives and communities. A trained visual artist, Schmitz has more than 15 years of experience in the arts and public administration. Most recently, he served as executive director of the Dubuque Museum of Art and has also held roles with the Des Moines Art Center and the Chicago Artists' Coalition. Schmitz currently serves on the boards of Mainframe Studios in Des Moines, the Friends of the UNI Gallery of Art, and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

B. From Teaching to Photography: Art as a Second Career — **Chris Ewan**

This presentation will focus on the insights Chris gained during my transition from being a full-time high school band director to pursuing his passion for photography as a business. Throughout his teaching career, Chris spent hours creating art with his camera but little time understanding or managing the business side of things. Since Chris's retirement in 2022, he's had the opportunity to explore the business side of this art and has learned a thing or two.

About Chris Ewan Chris retired in 2022 after 33 years as a high school band director. He now focuses on his passion for photography, capturing the "Colors, Shapes, and Textures of Our Natural World." His award-winning images of landscapes, animals, and plants have been featured in Our Iowa Magazine, the Iowa State Fair, and various guides and calendars. During the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, Chris launched the "Today's Distraction" project, sharing nature photos for a peaceful escape. With a photography journey that began in his teens, Chris approaches his work with the artistic mindset of a musician, crafting each image like a "musical score." Explore his work at chrisjewanphotography.com, Facebook, and Instagram.

4:20 - 4:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks (both session locations)