

Question:
***What do these
ten artists have
in common?***

Sue McKittrick
Vings Vebervings
Susan Ogle
Susan Kraft-Pflug
Jan Sexton
Susan Kraft
Jannah Atkins
Gary Webernick
J. Sexton-Atkins
M.R. Sommer
Janie Rinvings
Susie Bevins-Quinn
Quimmigsak
Mary Jean Ritchie
Timothy Ryan
Jane Meyer
Mary R. Sommer
Chris Arend
James C. Arend
Susan Kraft-Remick
Susie Bevins

Answer:
***They've all used
more than one name
in their careers.***

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No, Really, Who Are You?

by Wanda Seamster

After years of signing his work in with several different names, Andrew Warhola consciously chose—as part of his career plan—to be known by only one name. The tactic was valuable for name recognition and will be more valuable in the distant future; art historians of the twenty-second century will have fewer problems recognizing and researching Andy Warhol's work.

But these same art historians will have trouble researching other artists, particularly women artists who often change their professional names according to marital status. Artists who alternately use nicknames or alternative names of cultural significance may also be difficult to track. Artist who use mere initials combined with common last names are often women who feel it may be advantageous to their careers to hide their sex. This is not a recent concern; in 1908, Canadian artist Caroline Armington was told by her agent to “conceal her femaleness under unisex initials.”

During the All Alaska Juried Exhibition from 1967 to 1976, several artists were listed only with the initials M.E., which proved to often stand for Mary Elizabeth. When coupled with common last names, artists using initials are difficult to research through documents such as catalogs, news articles, and other sources of art history. Statistically, the number of last names worldwide are decreasing, so first names are becoming increasingly more important in identifying individuals.

Art historians and critics write about artists on whom they are able to find information. If you want to be remembered by art historians, you need to do several things: produce work has a quality that emotionally or intellectually reaches subsequent generations (the judgment of

time); make sure the work is readily accessible to art historians and critics by being included in permanent, well-maintained collections; and leave written information about yourself as well as your work that is able to be researched without too much difficulty. Out of these three criteria, the quality of the work appears less important than the other two; honors and recognition in the arts community and other societal groups creates more tangible history. “Posthumous reputations are sustained by the preservation of tangible things associated with the deceased artists,” according to Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang in *Etched in Memory: the Building and Survival of the Artistic Reputation*.

If you want to begin the arduous process of ensuring that you will be remembered, an easy way to start is to choose only one name and use it for your personal as well as professional life.