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## The Alex Beard Studio

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**The Alex Beard Studio**

**An Internship Report  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Arts Administration**

**The University of New Orleans**

**By  
James F. Qualls  
Spring 2011**

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## **Abstract**

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The following thesis report is an analysis of The Alex Beard Studio where I completed an internship from December of 2010 to March of 2011. The Alex Beard Studio LTD is the umbrella limited liability company which covers the artist Alex Beard's brand, children's books series, and the physical art gallery which is located in New Orleans' French Quarter. During my internship, I worked closely with the artist Alex Beard and his studio manager Brandi-Lea Harris, as well as briefly working with his former gallery director Randy Jackson and his new gallery salesperson Ryan Miner. This thesis report analysis will include a brief biography of the artist and an explanation of his studio and brand. A description of my internship will also be included in this report as well as an in-depth analysis on art gallery best practices and a S.W.O.T. analysis on the studio. Finally, this thesis report will conclude with my contributions and recommendations formulated during and after my experience as the Alex Beard Studio's intern.

## **Introduction**

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The motivation behind my internship at The Alex Beard Studio in the spring of 2011 was based on the graduate education that I earned at the University of New Orleans. Before moving to New Orleans in August of 2009, I completed an internship at the St. Louis Art Museum in St. Louis Missouri. Then, during my graduate education in New Orleans, I had the opportunity of working at the Bridge for Emerging and Contemporary Art not-for-profit Gallery and co-designing the Arts After Dark for-profit exhibition, which was held at ArtEgg Studios. These varied experiences in the arts management world inspired me to intern with The Alex Beard Studio, for it was different from all of the rest in business structure, location, and style of art. An artist-owned gallery and studio was a foreign idea to me before this internship, so I felt encouraged to learn from and learn about this new type of arts organization and make it the basis of my internship and thesis report.

**My graduate education at UNO was heavily based in not-for-profit arts management, but I felt it was a broad and strong education that well equipped me to serve in the for-profit art sector, and thus why I took a small chance to intern at a for-profit arts organization.**

**The following thesis report is a description, analysis, and recommendations stemming from my internship at The Alex Beard Studio.**

## **Chapter 1 – Organizational Profile**

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### **History**

The Alex Beard Studio Ltd. is located in New Orleans and consists of two physical parts. There is The Alex Beard Gallery, which is located at 712 Royal Street, and Alex's personal painting studio and offices, which are located in the 600 block of Royal Street. Considered by Alex to be the epicenter of his empire, the gallery opened its doors in the summer of 2009. For years, Alex's first gallery space was on Chartres Street in New Orleans. However, those doors closed shortly before Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The artist and his wife Amy relocated to New York City where they opened a gallery on Mercer Street for four years. Wanting to move their lives and work back to New Orleans, the current gallery space and offices opened in the summer of 2009.

The gallery is located in the historic Thomas House, built in 1827 by Dr. Pierre Thomas, on the corner of Royal and Pirates Alley. Since 1867, the building's first floor has functioned as a bookshop, a stationery store, a clothing shop, a fine hat shop, and now as an art gallery. The location for The Alex Beard Gallery on Royal Street was a simple and obvious decision, for Royal Street is a historic street in the French Quarter that has many art galleries, shops, and most importantly, tourists and foot traffic. This beautiful spot is a great place to display the artwork, meet with clients,

hold cocktail parties, and to see and be seen in the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter.

### **Artist Biography**

An artist, writer, and traveler, Alex Beard was born in New York City in 1970 and raised in his family home on Park Ave near Central Park. Alex spent his childhood playing stickball in the New York alleys, hanging out on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and harnessing his creativity through artwork, puzzles, and colorful conversation with his influential family's vibrant friends. Encouraged to think creatively from a young age by his uncle, Peter Beard, the acclaimed wildlife photographer and conservationist, and his mother, Patricia Beard, an accomplished author and magazine editor, Alex grew up among some of the world's most interesting personalities. Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, and their Pop World cohorts were familiar faces in the Beard household, along with Princess Margaret and many other noteworthy people.

Unwilling to follow in the footsteps of those who preceded him, Alex set off to find his own path. He studied classical drawing and painting at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, history and literature at Tufts University, and advanced painting at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Art.



He was also a participant in the New York Studio School's drawing marathon.

Perhaps his most powerful form of education came from his life-long world travels. Alex spent many summers as an adolescent with his uncle, Peter Beard, traveling and living in Africa. His travels in Africa, Asia, India, the Americas, and Australia certainly helped him develop his artistic skills and broaden his perspective. During his travels Alex would draw, paint, and write, not only documenting his path, but learning, exploring, and growing. He documented the final Eu Noto manhood ritual of the Kenyan Masai, searched for six months to find a tiger in the wild in India, and witnessed mass elephant poaching and burning in Africa first hand. In the early 1990's Alex moved to New Orleans to concentrate on his work as a painter but still travels the world extensively every year.

Alex has exhibited his work in several one-man shows around the world and has amassed an impressive clientele in the process. His drawings and paintings are scattered across the globe in private collections from Japan to the West Indies. He has painted portraits for some of the world's most colorful people, from Basil Charles in Mustique to Lady Weinberg, owner of Blake's in London. Royal portraits have been commissioned by Princess Padmaja Kumari Mewar of Udaipur and for the late Princess Margaret. Alex has sold at auction in the Guggenheim Museum in New York and at auction at Sotheby's New York.

Though Alex's popularity and prestige is gaining momentum worldwide, Alex purposefully keeps the epicenter of his art world in New Orleans. His

first New Orleans gallery was on Chartres Street, but it closed in 2005 right before Hurricane Katrina. Alex, his wife Amy, and their newborn son relocated to New York City and opened up a gallery on Mercer Street in Soho. Alex and his successful gallery quickly made an imprint in New York, and *Vanity Fair* credited Alex as “redefining the New York Gallery scene.”<sup>1</sup> His love for New Orleans is evident, because though Alex’s Soho gallery was doing great on his old stomping ground of New York, he and Amy were adamant about bringing their gallery and lives back to The Big Easy, their adopted home for nearly twenty years.

Most recently, Alex has expanded his brand and become a successful children’s book author. His trilogy of books, *Tales from the Watering Hole*, includes *The Jungle Grapevine* (2009), *Monkey See, Monkey Draw* (2011), and next year’s *The Crocodile’s Tears* (2012). The first two published books have been on multiple bestseller lists<sup>2</sup>. In January of 2011 the second book *Monkey See, Monkey Draw* was featured exclusively in the windows of FAO Schwartz in New York City for its grand debut.

Not only is Alex a successful artist, author, illustrator, and gallery owner, he is also a husband, father, and New Orleans enthusiast. Alex donates both his time and money to many charities in New Orleans, New York, and Africa. He is the co-founder of *No Dead Artists*, an annual juried art exhibition, and dedicates much of his time working with school groups at schools around the

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<sup>1</sup> Homes, A. M. "Call of the Wild." *Vanity Fair* Apr. 2008: 26. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Comic Relief: Thirty-Nine Bestselling Graphic Novels Kids Can’t Resist. Web. 1 July 2011. <[http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/slj/home/891089-312/comic\\_relief\\_thirty-nine\\_graphic\\_novels.html.csp](http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/slj/home/891089-312/comic_relief_thirty-nine_graphic_novels.html.csp)>

country, teaching them about the importance of art and education.

Alex, his wife Amy, and their two children currently live in Uptown New Orleans with their dog Bacon.

### **Mission Statement**

Being that The Alex Beard Studio is a for-profit company, there is not an official written mission statement. However, during my internship I spoke with Alex about what his mission is for both his business aspirations and his art. Based on my conversations with Alex and what I experienced during my internship, I feel the following is an accurate representation of The Alex Beard Studio's mission.

The Alex Beard Studio's mission is to provide wonderful art to the people that love it. Alex wants to break down the walls between the viewer and the art. Alex is a firm believer that art is a medium that should be, and can be, accessible to everyone. He uses different mediums and uncommon avenues to help bridge the gap between art and design and the public. There is a focus on children's art education through his kids' day events and children's books, as well as the very open and welcoming atmosphere that is always sustained in the gallery, inviting anyone to enjoy, talk about, and experience his art.

The Alex Beard Studio is not a charity, but rather a for-profit business, so of course there is the mission to make money to sustain the brand, the gallery space, Alex and his family, and his employees. Sales goals are in place for his original artwork, prints, books, and product. The overall mission is for his

brand to generate the money needed for Alex's lifestyle, charitable goals, and company to sustain, progress, and flourish while sharing with the world creative, high quality art and one-of-a-kind aesthetic experiences.

