

How To Sell Your Art In A Recession

This is a report about selling your art by:

- finding the collectors who like and can afford your work
- having a conversation with them either in person or by website, e-mail, print or phone that results in a purchase
- and doing it in the most efficient, affordable way possible.

If that works for you, read on.

1. Rethink Your Art Business

“a musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself.”

Abraham Maslow

Good times or bad, most artists will create art whether they get paid for it or not. It's an important part of who they are and what they do. Even so, most artists would prefer to create art AND make a decent living. The question is, “What can an artist do to make this happen?” “Are there ways to connect with collectors who will value and acquire your art over time?” In a word, yes. This report will help the artist, designer and craftsman do just that.

Let's start by simplifying the problem. Most artists struggle to balance their desire to create with the need to find someone to buy their creations. Suppose you are a painter. Your passion is landscapes and you would like to spend all your available time in the field or studio painting them. However, you need money to support yourself. In the best of all possible worlds, you would complete a painting, make a phone call and someone would pick up the painting and hand you a check. A very few artists can actually do this.

I want you to spend the least possible amount of time and effort on marketing with the maximum result. So, I took the shortest route between creation and purchase and reduced it to the four activities you have to manage for success. Then, I wrote this report to give you the tools.

ONE: Find wealthy collectors of artwork like yours

Collectors continue to buy art in slow times. Art collecting is a passion that doesn't end. People still want beauty around them. They may change their

buying patterns but dedicated collectors still have the means as well as the desire to buy. They simply adjust how much they spend and where they spend it. Wealthy collectors also tend to turn to trusted sources for new acquisitions. First, we'll look at how to establish a key collectors circle using an art buyers profile and a database. Then, we'll see how you can use local resources and research to expand your collector's circle. This is Chapter 2.

TWO: Get your artwork in front of these collectors and start conversations

In one way or another, the sale of your artwork involves a conversation between you and the collector. Could be face to face, could be through a website or email. In conversation, the two of you weave a magic spell that confirms your vision and skill and the collector's connoisseurship, then seals the value of the artwork. Making these conversations happen is the key to success. They do not happen by chance. They happen as you take control of your art business, then simplify, focus and delegate to get the job done. The payoff is the money and time you need to create art. More in Chapter 2.

THREE: Build relationships that make your art easy to acquire

For a collector to buy your work, he or she must see your art, get a hit from it and imagine it in his life. You build a connection to the artist when you provide the words and stories that support his feelings and desires. With your stories and art experiences, you can build a relationship that makes acquiring your artwork natural and easy. Chapter 3 expands on both these themes.

FOUR: Use only the most effective marketing tools: publicity, a website, direct mail, email, studio events

Make Yourself Newsworthy – get attention and media coverage using basic public relations: build media lists, write releases, assemble media kits (Chapter 4)

Go Online To Serve Collectors – build or supervise the design of an effective website to attract and serve your collector's circle and sell your art while increasing traffic from prospects, the media and the community (Chapter 5)

Keep In Touch With E-mail And Newsletters – create interest and prompt actions from collectors with an email and online newsletter program using personalized content (Chapter 6)

Attract Collectors To You With Direct Mail – produce promotional materials including a monthly print newsletter and effective postcard and other mailers (Chapter 7)

Draw Collectors To Your Studio – inspire collectors and cement relationships by organizing and producing a studio event (Chapter 8)

Make Your Art Easy To Acquire – establish the value and price of your work and shape productive conversations with collectors (Chapter 9)

That's all there is to it. ALL? I know, it looks a little overwhelming. But, you can do it. The rest of this chapter offers ways to rethink your art business using the tools of top business consultants. By doing what works and only that, you can simplify and focus your business. You can sort out what is paying off for you and what is wasting your time by using the 80/20 rule. Finally, there is an Appendix of nine useful marketing tools that provide more guidance and supporting material ready for your immediate use. They are listed at the end of this chapter. To get started now...

