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Want to “Move” an Art Buyer? It’s All About the Images

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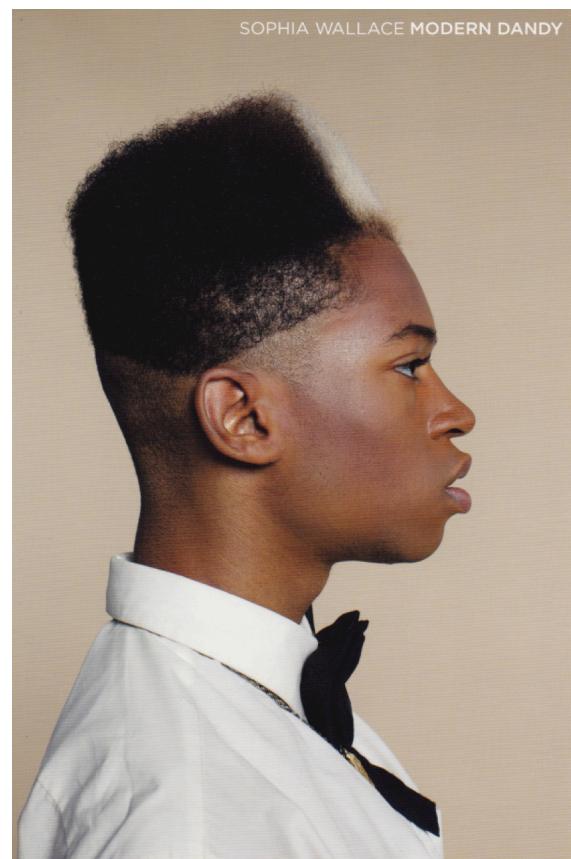
Question: What is it about promotional pieces that move ADs and art buyers to pick up the phone and call you? Images? Calls to action? Something emotionally moving?

As with many other marketing questions, there is no one perfect answer, because you can be doing everything right and still not get the phone call. It may be a question of luck or timing, and that is out of your hands.

Most art buyers and art directors are simply not going to pick up the phone right away to tell you how great you are – they’re too busy – but they might email you and say they like your work, or keep your printed promotion on file because they loved it so much. Usually, the calls are only going to come when they have a project for you to shoot or they want you to submit an estimate, and who knows how long that can take?

So how do you remain on their radar? Keep promoting. You could say the answer to this question is “all of the above.”

Of course you need to show something really special as far as the images go – why aim for mediocre? “Hmmm, what image shall I use on my next promotion ... an OK one, or one I think they want to see?” No, send what you want to show them. Make them want to see more. Make them want to go to your website and bookmark it.



© [Sophia Wallace](#) – “DeVohn, No. 2”
from the “Modern Dandy” series

For me, a “call to action” sounds a bit demanding. If a promotion “instructs” viewers to pick up the phone and call, you’re not giving them the opportunity to make the decision for themselves. If they want you, you’ll hear from them. The trick is making them want you. Your promotions should give the art buyer or art director an idea of what you bring to the table.



© [Jade Albert](#) – "juliette is crazy about purple"

And absolutely it should be “emotionally moving.” If we are not moved emotionally, then what’s the point? That emotion evoked by your images can range from humor to horror, from joy to sadness, but if you know that your promotion is going to be one of many, which it is, then of course it needs to stand out.

To answer this question more fully, I asked a few art buyers for their thoughts. Interestingly, [Patti Harris-Zarkin](#), senior art buyer at Publicis, said she’s not a big fan of promotional pieces and has never had the experience of calling a photographer because of a promo. For her, each assignment requires a new search and she does all of that online.

Freelance Art Buyer [Amy Salzman](#) doesn’t mind receiving printed promotions, but said they shouldn’t be too big or too small and they should “*leave a visual memory*.” [Erin Rabasca](#), group director of the Digital Studio at R/GA, said “*It is all about the images*” and that all promotions should include your website address and contact information (people do forget these things). Erin definitely prefers fewer bells and whistles: “*Simple is better*.”

A recent promotion that stood out for Kat Dalager, print production manager at Campbell Mithun in Minneapolis, was a series of signed and numbered limited-edition prints from photographer Doug Kirkland.



© [Douglas Kirkland](#)

“They’re striking not only because they are of famous people … but because they are amazing images as well,” Kat said. *“It’s also incredible to receive something so personalized. Do I have any portrait work in the immediate future? No, but great work is great work, regardless of the immediate need. A limited-edition signed print of a Ford truck … won’t necessarily have the same emotional appeal as a shot of Marilyn Monroe.”*

It’s true that not everyone has images of Marilyn Monroe in their archives, but even Doug Kirkland had to start somewhere – and it’s because of his incredible images that he’s had such an incredible career.

This brings us back to the work itself. Even if you are not as well known, you can still make a memorable card or a beautiful print to send to potential clients ... something they will love and keep, and hopefully treasure.



© [Desmond Burdon](#) - "Diva"

As always, there is never one answer to any of these questions and what one art buyer or art director may prefer can be very different from another. [Tim Stapleton](#), creative director at Sigma Group in New Jersey, said although most people around his office receive cards, he also happens to like receiving posters, especially if they're signed!

At the end of the day, it is all about the images.