### **Community and Demographics**

The Alex Beard Studio serves a worldwide audience. There is a focus on the Greater New Orleans area because of its geographic location, but Alex's audience is spread throughout the entire globe. Alex's only gallery is located in the French Quarter, so the tie to New Orleans is particularly strong, as well as the tie to New Orleans' tourism industry. The majority of the gallery's walk-in clients are out-of-towners, enjoying the French Quarter and the art galleries on Royal Street as visitors to the city. Alex does, however, keep his local New Orleans clients and friends on his radar through his New Orleans speaking events, school visits, and private cocktail receptions at the gallery exclusively for New Orleans residents.

Alex connects to his national audience through his traveling book tours and school events. For example, in the first five months of 2011, Alex spent 42 days on his book and kids' day tour, connecting with schools, students, and patrons across the country. With the use of his website, Facebook, and email list, Alex reaches his global audience, providing images of his work, videos of him painting and speaking, and his new adventures in life as a bestselling children's book author and illustrator.

### **Staff Structure and Responsibilities**

### **Alex Beard – Owner and Artist**

Alex *is* the brand. He is involved in every aspect and is a strong artist and brilliant businessperson. Because of Alex's commercial success, he has the luxury of not working in the art gallery, but rather spending his time working in his painting studio and business offices, located in the 600 block of Royal Street, just a block away from the gallery. Alex spends his days painting, writing his books, going on his book tours, working with charities, and planning future art events in both New Orleans and around the country. Alex is inspired to work in all aspects of his brand and oversees all operations. To help him fulfill the needs of his growing brand, he has also created a web of trustworthy employees to whom he delegates responsibilities.

### **Brandi-Lea Harris – Studio Manager**

Brandi-Lea is Alex's "right-hand-man." She plans and helps Alex execute all of his kids' day events and his entire book tour. She manages all product that Alex has designed from his books and artwork; works with clients to sell artwork; coordinates with his product manufacturers; coordinates with Abrams, his book publisher; and helps plan all of Alex's charity events.

### **Mike Renshaw – Accountant**

Mike Renshaw handles all paychecks to Alex's employees, the gallery's taxes, and Alex's publishing royalties.

### **Brilliant Ink Framing**

The Alex Beard Studio has befriended and uses Brilliant Ink Framing for all

of its framing needs. Just a block away from the gallery, this small framing shop has become a daily client of the studio's for the select pieces that do get framed for the gallery before sale.

### **Ryan Miner – Saleswoman**

Ms. Miner is The Alex Beard Studio's newest employee. She was hired in March of 2011 and her focus is in gallery sales. Previously the gallery director of Michalopoulos Gallery and an art expert for Neil Auction Company, Miner brought her expertise in art sales to The Alex Beard Studio.

### **Jim Qualls – Studio Assistant**

Shortly after my internship started, Randy Jackson, the former gallery director, was fired. My responsibilities at the gallery, and for the Studio as a whole, exponentially expanded. The studio manager Brandi-Lea and I shifted our duties to fill in the gaps that Randy left, and soon Ryan Miner was hired to focus on sales. With our efforts, the gallery and studio are properly being directed again. Though my internship is complete, I have been hired as the studio assistant to continue to fulfill the duties that I took over while serving as an intern. As studio assistant, I work to aid everyone in reaching their goals, with particular attention to the daily functions of the gallery and helping aid Brandi-Lea with all of her responsibilities working behinds the scenes for Alex.

### **Community Events**

*Geaux, Saints, Geaux.* In 2009, The Alex Beard Studio partnered with the Saints football organization to create a limited edition series of *Geaux, Saints, Geaux* silkscreen prints, the proceeds of which directly benefit multiple charities in Louisiana. The prints, signed by not only Alex, but also Coach Payton and some of the Saints players, have been one way that Alex has fulfilled his philanthropic duties to his beloved community.



*Geaux, Saints, Geaux* 2010  
Silkscreen Print  
Signed and Numbered by the Artist  
27 in. x 41 in.

**Art for Arts Sake:** Held the first Saturday in October, Art for Arts Sake is a local, citywide art event in which galleries and arts organizations promote and exhibit new artwork, children's art events, and invite the community to explore and appreciate visual arts in New Orleans. In 2010, The Octavia Gallery on Magazine Street in New Orleans held an exhibition of Alex's newest works during Art for Arts Sake. It was here that Alex debuted his *Octavia Peacock*, which was turned into a wildly successful series of limited edition prints. Today Octavia Gallery has some of Alex's work permanently on display in its upstairs gallery space.



*Octavia Peacock* 2010  
Original Pen and Ink on  
Paper  
64 in. x 48 in.

**Newman School Gallery:** In the Autumn of 2010, Alex spent three weeks at the Newman School in Uptown New Orleans painting and teaching art lessons. Utilizing the Newman School's gorgeous art gallery, Alex spent three weeks painting six paintings. The students at the school watched as he built these six paintings from start to finish, explaining each layer and movement. Over the three weeks, Alex had the opportunity to have a one-on-one interaction with each student to talk about the art process or his children's book series.



*Ram is Monkey* 2010  
Original Oil on Canvas  
48 in. x 72 in.



**White Linen Night 2011: Embraced by the city, White Linen Night is an annual free art event. On the first Saturday in August, art galleries and museums in New Orleans present local, national, and international artwork in a celebration of art and culture. Locals flock, dressed all in white linen to combat the August heat, and enjoy the visual art that the city has to offer. On White Linen Night 2011, Alex will present an exclusive exhibition of peacock drawings and paintings.**



*Show Your Feathers*  
*Peacock 2009*  
Original Pen and Ink on  
Paper

## **Chapter 2 – Internship Description, Responsibilities, and Contributions**

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My internship at The Alex Beard Studio officially began in December of 2010. The position as intern, as decided by Alex, was to be an assistant to all members of his team. At the time this team included himself, his studio manager Brandi-Lea Harris, and his gallery director Randy Jackson. I assisted all three in every aspect of running not only the physical art gallery, but also the studio as a whole. I spent about 90% of my internship hours in the gallery where almost all sales take place. Aside from that, I spent a fair amount of time running errands and working in Alex's painting studio and business office. I was essentially in place as the assistant to lighten everyone's busy workloads, and in return, I learned from each member of the team while being exposed to every aspect of Alex's brand.

Not only does the studio concentrate on Alex making and selling artwork, but it also handles his brand's marketing and publicity, managing his successful children's book series, planning and helping implement his nationwide book tour, and helping oversee his product lines, which are in stores across the world. My focus as intern was to assist in any of the above endeavors as best I could, which mostly included administrative support as well as marketing, sales, general running of the gallery, and publicity.

My work schedule at the beginning of my internship was very consistent. I worked Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. In late January

when the former gallery director Randy Jackson exited the company, my hours changed drastically. I quickly started working weekends and nights to fill in gaps that created from being short-staffed. This included ten days in which Alex and his studio manager Brandi-Lea were in New York on his book tour, and I was the only employee left to maintain the gallery in their absence. Because of this opportunity, I was able finish my internship hours much faster than I originally predicted, even though I took off days for a vacation and during the Carnival season. More importantly, with this shift in management, my position as intern became much more important and I took on a great deal of responsibility to aid in the studio's new employee transition. I helped alleviate the challenge of not having a full-time gallery director by aiding Brandi-Lea in managing all aspects of the studio.

As an intern, I had great freedom when it came to getting my daily work done. My deadline was merely the end of the day. I frequently received a specific list of things to do in a day or a week, and had a very reasonable amount of time to complete these tasks. This flexibility was necessary as I paired new tasks and goals with my daily responsibilities. Throughout my internship, my responsibilities and day-to-day jobs included the following:

### **General Management of the Gallery**

There were many mundane, yet very necessary tasks that had to be completed in the gallery on a daily basis. Checking and changing light bulbs was an almost daily task because of the vast number of little spotlights used to light the artwork. I would stock product, design and frequently change

window displays, count inventory, sweep and mop if needed, go to the bank to obtain change for our cash drawer, and carry out any other general upkeep that the gallery needed to function. The gallery does not just have artwork, but also Alex's books and different products that he has designed based off his artwork, such as puzzles and notebooks. These things needed daily maintenance. I either opened or closed the gallery by myself every time I worked. At the end of the each night, I counted down the cash box, tallied and organized the receipts, and accounted for all monies. These daily routines, though not overwhelmingly difficult or exciting, are of course essential when running the fully functioning business. The studio's art gallery is a retail store as much as it is a fine art gallery.

### **Art Sales, Commissions, and Product Sales**

Being that The Alex Beard Studio is a for-profit institution, sales are key to ensuring its survival. One of the biggest duties that evolved during my internship was making sales. This was an odd evolution because sales were never expected of me or demanded of me; I was always there only to support the studio and never given a sales goal. However, sales naturally became a huge focus because there were many days when I was alone in the gallery as the only employee, and the business of the gallery needed to continue in the absence of the rest of the staff.

The Alex Beard Gallery has an intense amount of foot traffic because of its location on Royal Street in The French Quarter. This sometimes brings hundreds of people into the gallery on a particular day. When visitors come

into the gallery, they are greeted, respected, and, if they are interested, spoken to about buying something. Every sale counts towards the stability of the company, and thus any other work stops when a customer enters the gallery; their money is important.

