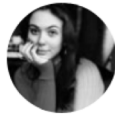


# Exclusive – Alaia De Santis on making it big in the art world

EXCLUSIVES ENTREPRENEURSHIP Posted 11 January, 2021



By Sofia Phillips London, UK



By Charlie Coombs London, UK



A prime example of the talent, discipline, and patience it takes to become a household name as an artist, Gen Z creative Alaia De Santis shares her advice on how to succeed in the industry.

Having been featured in numerous exhibitions and gallery shows across London and New York for her films, paintings, and collages, Alaia is a leading example of how unrelenting dedication to a craft you truly love can amount to success.

I chatted to her recently about her [experiences](#), where she hopes to take things next, and even managed to pick up some tips for aspiring Gen Zers looking to make it big as artists.



### **A rising young talent in the industry**

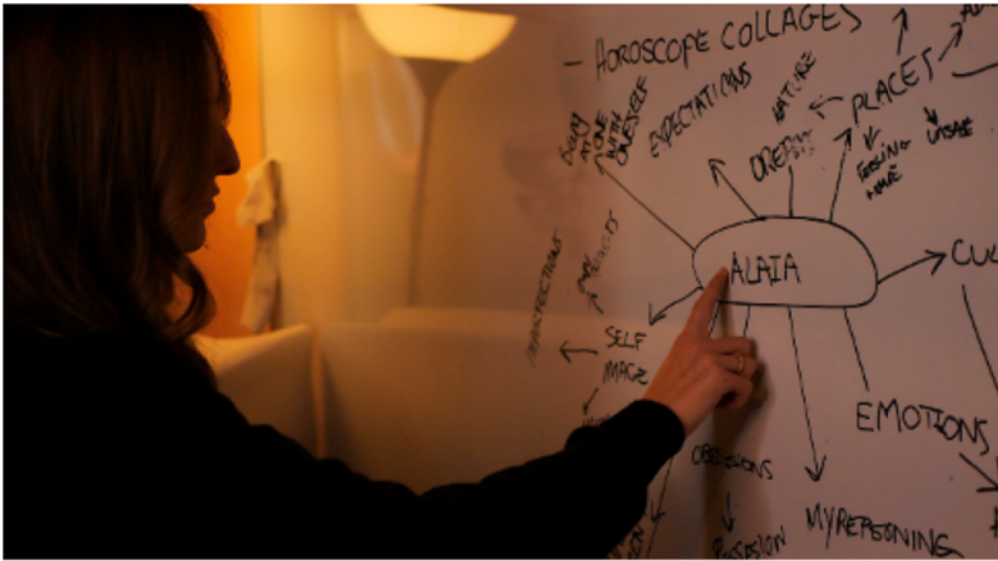
Recently recognised by [Forbes](#) as a ‘rising star to watch’ within the art world, her talent is evident.

Through a vast combination of mediums including oil paint, clay, collage, and [film](#), Alaia explores the history of popular images and iconography, attributing her explorative nature to the multi-faceted way in which she approaches her work.

‘I’ve always been an explorer, so I let that guide my practice,’ she begins. ‘As a young artist, I keep a diverse and open mind to all media, often challenging my own understanding of an artist’s tools.’

Looking like a seventies magazine spread come to life in an abstract barrage of architecture and fashion, Alaia’s most popular pieces are her [collages](#).





Drawing inspiration from absolutely anything whether it's a 'banana on the floor to a silhouette at a party' as she tells me, for her, collages form their own stories, mixing different characters and settings to bring out a whole new narrative.

Touching on an uncanny kind of familiarity juxtaposed with commercial surrealism, it's this unique and undeniably engaging approach, alongside her instantly recognisable passion for what she does, that makes her work all the more compelling.



Viewing the creative process as her 'own personal treasure hunt,' Alaiia also strives to find stimulus in the stories attached to objects and, through her art, propose the next chapter.

'There's something beautiful about the feeling of pseudo-nostalgia when I look at old images,' she says. 'They depict moments I have never known, but they feel alive in my own imagined reality. I find myself enchanted by stories of the past, particularly the ones that live on until now.'

## Using art for therapy and self-care

Beneath the eclectic and vibrant surface of her work however, there exists an underlying theme.

Alaia is acutely aware of how cathartic the creative process can be and considers art 'the best kind of medicine' for anyone dealing with anxiety or other mental health conditions. Regarding her own experience with this, she explains that her paintings are how she deals with emotions and examines her personal relationships.