Take Charge Of Your Art Business

Changing times call for changing your point of view, your strategy and your actions. Start by thinking like business professionals think in planning and directing your efforts. Be as creative in your business thinking as in your art. The whole point of your rethink is to strip out waste motion and concentrate on what gets results. There are three practices that will get you there.

First – Simplify

I made several choices in this report. I am aware that there are many ways for an artist to sell art. For example:

- directly through juried outdoor art shows and art fairs
- indirectly through galleries, juried shows, art consultants, interior designers and architects
- online through Etsy, eBay, Craigslist, Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, blogs
- by teaching, lecturing and demonstrations
- by book and DVD sales plus licensing

You may be using one or more of these ways to sell your art successfully. It makes sense to continue to do what is working. However, try looking at the amount of time, money and attention each of your marketing activities requires compared to its payoff. Then, try to concentrate on the ones with the biggest return for the effort and let the less productive efforts go.

You can also simplify in terms of the tools you are using; website, mailings, newsletter, studio event and phone calls. Think about the potential payoff of each activity you are planning to use. Rank them by cost and potential payoff. Put your effort where the best payoff is. Each sales-building project in this report will take time, money and your attention. Each will produce a different result depending on your situation. Be ruthless in culling out the ones that offer the least payoff for your time and money.

The emphasis in this report is on working with and expanding your key collector group because that's where the payout potential is for most artists. Building your legacy is a worthy effort. Exhibiting in United States and international shows, museums and galleries to increase your local, national and international recognition will do that. But, it can be a slow way to build the sales you want. Again, take the direct route. Identify a circle of key collectors and others like them, then plan your efforts to reach these people. They will build your fame as they build your fortune.

I spent several years as a partner in a major New York management consulting firm sorting out the problems and opportunities of Fortune 500 companies. Here's one of our tools that will prove useful to you, the 80/20 rule. It says that 80% of your results will come from 20% of your efforts. From another point of views, "80% of your sales will come from 20% of your clients." Businesses use the rule to sort out the customers that produce the most sales and to focus their marketing efforts on them. They also sort out the customers that produce the least and reduce their marketing efforts to them. In my experience, small accounts are often the biggest pains to service. Losing them frees up time and money.

What happens if you apply the 80/20 rule to your art business? You'll find that a few patrons are providing most of your income, a few of your marketing activities are producing the bulk of your sales. Does that fit your experience? Suppose you directed most of your effort toward this productive group and weeded out the non-productive prospects (or even clients) that are eating up your time? You'd get more income from less effort. You'd free up time to create art or to expand your marketing efforts. Try using the 80/20 rule as we go along to evaluate your plans and activities.

The rule works in the studio as well. Ideally, an artist would spend 80% of his or her working time producing artwork and 20% building sales. The more good artwork you have, the more you will sell. How do you find yourself spending your time? Would rebalancing your efforts make a difference in your life? In your sales?

Another way to look at your efforts is the idea of payout potential. Say you have three collectors each of whom has purchased two of your paintings. Which one presents the greatest opportunity right now? Which one should get the most attention? A painter friend claims the answer is the one with the largest blank wall space. How would you sort it out? How could you compare each collector's payoff potential with the time and cost required to get there.

Second – Focus

Remember that your artwork comes first. It is important to focus on creating high quality artwork. Without it, you are out of business. Plus, you're not having any fun. You don't have to change what you create or how, except to continue making it better and better. In the process, try to offer something for every collector, from beginner to patron. Rethink what's in your inventory and what you can do to expand it. Produce smaller pieces or lower priced

multiple items without sacrificing quality. Instead of cutting prices, offer a gift or service with a purchase. Your goal is for every collector to be able to purchase something from you!

You may have to change how you think about your work. Tens of thousands of people can buy a blue Ford Focus. Only one person can buy each original piece you create. As an artist you are unique and each piece of your artwork is unique. That uniqueness creates a value that people are willing to seek out and pay for. Try to see your work as a collector sees it, value what he or she values, then learn to express this uniqueness and value so everyone can share your creation.