Towards the end of my internship, Ryan Miner, former director of the Michalopoulos Gallery and Neil Auction Company art expert, joined the Alex Beard Studio to oversee sales. I assisted her in this process and actually assisted in training her as well. Sales goals were set for Ryan when she was hired, around \$70,000 a month in fine art, not including product. In a typical month, around \$4,000 in product sales was expected, including web orders.

One of my duties as intern involved management of all web orders from the two websites [www.alexbeardstudio.com](http://www.alexbeardstudio.com) and [www.alexbeardimpossiblepuzzles.com](http://www.alexbeardimpossiblepuzzles.com). I processed the web orders by hand. Web orders could have been in either fine art or products. I processed the credit card, created a receipt, took the product or art off the sales floor, wrapped it, and mailed it to the customer. Of course, there could also be problems, comments, and special requests in addition to the orders. I took care of these additional notes as well.

With sales come commissions. During my internship, I earned a set stipend each month with no commissions for artwork sold. Five percent is Alex's standard commission rate to his hourly employees, and there is zero commission for his employees that are on salary. Regardless of whether or

not the artwork is original or a reproduction, discounted or framed, Alex's hourly employees make a full 5% on the final sale of the artwork.

### **Marketing and Publicity**

Over the course of my internship, I assisted in handling all of Alex's marketing and publicity needs. I managed his Facebook page by accepting all of his friendship requests, replying to all of his messages and invites, and adding pictures of his artwork and of him at events. I also created a Twitter account for him and painstakingly tried to get him to Tweet. Lastly, I put the gallery location on Foursquare and encouraged customers with smart phones to check in. These free social networking devices were a great way to share Alex's speaking dates and new artwork to his fans and friends.

While Alex was on his book tour, I was in charge of creating Facebook events for his different public appearances and inviting people that lived nearby each event. Alex found that more people attended his book tour events from Facebook invites than from any other outreach. While Alex was on his book tour, I added online articles and website mentions to the press page on his websites as well. Google Alerts informed me anytime Alex was mentioned on another website so that I could link it to Alex's press page. This turned out to be a very useful tool. Getting the word out about his book tour stops and getting people to attend these stops was very important.

Abrams Books, his publisher, met Alex's nationwide marketing needs for his children's book series and product line. Occasionally they would ask small tasks of me, like making sure Alex signed a number of books and having

those books shipped to a certain location, and I would fulfill these needs, but these tasks were very infrequent. Brandi-Lea scheduled TV appearances, radio interviews, and created his entire book tour itinerary. I assisted her daily in these tasks, which mostly consisted of confirming dates, creating calendars and schedules for Alex and his publisher.

### **Correspondence**

All website contact submission forms went through my work email. These submissions were frequently questions about Alex or complaints about products sold. It was my job to respond to every comment. I received many complaints a week due to defective puzzles that Alex has designed based off his artwork. Each complaint received the same system of recourse. I sent the complaint writer a message explaining our apologies and concerns as well as our appreciation for their comment and business. I then went through the process of finding out which product they purchased, where it was purchased, what the defect was, and the client's shipping address. Then I would contact the manufacturer via email and submit the damaged product for a refund that would go directly to the customer. A replacement product and an additional free gift was sent directly to the customer as our reimbursement and replacement. All correspondence with clients and customers was carried out in an effective and professional manner. If appropriate, I would add anyone that I corresponded with to our system of contacts so we would have their contact information for future correspondence or newsletters.

In the gallery, we received a lot of contact information physically, via our sign-in book or through sales to new clients. Every time we received a new contact, I would add it to our system for future use. This was our way of creating and growing our client contact list for future sales, event invitations, and any other future correspondence.

### **Website Maintenance**

The Alex Beard Studio websites, [www.alexbeardstudio.com](http://www.alexbeardstudio.com) and [www.alexbeardimpossiblepuzzles.com](http://www.alexbeardimpossiblepuzzles.com) needed constant upkeep. After each sale or creation of a new piece of art, the studio website had to be adjusted to remove or add the new product. After the release of Alex's second book, which landed on multiple bestseller lists, the prices of his artwork required adjustment to reflect his climbing success. Alex's websites were both created through a company called Websecure, but his staff are the administrators and handle all of the small changes and sales that occur on the website.

### **Edition Tracking and Cataloging of Sales**

Alex does have reproductions of certain pieces of his artwork. He normally has five to twenty editions available at one time. These editions are giclée prints that are created through Renaissance Imaging in Baton Rouge Louisiana. All of Alex's editions are approved by him, signed and numbered, and in a limited edition. After an edition sells out, he closes it forever.

Most commonly, his edition numbers are ten large editions and a series of five to fifty small sized editions (sizes vary based on the image). Large



editions are around \$1,000 and small editions are around \$400. These editions are not all printed at once, but rather on an-as needed basis. I was in charge of keeping track of the editions to make sure Alex recorded the correct number on each one and to make sure they were not sold over their established limited edition. I used Google Documents to keep track of his editions list and pricing.

All sales of his artwork were cataloged in a database software called Filemaker. Filemaker allowed me to list the name of the artwork, when it was created, the medium, who purchased it, when they purchased it, an image of the artwork, and many other important elements of the piece. The Filemaker software also allowed me to create price lists, certificates of authenticity, and maintain an overall database of his creativity. Once a week I would gather the sales and catalog them in our edition tracking lists and/or in Filemaker.

### **Framing**

The majority of Alex's artwork is sold unframed. However, the artwork displayed on the walls in the gallery must be framed, as well as certain special pieces for clients. Brilliant Inc, a framing business located just a block away from the gallery in French Quarter, meets the studio's framing needs. Five or six pieces are framed a week at Brilliant, and while interning I would handle getting the artwork to and from them, choosing what frame to use or working with particular clients to get the frame they prefer. One of Alex's signature styles involves expanding his artwork off the page and onto

the mat. Brilliant Inc. cuts all of Alex's mats, and this business relationship has grown into an important one for both businesses.

### **Packing and Shipping**

Before my internship, all shipping of product went through Royal Mail Service. This company packaged and shipped our product at an exorbitant cost billed at the end of each month. During my internship, I helped the studio switch to an online UPS system where we printed our own labels, packaged the product ourselves, and had our shipments picked up directly from the gallery by scheduled UPS appointments. This saved the studio a lot of time and money, and it provided us with an online catalog and tracking numbers for everything sent out via UPS.

Fine art shipped to clients went through New Orleans Packing and Shipping. This company picked up the artwork directly at the gallery, packaged it, crated it if it was a large piece of artwork over 40 inches by 40 inches, and shipped it to the client via FedEx. My job was to prepare the artwork to be picked up by New Orleans Packing and Shipping by filling out a shipping receipt in detail and scheduling an appointment for our artwork to be picked up.

New Orleans Packing and Shipping had set prices for the studio's artwork based on size. When a piece of artwork was sold, a pricing-by-size chart was used to figure out what the shipping costs would be, and that exact amount was charged to the client on the date of purchase. This helpful tool ensured that clients' shipping charges were accurate and that they were not paying

too much or too little for shipping. I created this system of shipping cost-by-size during my internship after the former gallery director's employment ended. His failing system was to contact the client after the delivery of the piece to be reimbursed for the shipping charges using their invoice. This led to thousands of dollars in lost shipping charges, for it was very difficult obtain these retroactive shipping charges from clients once they received their artwork. I quickly changed this system with Mr. Jackson's exit to ensure that the studio did not lose money on shipping.

### **Basic Accounting**

With Mr. Jackson's departure, I assumed responsibility for some basic accounting for the gallery. At the end of each day, all sales needed to be recorded and broken down by what was taxed, what was sold out-of-state, etc. At the end of each month, these totals had to be tallied together, checked against the receipts for accuracy, and sent to the accountant who does the studio's taxes each year. To ensure responsible and ethical business practices, these totals had to be accurate.

## Chapter 3 – S.W.O.T. Analysis

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### **Strengths**

#### **Location**

One could find great strengths in both The Alex Beard Studio's brand and in the physical gallery location. The location of the gallery was an obvious strength. Situated on Royal Street in the heart of the French Quarter, The Alex Beard Gallery attracted an intense amount of foot traffic and notice. Royal Street is one of the city's prominent shopping locations for tourists and locals to find art and antiques. This very important and visible spot allowed Alex's gallery to function as a flagship for his brand. When Alex came back to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, he needed a place to tell the city that he had returned. This gallery's location served that purpose. This very visible flagpole helped Alex reclaim a spot in the New Orleans art world and tell clients and businesses of New Orleans that he and his art were back. It also served as an anchor for the epicenter of Alex's brand. The gallery was a self-sustaining entity that pushed fine art and product, but more importantly cemented Alex as a New Orleans artist.