For this reason, a collection of Alaia's [paintings](#) are titled with anagrams of people's names, which she says is also to do with how much she enjoys mysteries and puzzles – 'something for the viewer to solve.' Able to transform uncomfortable or negative thoughts and memories into art, she deems it a highly effective method of regaining control.

'It's a good way of getting things off my chest,' she says. 'When I'd paint, I'd feel a weight lift. It's personal, and no one will ever know the whole truth, but it means I don't have to carry pain with me, it's released into the world and I'm controlling it – it doesn't control me.'



It goes without saying that Alaia is a force to be reckoned with in an industry that's evolving every single day, particularly given her understanding of the importance of social media when building a fan base.

Though striking bold canvases are a sure-fire way of attracting eyes on platforms such as Instagram, becoming a household name as an artist is certainly no easy feat, but Alaia is determined that with patience and a committed mind-set, one can achieve anything. 'You are confined only by the walls you build,' she says. 'You are your worst enemy so don't give in to giving up.'

This is not to say that Alaia didn't face a slew of obstacles in the early stages of her journey because, as is often the case, many of her peers would urge her to follow an alternative career path, citing 'making it' in the art world a near-impossible accomplishment in this day and age.





But Alaia refused to let this hinder her, and stresses that there's no point doing anything in life that you don't love. 'I never cared because I adore it and the risks are all worth it in the end,' she says.

If I could give advice to my younger self on receiving criticism I would say: 'don't take it too much to heart.' Sometimes I'd get sad and feel self-doubtful of course, but the most important thing is to stay confident, positive and just keep going, no matter what anyone tells you.'

While adopting a well thought out approach can give you a significant advantage, it may seem obvious, but passion for a craft shines through when it's genuine and creating pieces you actually appreciate yourself is key. Alaia is emblematic of this and who better, therefore, to offer up some sage advice on how to succeed in the industry? Here are her top tips.



## Use social media to your advantage

‘One should definitely have a social media account as it’s the best way of putting your work out there,’ she says, noting that social media is absolutely crucial to finding a receptive audience for art. While traditional outlets like Facebook and Twitter are both good options, the most important ones to be flaunting pieces on these days are Instagram and TikTok.

Alaia says that using apps and websites to market herself plays ‘the biggest role in advancing [her] career’. Showing off work, creative processes, and even your day-to-day personality helps potential buyers and audiences connect with you, which is important during the early stages. Adding links to your Instagram can lead to job opportunities.

‘People love to see how you progress and be updated on what you do,’ she adds. So, get sharing! It’s the name of the game. For some ideas on how to start, check out Alaia’s Instagram profile [here](#).



## Understand how to make your work easy to sell

Online marketplaces can be brutal. Websites like artsy, RedBubble and ArtSpace are good online platforms to sell work on, but it's also just as viable to create a website from scratch using services like Wix or Squarespace (which can directly be linked to your Instagram profile). Remember to promote your website or digital storefront everywhere you can and get the word out.

Alaia warns that it can be tough to stand out, as the 'art market is a super competitive place', but by the same token notes that there are 'so many ways of producing prints and making them attractive to buyers'.

Consider making limited edition prints, timed exclusives, or seasonal pieces to help give a sense of urgency and exclusivity.

She also recommends reading '[Navigating the Art World: Professional Practice for the Early Career](#)' by Delphian, a book aimed at early career artists to help equip them with the practical tools needed to approach their careers.

And while you're at it, why not check out [Gatekeeper Magazine](#), a fascinating new self-starter from two Gen Z creatives giving new and aspiring young artists resources and insights into the world of art, helping them to understand the ins and outs of an over-commercialised industry.

## Make connections and get networking

Okay, so this one's a bit of a tough one right now, considering we're stuck in lockdowns and social restrictions, but networking remains essential – even online.

Join LinkedIn and find likeminded artists, reach out to other profiles on Instagram, and get involved. Setting up exhibitions independently with friends and peers is a great option too, though you'll obviously have to wait a while until that's possible again.

Alaia mentions that this is how she got things off the ground when she was first taking off. 'When you're a young artist you start by creating your own exhibitions with friends. Sometimes you may have someone that knows someone, and they'll eventually want to show off your work in an exhibition'. She also mentions that going out and meeting people is 'part of the job'.

It's so imperative to make those vital connections in the industry. It's also great to get first-hand experience in it as well for example working at a gallery or artist studio.

Ultimately, be true to yourself and explore your own imagination thoroughly. Don't create paintings or pieces just because you feel you have to – keep it fresh and mix things up. If you're proud of the work, it'll be reflected in the feedback you receive and will no doubt help find success.

<https://thred.com/exclusives/exclusive-alaia-de-santis-on-making-it-big-in-the-art-world/>