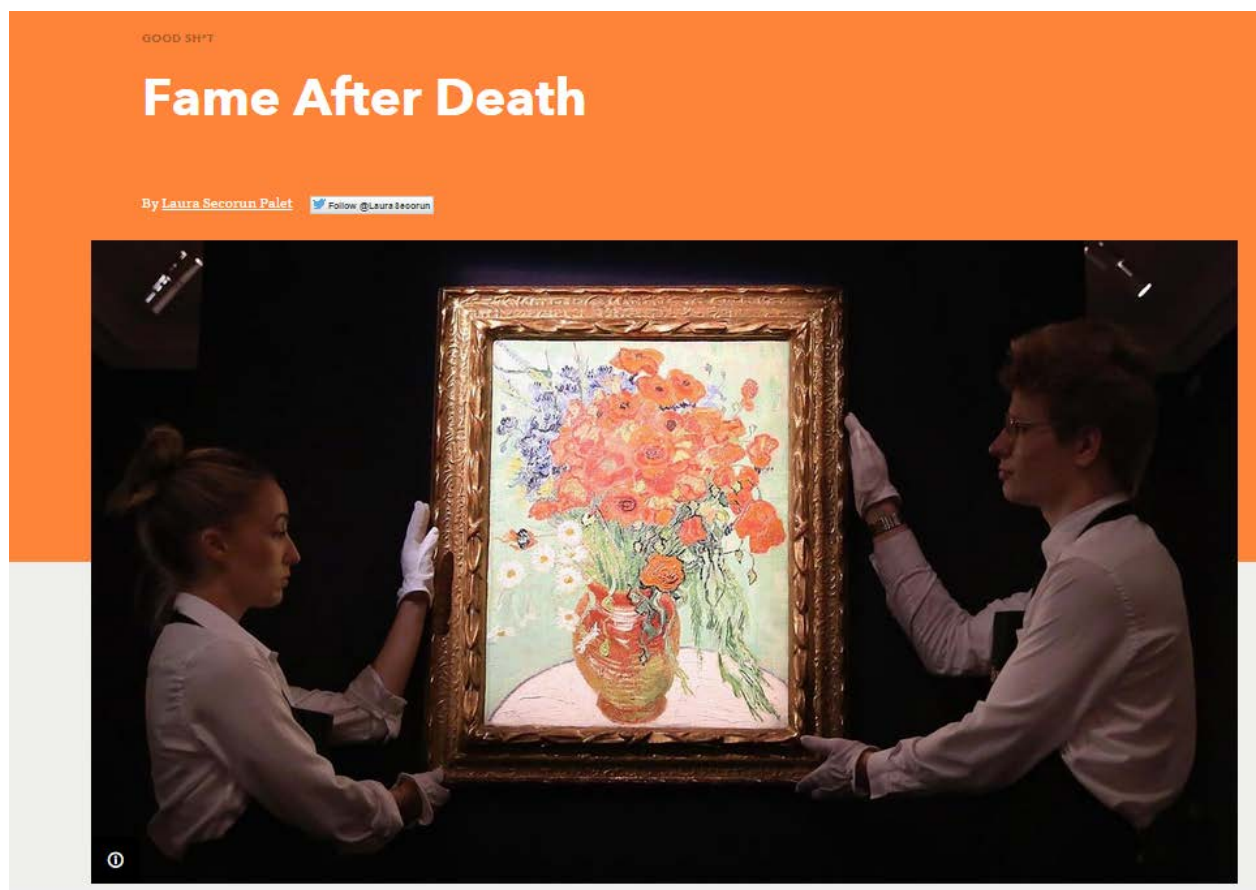




October 20, 2014



Vincent van Gogh, El Greco, Henry David Thoreau. Many artists become famous only after they die. For some, it happened by pure chance, like Franz Kafka, whose last wish was to have all his manuscripts burned. But if you don't reach creative stardom in this lifetime, there still could be a way to get there.

The new website [POBA: Where the Arts Live](#) offers to keep your work alive, "promote and preserve the creative work of exceptional artists who have died without recognition of the full measure of their talents or creative legacies."