#### **Diversity, Excellence, and Originality**

On a macro level, the brand found strengths in its diversity, excellence,

and originality. These all fed off each other to create a powerful force. Diversity found in both the actual types of artwork and the range in price levels. Alex created a broad appeal with his many styles of fine art. Alex's whimsical style, particularly his talking animal characters, appealed to children. His abstract and naturalist styles frequently found an older audience. Appealing to many different age groups and working in many different styles is a powerful way to expand clientele and make more sales.

Alex created a range in prices as well to meet every client's budget. Original art prices spanned from \$200 to \$45,000. That was an intense and risky gap, but a purposeful one. It allowed for a larger art buying audience, and it helped Alex meet his personal mission of bridging the gap between art and the people that enjoy and appreciate art. Alex further bridged this gap by allowing clients to get an Alex Beard image on a product for an even lower price. His artwork and characters have been transformed into puzzles, sketchbooks, bookmarks, note cards, and many other products that allowed almost anyone with any budget to take away an image of his work.

High quality and original artwork was a constant goal and thus an intense strength. Alex worked hard to make his artwork excellent for his clients so that the value of the piece was worth the price tag.

### **Artist Presence**

Lastly, the presence of Alex was a major strength. The fact that Alex was accessible to his flagship gallery and worked so closely with his brand and the licensing of his images was wonderful. It showed clients that he cared

about them. Alex made himself very available for commissions or private viewings of art. People like to know the artist and see the artist work. Clients and businesses had the benefit of working directly with the creator of the work. Alex's kind demeanor and handsome smile broke down many walls between the client and the artist. This was an ongoing asset to his brand. Alex wiped away pretentiousness and presented himself as the interesting and relatable human that he is. This is how he presented his brand and his artwork and it gave his art and products a down-to-earth appeal, which was certainly an important and intentional asset for The Alex Beard Studio.

### **Organic**

His brand was organic. Success and strength in one area of his brand helped in other areas. The physical gallery, for example, was never forgotten in any of this. Original artwork for any future projects will be sold in Alex's flagship gallery as long as the gallery exists, which Alex will strive to keep in New Orleans. Making a bigger name for himself on a global scale will only help the gallery sell his increasingly valuable fine art. The success in one area of his brand only strengthens the brand as a whole.

### **Weaknesses**

#### **The Space**

Though the intense volume of foot traffic in the gallery was a great strength, there was a downside in that the space could not properly accommodate everyone. Ideally, the gallery, painting studio, and business

office would all occupy the same place. Alex and his staff had yet to find such a place in the French Quarter, where a large amount of foot traffic exists. Alex would prefer to be closer to the gallery while painting in his studio to allow clients some easier access to see him, for he was his own best salesman. A move to a larger space where all of these entities are together, but in a less popular or accessible location, ran the risk of alienating the tourist clientele that just wander in at random. This evolving weakness had yet to find a solution.

### **Poor Product Quality**

Another weakness was in the poor quality of the mass distributed product. The puzzles in particular suffered from poor quality control. Clients frequently complained about the poor quality of the puzzles; that the puzzles were damaged beyond use. This led to a lot of time and energy spent refunding the defective product. This weakness is currently in the process of being remedied. Alex is searching for new manufacturers in which to license his images. Unfortunately, this problem could not be fully remedied until the contracted time on the license agreements expired. Consciously, Alex was in the process of separating new product licensing ideas from the old manufacturers and policies to eliminate this problem and move forward with a different product manufacturing company with better quality control.

### **Staffing**

Alex worked with many manufacturers, publishers, distributors, lawyers, retail outlets, etc. It was a lot for a small independent company with a staff of

four to handle. This was a weakness too, for it was not all being managed properly according to Alex. The changes to the staff structure that occurred during my internship helped dramatically to better serve the gallery and the subsidiary members of the brand, but even more progress with staffing would make The Alex Beard Studio run more efficiently.

### **Websites**

A weakness on a small scale that was also in the process of being remedied were the websites. Both of Alex's websites needed an update. They looked stale, they were confusing, and they needed to display the artwork much better. This was another weakness that was in the process of being remedied during my internship. The major roadblock that was in the way was the large financial expense a company has to endure to have a complete website overhaul.

### **Opportunities**

#### **Intimate and Independent**

The Alex Beard Studio is a limited liability company and has kept its presence intimate and independent. This independence, which is a strength, has led to the opportunity of working with other independent retailers nationwide. Over 14,000 independent bookstores nationwide can carry Alex's product and books. This dwarfs the 500 chain bookstores that carry Alex's products, such as Barnes and Noble. If a store has more than five



locations, it could not obtain an Alex Beard display kit for his books and products – a huge incentive for independent retailers. By staying small and intimate, Alex’s brand was able to connect to these small bookstores, which led to a companionship with these clients. This approach produced access to stores and to better shelf space and window placement for these products. This huge opportunity pushes Alex’s brand past sustaining itself into being extremely successful.

### **Digital Future**

Alex had opportunities to grow massively as a brand and as an artist. His next step is to get his books, characters and artwork into a digital format. During my internship, Alex was working on getting an app made for smart phones and other devices that would have his children’s book series along with games and activities. Once this app is complete, it has the potential to propel his books forward in our inevitable paperless future. Alex was also attempting to go digital with his characters and artwork in another way: movies. Creating a major animated motion picture, or being the creator of the characters for one, would be an extremely lucrative opportunity. Alex was considering going in that direction in the near future. This development would rocket Alex and his brand into an entirely new universe of popularity and success.

### **Threats**

#### **Debt and Cash Flow**

According to Alex, the biggest threat is plain and simple: running out of money. For any for-profit business, the constant battle between debt and cash flow is an ongoing war. It certainly takes money to make money, but it amassing an intense amount of debt to make money in the unknown future is a hazardous and often unsustainable business approach. Alex has worked very hard and has spent a lot of money to make his brand and his art what it is today. The threat that his books, art, products, etc would not sell after he invested a large sum of money into them was always possible.

### **Competition**

Furthermore, competition is also an ongoing threat for any business. Though Alex's gallery and brand were doing very well, hard work was constantly required to make his artwork and products more attractive than those of the competition. With hundreds of local artists and galleries to choose from, there is a constant contest to make sales. For example, in the 700 block of Royal where the gallery was located, there were seven art galleries! This rivalry was staggering. Using the vibrant art scene in New Orleans to promote Alex's work during the many different art festivals and art opportunities was perhaps the best way to combat the competition and stay relevant in the city.

### **Possible Future Threats**

Threats that no one has control over must be dealt with as they come. Though I did not witness any of these during my internship, I was aware that natural disasters, crashes in the economy, non-cooperative staff, and many other threats could have come along at any time. Being adaptive and aware was the best and perhaps only defense against unseen future threats.

**Alex compared himself and his brand to an octopus. He was the body of the octopus, encompassing the organs and brain. His gallery was a tentacle, his books were a tentacle, his future movie aspirations and future licensing were a tentacle, his ability to create was a tentacle, his current products and future product licensing were a tentacle, his staff and business partners were a tentacle, his artwork was a tentacle, and his inspirations and his family were a tentacle. The octopus was only strong with eight complete tentacles, working together to swim and survive. One opportunity, strength, threat, or weakness could affect the all tentacles together. They are organic and none of them technically had defined lines. If the tentacles are self-aware and strong, the octopus will just keep growing, which was the goal.**



*Octopus*  
Oil on Canvas  
72 in. x 60 in.

## Chapter 4 – Best Practices

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This chapter will examine best practices in different categories of artist-owned fine art galleries and studios. I based the following on my experiences during my internship report supported by expert literature on the subject.

### **The Leader**

When one is discussing an artist-owned gallery, one must put an intense amount of emphasis on the artist him or herself. The epicenter of the gallery, the artwork, and the brand is that leader. This leader has to be an effective and strong guide to his staff while at the same time balancing the job of being the creator and soul of the artwork. The leader in this situation has many responsibilities that go beyond just making the art or just running an art gallery. “Effective leaders offer the team a compelling vision and leaders must be able to persuade the team that this vision is worth pursuing<sup>3</sup>”. The artist must explore his own creativity to make excellent art that his staff can believe in and be able to work with. At the same time, the artist must be thoughtful of business decisions and of guiding his staff in the right direction. To do this effectively there is a great deal of planning and communication that must be constantly present in the artist’s everyday work. The artist becomes a ringmaster and certainly is the center of the brand, which is far from being just the creator of the product. According to Ryan Miner, former

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon, J. "A Perspective on Team Building." *Journal of American Academy of Business* 2 (2002): 185-88. Print.

gallery director of artist-owned New Orleans gallery Michalopoulos, “effective leaders use communication constantly to deliver their plan, their mantra, their guidance to the people dedicated to working at their organization<sup>4</sup>.” Ms. Miner went on to say that artist-owned galleries are the “way to go” because the artist makes almost 100% of the profit, but the artist has to “...walk a thin line between building an effective business plan and building an effective painting.” In the case of artist owned galleries, the leader certainly must wear many hats. The artist’s passion in artwork must speak to his staff as much as it speaks to clients. The artist is responsible for so much more than the art, but also creating, explaining, and helping see to fruition previously set goals and missions. This means that the leader is a member of his own staff. A good leader will work with his team to encourage and guide them, so that the team as a whole has a better chance of reaching their overall goals.

### **Goals & Visions**

The leader of the organization must have strong, long-term goals for his art and business. These goals must always be in place for the artist and the staff of the gallery to obtain. It gives the staff a purpose and something to work towards.<sup>5</sup> “The only process of creation, presentation, and preservation of art that has not changed is the artist’s impulse to create.”<sup>6</sup> The artist cannot help but make art, but there is so much more that the artist

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<sup>4</sup> Miner, Ryan K. "Interview with Ryan K. Miner." Personal interview. 16 May 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Miner, Ryan K. "Interview with Ryan K. Miner." Personal interview. 16 May 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Byrnes, William J. *Management and the Arts*. Fourth ed. Amsterdam: Focal, 2008. 40. Print.

must do beyond creating art in an artist-owned gallery setting. The artist must have business goals and heights that he will try to reach, but also have back-up plans in place for possible changes and threats to their business, like crashes in the economy or natural disasters. Furthermore, it is essential for an artist to have a goal in place that extends past his life, a goal for how he wants his art to live on after death and what type of value he wants his art to possess after death. To ensure that ones artwork lives forever and continues to climb in value after one's death, legacy planning needs to be a part of the business plan while the artist is alive. To do this one must brand the art as heirloom quality and exclusive. Even with commercial, mass-produced art, one must create the idea of exclusivity and produce the art with high quality. The artist must be conscious that he is not merely making trendy art for people to decorate their homes with, but true works of fine art that will last forever. This quality will help sales of the art, will raise the value of the art, and is an overall fundamental goal to have in place when for the artist-businessperson who owns his own gallery.<sup>7</sup>

## **Teamwork**

In any business setting that involves more than one employee, teamwork is essential for success. Team members must communicate well with each other to see goals and projects to fruition. This helps a company grow and become financially sound. A steadfast team that is working well together will be more successful and will approach problems, challenges and changes

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<sup>7</sup> Miner, Ryan K. "Interview with Ryan K. Miner." Personal interview. 16 May 2011.

better because there is strength in numbers. Teams must be cognizant of needs for change and flexibility and look to their strong leader for their goals and overall mission. Accountability evolves out of teamwork and promotes responsible and ethical decision-making and business practices. In a gallery setting where large sales are made, ethical business practices are mandatory for the success and longevity of the business.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Arts Administrator**

One of the most important people at any art business is the arts administrator. The arts administrator not only supports the artist and the staff, but is one of the integral members in managing the arts business. He is a member of the team that realizes the artist-owner's goals and vision. The arts manager is as an enabler of the arts who ensures that projects stay within economically reasonable limits.<sup>9</sup> By doing this the arts manager ensures that the arts business stays alive and is on a path of success. His main goal is securing the future existence of the organization. To secure this existence, the arts administrator manages the business's finances, creates and maintains the business's image, and uses his creativity to design seasons, exhibitions, and makes suggestions to the artist-owner. The financial welfare of the organization can involve everything from expenditures to creating and maintaining client lists. The arts manager creates an impeccable image for his arts organization in the eyes of the

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<sup>8</sup> Fisher, R. "Putting the 'Team' in the Fine Arts Team: An Application of Business Management Key Concepts." *Arts Education Policy Review* (2007) Vol. 108, No. 4, March/April 2007. Print.

<sup>9</sup> Heinze, T. "Culture Sponsoring, Museum Marketing, and Cultural Tourism: A Guide for the Cultural Manager." *Auflage Journal Deutschland* 3 (2008). Print.



media, investors, and of course, clients, based on the artist-owner's business mission. This image is maintained for the success of the business, and thus is an extremely important effort. This image can be independent, avant-garde, posh; whatever helps in fulfilling the organization's mission.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the term "arts administrator" covers many job titles in an organization. The arts administrator or arts manager supervises, plans, develops, recruits, negotiates, and manages, but most importantly keeps the organization he is dedicated to alive.

## **Change**

The arts manager must be conscious of the ever-changing world. Changes happen constantly and we need to be ready to roll with whatever challenges may evolve during these changes. "The core challenge for us as arts managers is to deal with change: changing external environmental conditions, evolving styles and approaches to the arts by our artists, the advancements in how we present and distribute the art to our ever-changing audiences, and the shifting competition for resources and attention."<sup>11</sup> We have to stay ahead of the curve and prepare for the changes that are inevitable, particularly when it comes to art sales and changes in the art market and with our economy. These areas must be watched closely and their negative changes must be combated quickly. Marketing and advertising is always evolving as well. Arts organizations, like any business,

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<sup>10</sup> Kuesters, Ivonne. "Arts Managers as Liaisons between Finance and Art: A Qualitative Study Inspired by Theory of Functional Differentiation." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 40 (2010): 43-47. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Byrnes, William J. *Management and the Arts*. Fourth ed. Amsterdam: Focal, 2008. 40. Print..

need to watch marketing trends closely to be mindful of up-to-date tools of exposure. Being strategic with marketing and publicity is one of the goals that all arts managers work hard to reach. Perhaps the best way to be prepared for the changes that inevitably will occur is to have a constant dialog with one's staff, one's community, and the art scene as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

## **Communication**

Communication is the most important tool to succeed in any of the above. A dialog among the employees of any organization is essential. In an artist-owned gallery setting, the artist is the leader setting the goals for the team of arts administrators. This system works, but only if there is an open flow of dialog between all of these members. This is how they will work together to reach their goals, how they will be alert to the changes that they face together, and how they make sales that will allow their organization to survive and thrive. A solid dialog with clients, investors, staff members, and business partners is mandatory for ethical and effective business. Mutual respect, intelligence, and good humor will lead to an effective and communicative staff. Many times artists are not businesspeople. The arts manager will use his skills of communication to function as the businessperson for the artist, but while doing it in the manner that the artist desires. Healthy communication between the artist and the staff and the staff and the world will lead to success and a happy, healthy work environment.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Minvielle, Mary C. "Interview with Mary Catherine Minvielle." Personal interview. 14 May 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Beard, Alex. "Interview with Alex Beard." Personal interview. 6 May 2011.



## Chapter 5 – Recommendations

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This chapter will explore my recommendations for improvement for The Alex Beard Studio based on my experiences, previous education, and expert opinions in the subject.

### **Management**

During my internship, the management and staff structure of The Alex Beard Studio changed dramatically. With Mr. Jackson's exit, Brandi-Lea Harris, the studio manager, temporarily assumed the position of both gallery director and studio manager. I had the opportunity to take on many other responsibilities that were beyond my internship's description. We worked together to determine what the gallery and the studio needed in terms of staff and management: a full time salesperson that would focus only on sales. Ryan Miner filled this full-time sales position. This salesperson addition alleviated the problems of having an incomplete staff and created a staff structure that worked. My recommendation is that evaluations be put in place to improve the staff and management of the studio. There needs to be a system of checks and balances that goes beyond just making one's sales goal. Alex, the leader and ultimate manager, needs to evaluate each of the staff members on a routine basis to ensure that they are working at full efficiency, while being completely ethical and maintaining a focus on reaching his goals.<sup>14</sup>

Hiring a second salesperson would also benefit the gallery because of the intense amount of foot traffic. I think if there was a second salesperson working

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<sup>14</sup> Byrnes, William J. *Management and the Arts*. Fourth ed. Amsterdam: Focal, 2008. 214. Print.

part time on the weekends, pressures that Ms. Miner feels when the gallery is swamped with tourists would be alleviated. She would then be able to focus on selling the very expensive paintings, while not being interrupted to sell a twenty-dollar puzzle.

Overall, I think the staff structure needs to be more defined at The Alex Beard Studio. During the internship, I realized that the staff was very fluid and did not have clearly defined roles. I believe that giving the staff individual goals and individual job descriptions would help them know what they need to be doing at all time, thus making them more efficient employees.

## **Marketing**

Viral marketing is obviously the best way to go for almost every arts organization that exists today.<sup>15</sup> The Alex Beard Studio needs a more solid and engaging online presence. Using Facebook, Twitter, and the website more often, as well as properly emailing updates to clients, will certainly benefit The Alex Beard Studio by extending its reach and creating new clients. Using Facebook as a way to invite people to Alex's book signings and kid-friendly events worked, but it can be utilized even further. Currently Alex just has a personal Facebook profile, but moving to a business Facebook profile page will be an excellent and necessary choice in the near future. This way more people can be contacted for events and it will be done in a proper manner.