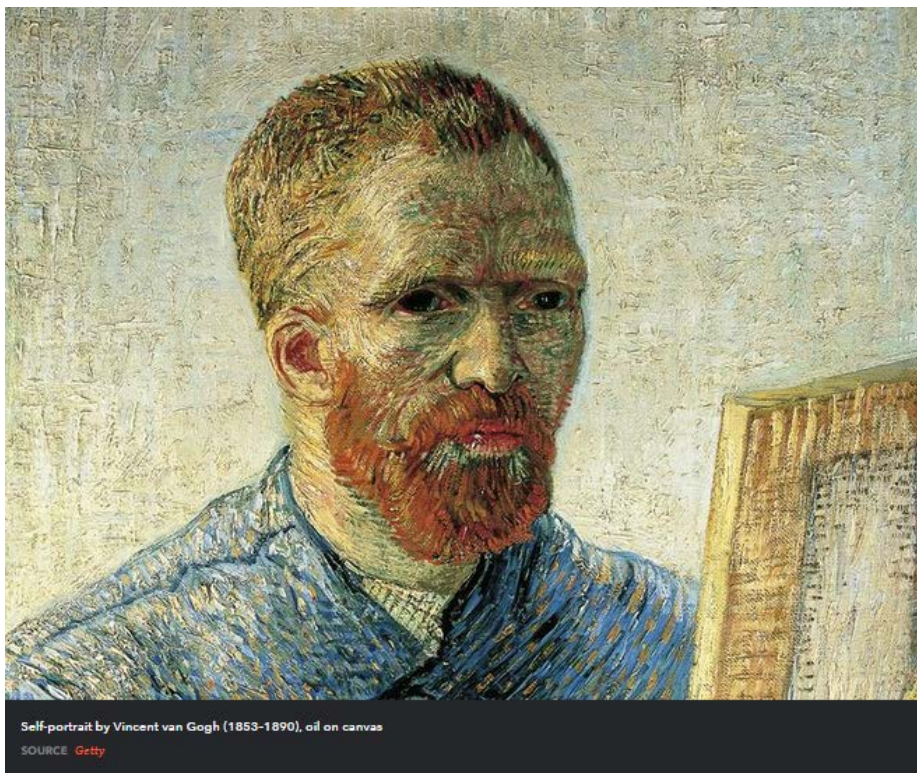
This peculiar Web-based program, part of the nonprofit James Kirk Bernard Foundation, promises to “help take your artist’s legacy from garage to gallery, and offer assistance at any stage in between.”

*“Too many artists of great ability leave behind large collections of fabulous works ...”*

The self-described “virtual cultural arts center” is inspired by the Buddhist term *phowa*, the transference of consciousness at the time of death. The initiative provides support for grieving families or estate managers to get their beloved artist’s legacy cataloged, archived, displayed, marketed and, hopefully, sold.

“Too many artists of great ability leave behind large collections of fabulous works, which loved ones and representatives have little time, opportunity or help to make widely known. Without a place like POBA, these works may never be known or get the full recognition they deserve,” says Sallie Bernard, president of the James Bernard Kirk Foundation.

Despite being a nonprofit, the Web-based service charges an annual, tax-deductible fee of \$49.95. This fee provides a platform for families wanting publish and exhibit their dead loved ones’ lasting artistic expressions, including secure digital storage, access to a personal POBA Concierge to assist you with online and physical storage, marketing, and even organizing a memorial concert or posthumous retrospective.



“POBA helped me understand the significance of the collection,” says Jaye Smith, whose mother, Carol C. Carlisle, left behind a treasure trove of 1,200 photos of hers and other great photographers of the mid-20th century. “I knew some of the important names in it, like Cartier-Bresson and W. Eugene Smith, but I didn’t know all of the great photographers in it. I also learned a lot about the authentication of prints and how that determines their value.”

POBA members retain the copyright for all the materials, so the bereaved can legally benefit from potential sales of the artwork.

It’s also a good opportunity for artistic treasure hunters and museum curators looking for the next Vivian Maier and tired of rummaging through garage sales. Granted, the concept is eerie, but it also raises the question: How many more masterpieces would we have today if yesterday’s artists had had access to such a service?

For now, the list of artists shown on POBA is short and varied, ranging from author Norman Mailer’s Picasso-inspired drawings to George Tate’s beautiful photos of 1950s California, as well as other lesser-known painters, musicians and writers.

Of course, there’s no guarantee that your doodles will make it from the garage to the gallery and allow your grandchildren to live the good life. After all, there might be a very good reason you didn’t make it into the Guggenheim during your lifetime.

But even so, there’s a certain comfort in knowing that, while we might regret many things on our deathbeds, when it comes to artistic success, it’s never too late.