A type of marketing that is a long shot is the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival Poster. The poster that is designed and used each year normally features the work of a New Orleans and it catapults her/him into the public eye. Getting this prestigious job is of course very difficult, but it is something that The Alex Beard

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<sup>15</sup>Sykes, Bruce W. "Leveraging the Internet to Promote Fine Art: Perspectives of Art Patrons." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 38 (2010): 127.

Studio should be actively trying to obtain. There are other high profile public commissions to compete for as well, which will also be great marketing. The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival Poster is perhaps the most prestigious with the biggest outreach, however.

Another form of marketing that that I believe will benefit gallery is having invitation-only parties at the gallery twice a year or more.<sup>16</sup> I think cocktail parties where clients and friends of clients get invited to have a glass of wine and view a new series or exhibition could be a great approach to remind Alex's loyal client base that the gallery is thriving and that new artwork is always being created. It makes the clients feel prestigious and will possibly nudge them into making another purchase. Many, if not most, of Alex's New Orleans' based patrons live in Uptown New Orleans. They do not travel frequently enough to The French Quarter, so coaxing them with a fancy cocktail party will remind them, engage them, and possibly persuade them to continue their loyalty. It also will help make Alex and his artwork a "must have" for certain groups of people that have the money to spend on the luxury.

My last marketing recommendation is for the studio to build solid relationships with large, multiple-buy clients, like hotels and decorating firms. This of course is not easy, but it was not being attempted at all during the course of my internship, and it could have very successful results in the long run. Working with interior designers that appreciate and successfully use your artwork is a great way to make new clients and create Alex Beard artwork lovers all over the nation. Discounting larger quantities of artwork or selling it on consignment to design firms is a fantastic way to bulk up sales, but more importantly, to use it as a form of slow, word-of-

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<sup>16</sup> Craft, Taylor "Interview with Taylor Craft." Personal interview. 25 May 2011.

mouth marketing. For example, having a hotel as a client that buys many pieces of artwork is great for the initial large sale, but it is also great marketing tool for years to come. This exposes art-loving tourists to the artwork and they can then learn the artist and find the gallery by speaking with the concierge. Spending the sluggish summer months on these projects would be a fantastic use of time and energy.

### **Development**

Being that The Alex Beard Studio is a for-profit company, there is not the traditional use of development. The studio does not write grants or hold fundraisers, and there is no board of directors. However, The Alex Beard Studio does have a client base and asks those clients for their money, much like a not-for-profit asks for donations. The selling is a bit different, but essentially both are cultivating a garden of loyalty, support, and money. My recommendation to the studio is to look at not-for-profit ideas of development as a good example of something that the studio was lacking. Client relations need to be better. The studio needs to connect to clients, remind these loyal patrons that Alex's art is alive and well in New Orleans. This will help get these clients back into the gallery.

### **Financial Management**

Obtaining a point of sale system would greatly benefit the gallery. Using this type of system in the gallery would allow the staff a way to track sales of both artwork and product much more efficiently. In addition, electronic receipts of each piece of artwork sold could be created, emailed to the client, kept forever, and be easily accessible in case it ever needed to be located again. A point of sale solution would allow the gallery to easily track and update artwork layaway payments, employee time and attendance, client loyalty, and inventory – all of which are currently done by hand or using outdated or confusing systems. The down side to point of sale

systems is that they are expensive and frequently require monthly fees. A point of sale solution would also allow employees to have a tighter and more accurate way to track commissions on artwork, especially on commissions spread over multiple months through layaway payments. The introduction of a small business, point of sale system could alleviate the current confusing method of employee payroll.

### **Future Projects**

In the future I think that The Alex Beard Studio needs to focus heavily on updating its social media and web presence. A better website needs to be created and it needs to be updated more often. Furthermore, the studio should take advantage of the free publicity that is at its finger-tips through the use of social networking. Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites should be utilized daily for the studio to continue to create a web presence.

Going along the same lines of moving into the future with technology, I think that an Alex Beard app for mobile devices should be designed and promoted. Alex's books, puzzles, and activities need to be converted into an app for iPhone's, Droids, and other smart phone and tablet devices. This will help Alex propel himself into the future and set himself apart from other artists that do not have the ability to diversify themselves in such directions. With the combination of Alex's books as well as art presence, he will have an easier and more natural progression into the app world. When the third book releases in early 2012, it will complete the *Tales from the Watering Hole* series. This complete series should be released as an easily downloadable app, complete with games and puzzles. This app will be a great product to sell, as well as a great way to expand the Alex Beard brand in both sales and worldwide presence.

Lastly, I believe that The Alex Beard Studio needs to put a good amount of effort



in connecting with the surrounding community, to build Alex up as one of the leading, living New Orleans artists. More interaction with the community will lead to prestigious and lucrative jobs, commissions, and the gallery's longevity. New Orleans is Alex's home base. This base needs to be secure so that his brand can continue to expand nationwide. Continuing with a mix of fine art, product, and books is definitely essential, as each one feeds off the other as Alex's brand and goals expand and come to fruition.

## **Impact**

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Working at The Alex Beard Studio was an excellent opportunity. It provided me experience, insight, and knowledge of working in the arts. In return, I had the pleasure of providing my own experiences, insights, and knowledge from everything I've done in the past with my education and previous work. As an intern I was diligent and thoughtful, providing new ideas and sharing my creativity and skills to all of my projects and duties. Being able to provide support to the organization during the chaotic time when former gallery director Mr. Jackson departed was my most valuable contribution. My subsequent employment that I happily accepted was perhaps the most obvious long-term effect of my internship on The Alex Beard Studio. I filled a void at the organization and became a valuable addition, none of which would have happened without my initial internship.

During my internship, I was able to initiate a more cost-efficient method of shipping product and art. The use of UPS for the shipping of product and more efficiently working with New Orleans Packing and Shipping saved the studio time and money. I made cataloging the art archives and basic administration duties more efficient by integrating Google Documents and Gmail. I led Alex to establish a bigger web presence by introducing him to Twitter, Foursquare, LinkedIn, and teaching him more about the world of Facebook. Furthermore, my networking skills and prior contacts to the art

world added to Alex's client base and made many sales. I provided the groundwork upon which many of the future improvements can be built.

## **Conclusion**

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I look back at my internship as an amazing opportunity. This internship exposed me completely new situations and introduced me to many new contacts. Immensely beneficial from start to finish, my internship and subsequent employment opportunity were a fantastic way to end my graduate school career and a fantastic way to start my professional arts administration career.

Watching Alex's creativity and skill was inspiring. Learning from Brandi-Lea opened my eyes to many new possibilities in my life. Working alongside Ryan taught me an intense amount about the art world. These people made this internship an incredible journey of a lifetime.

This internship and thesis report provided me with the chance to use the skills and knowledge that I learned during my time as a student of the University of New Orleans Arts Administration Program. This was certainly the best way to conclude my graduate school studies at The University of New Orleans.

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**IN THE GENES**  
 Clockwise from left: Alex Beard in his SoHo studio; Beard's paints and brushes; his *The Crowned Egan*; Egan Beard, a collection of his work.

**Call of the Wild**  
 ALEX BEARD OPENS HIS SOHO STUDIO



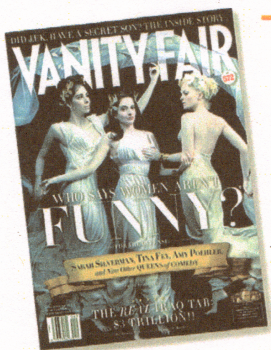
At 37, Alex Beard is an accomplished artist, an adventurer, and an accidental entrepreneur redefining the New York gallery scene with his SoHo studio, which doubles as an exhibition space. Here the flow of ideas, audience participation, and children is always welcome. His motto: "Be curious."

Son of noted author and editor Patricia Beard, Alex grew up in New York, with his celebrated uncle, photographer Peter Beard, often camped out on the couch. A self-described fly on the wall during many of Peter's escapades, Alex grew up doing projects with his uncle

and his merry band of luminaries—such as Truman Capote and Andy Warhol—and emulating his idea of what Uncle Peter was, which included learning the fine art of pen-and-quill drawing from him. "I knew I wanted to be a doodler from the time I was six," says Alex, adding that it took until his early 20s to realize that he didn't really

want to be Peter. At that time, Alex took off on an extended search for self that began in India, where he looked for a tiger in the wild—he found one after trying for six months. He wound up in Calcutta, where he "stumbled into an ancient art-supply store, completely out of time, filled with oil paints, linseed, pigments," and knew immediately, "I am going to be a painter." After India, he held up on the island of Mustique as "artist-in-residence" at Basil's Bar. There he met a couple from New Orleans, who lured him to what became for a time his adopted city to study at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts.

Beard's paintings and ink drawings are filled with an intricate, almost mathematical dance of whimsical animals, feathers, and figures, all in constant motion. He constructs drawings much like riddles or puzzles, and in fact has just completed a line of puzzles for Sababa Toys. He's also working on a story for children called *The Jungle Grapevine*, which has animals playing a version of the game of telephone—"the watering-hole chaos theory," he calls it. Exuberant, with a familiar twinkle in his eye, Beard "thrives on this idea of communal spirit." —A. M. HOMES



As seen in the April 2008 issue of *Vanity Fair*

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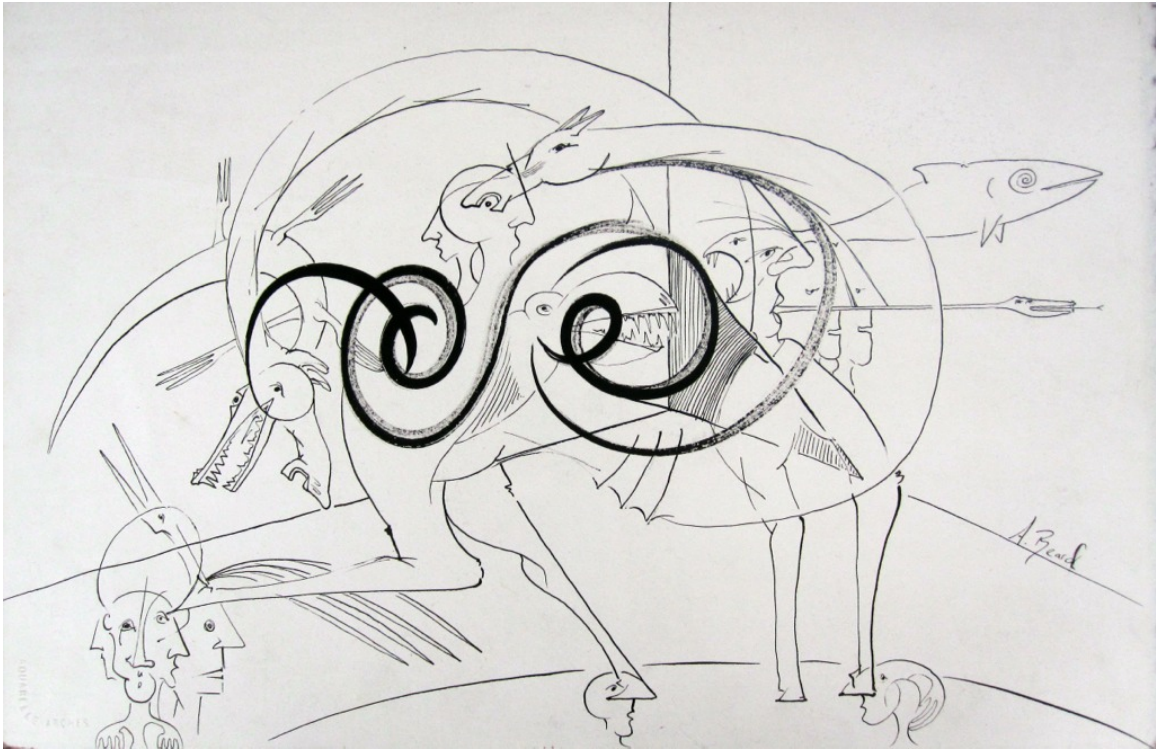
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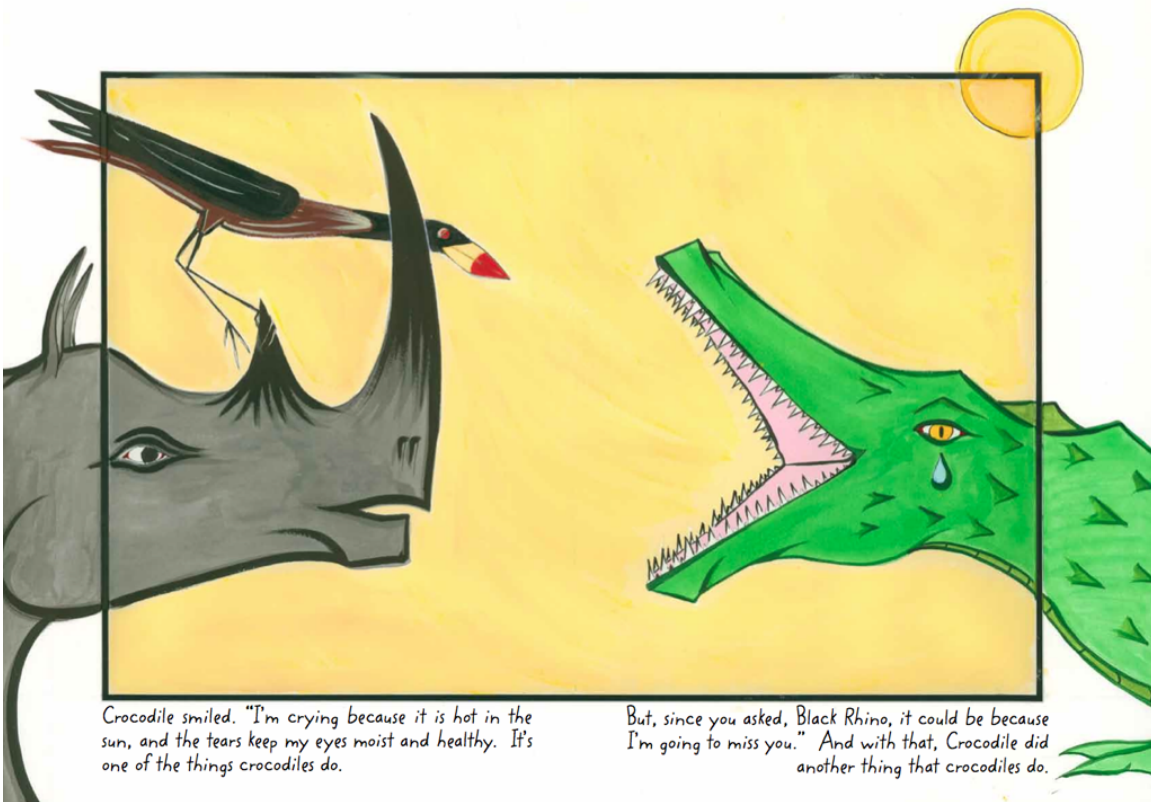




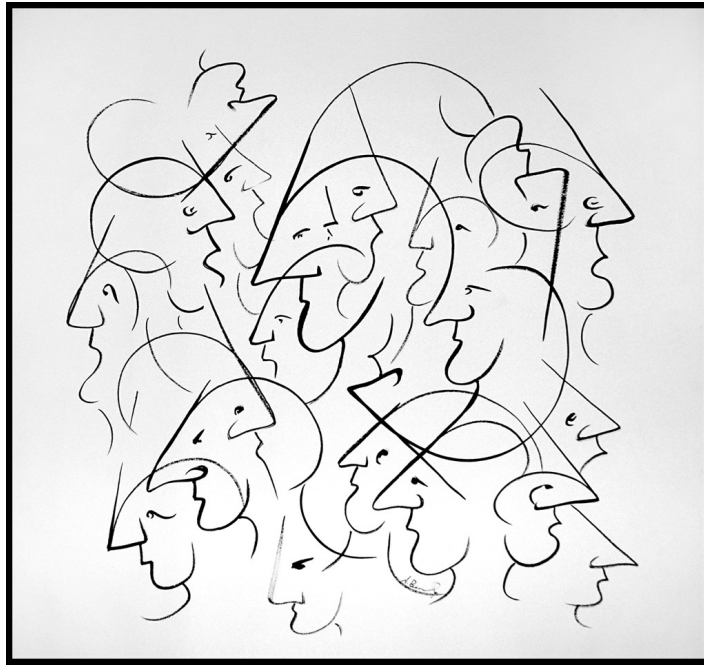
Abstract Naturalism



## Whimsical Animals



## The Audience Series



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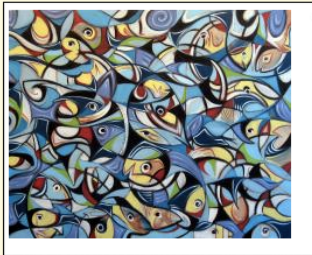
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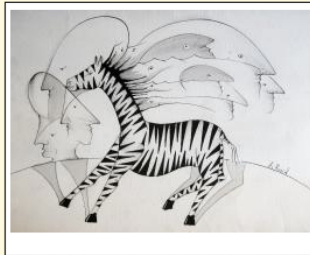
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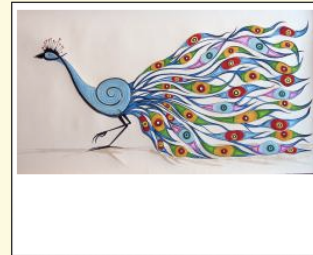
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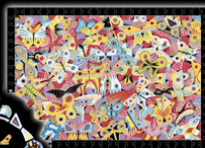
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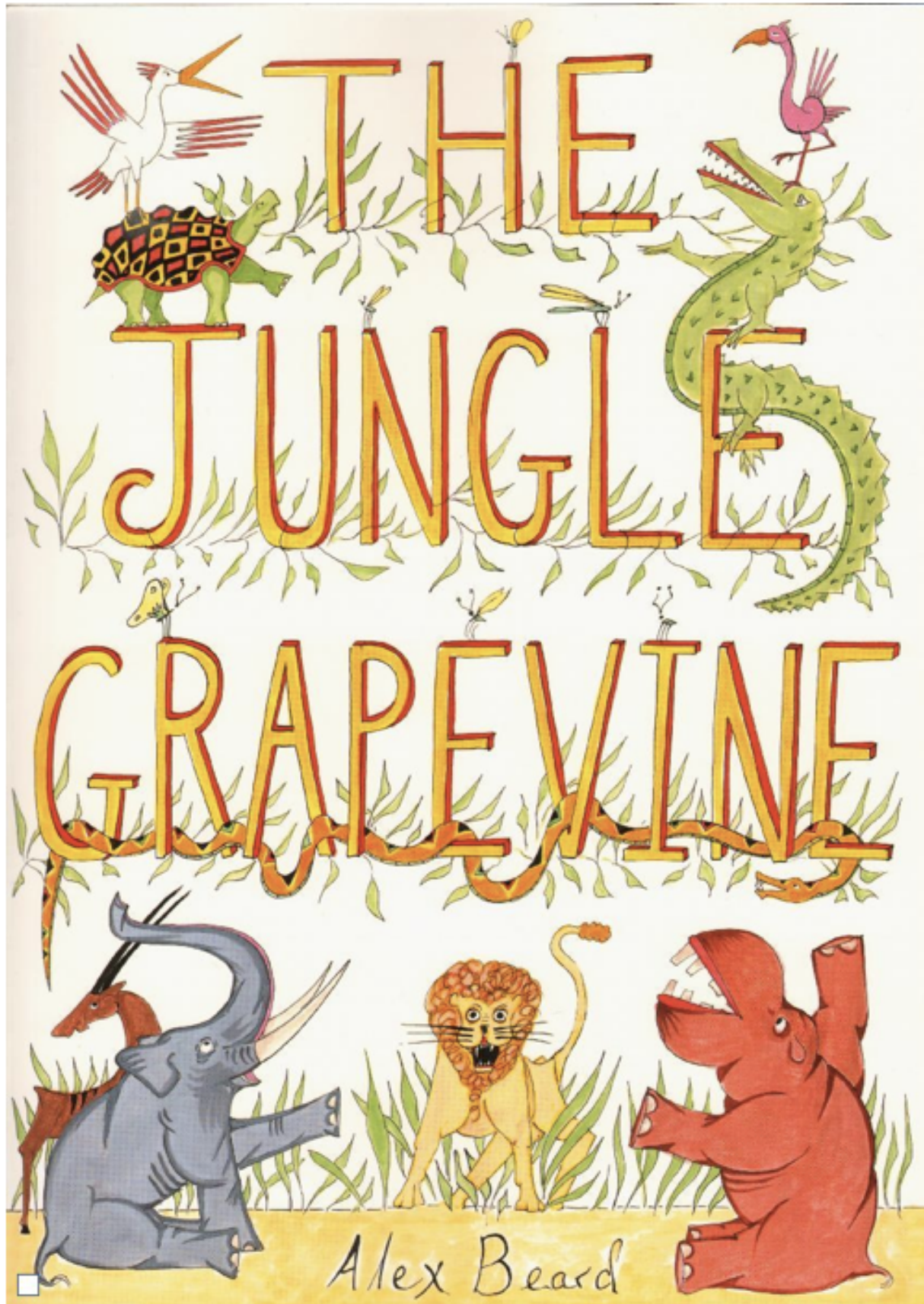
## PUZZLES



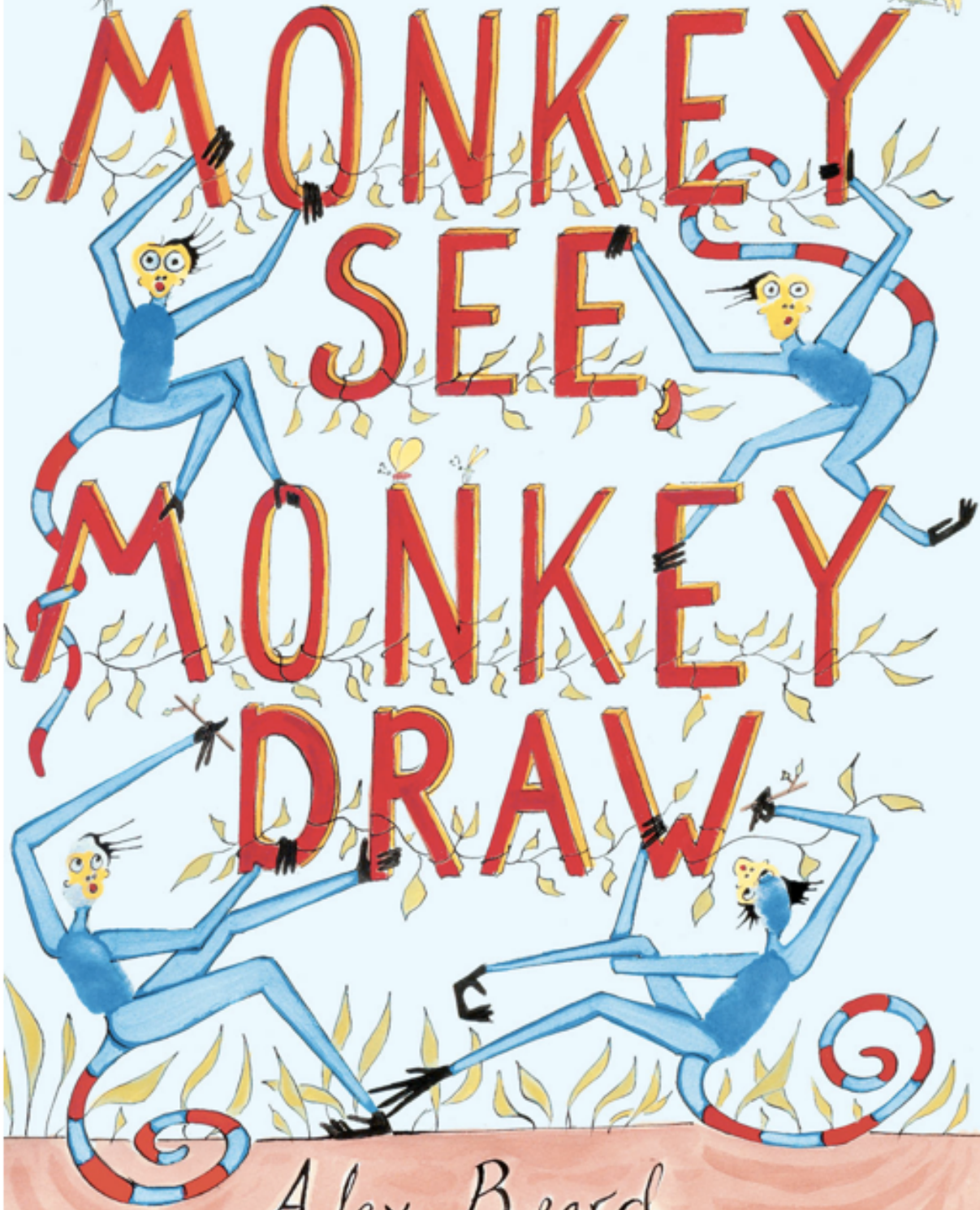
Artist Alex Beard has always been an avid puzzler. But, when he realized that standard jigsaw puzzles weren't holding his interest anymore, he decided to invent one that would.

"As a painter, I use shapes as the building blocks of my work. The way I place the shapes or combine them in any given painting creates the outcome - and it's different every time," says Alex. "I wondered why the same couldn't be said for puzzles. Why do the shapes always have to fit together the same way? Shouldn't they be able to be fashioned into anything I want?"





From the author of THE JUNGLE GRAPEVINE



Alex Beard

## Vita

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Born in St. Louis, Jim Qualls moved to New Orleans in the summer of 2009 to earn his Master of Art in Arts Administration from The University of New Orleans. In May of 2008 Jim graduated from Eastern Illinois University after spending half of a year living abroad in Germany completing his student teaching at the Königin-Luise-Schule in Köln. After returning to the United States in August of 2008, Jim had the pleasure of teaching in the Waterloo Illinois School District for one year, while completing an internship at the St. Louis Art Museum, thus starting his career in the visual arts management field. During Jim's graduate studies at The University of New Orleans, he worked at the Bridge for Emerging and Contemporary Art Foundation and helped design the Arts After Dark / 100sqft Exhibition at ArtEgg Studios. Currently, Jim works at The Alex Beard Studio as the studio assistant.