From the simplest point of view as an artist, you only need to work with people who buy your art now, plus people just like them who will buy it in the future. This is your natural universe. Most artists only need to capture the attention of a few dozen qualified patrons at the most. Working from this base, you will find that 40-80% of your new business comes from existing clients. You can enjoy their friendship and patronage while continuing to create great art.

Third – Delegate

You can't do everything. You can focus on your art and your key collectors as much as possible. Use other hands to build or update your website, create direct mailings and newsletters or produce an event. There are more projects in this report than you need to do (or can do for that matter.) Select from the ideas and projects that fit your needs and opportunities.

Above all, be yourself! You are a skilled professional offering a unique and valued service. Treat yourself with respect. Lighten up. Continue creating art no matter how difficult the process becomes. Persevere, work through the tough times. You'll be glad you did.

All businesses have ups and downs. Professionals simply adjust their expectations during the downtime. Tough times provide a real opportunity to reach out to collectors, get their support and build your art business. So, keep your creative juices flowing. Be ready for tomorrow's turnaround. Collectors gained during the recession will still be with you when good times return as long as you treat them well. Think about new ways to satisfy all your collectors. Imagine new products that will better meet their needs. Never stop marketing. Above all, keep a positive attitude.

On the next page, there is an Art Marketing Checklist of projects to help you think about what will work for you. Refer to it frequently as you read the report. Look for the balance of projects that works for your situation. Each project has low, medium or high requirements in terms of time and cost demands. Each has a different potential for reaching and getting a response from your key collector group. Spend some time thinking about what you are now doing or could change to make your efforts more effective. After each activity, circle your best guess about its time, cost, reach and response. A pattern will emerge that suggests a series of priorities for you to consider.

Art Marketing Report Marketing Checklist



Artist/Craftsperson

Studio

Shows & Fairs

1 Rethink Your Business

- Simplify**
- use 80/20 rule
 - think payoff potential
- Focus**
- Delegate**

2 Build Your Collector's Circle

- Identify Core Patrons & Prospects**
- profile client base
 - establish geographic area
 - review patron's lifetime value
 - build a client list
 - potential client list
 - list 50 most desired collectors
- Create An Art Buyers Profile**
- demographics
 - activities
 - purchase patterns
- Expand Your Collectors Circle**
- suspects list
 - influencers list
 - media sources list
- Set Up A Database**

3 Use The Language Of Collecting

- Tell Collectors What They Need To Know**
- develop your personal information
 - create an artwork profile
- Develop Your Artists Statement**
- Produce A Powerful Message**
- use stories to sell
 - start the conversation
- Give Them An Art Experience**
- post on website

4 Make Yourself Newsworthy

- Set Up Media Lists**
- Assemble Media Kits**
- cover letter
 - photos
 - fact sheet
 - card
 - media release
 - portfolio
- Run Media Releases**
- multiple subjects
 - drafts to final copy
 - send monthly releases
 - post on website

5 Go Online To Serve Collector's

- Establish A Web Site**
- design concept/site plan
 - create clear, complete copy
 - make it easy to use
 - give yourself an identity
 - make purchasing easy
 - do response offers
- Build Traffic**
- list in search engines
 - link to key sites
 - post to blogs
 - mail to influencers

6 Keep In Touch With E-Mail

- Build An Email Program**
- build email address list
 - create fascinating content
 - personalize your message
 - use a simple design
 - ask for action

7 Attract Collectors With Direct Mail

- Produce Promotional Materials**
- catalog
 - brochure
 - flyers
 - handouts
 - posters
 - newsletter
- Postcard Mailers Get Action**
- design & produce postcards
- Prepare A Monthly Newsletter**
- mail newsletter

8 Draw Collectors To Your Studio

Produce An Event

9 Make Your Art Easy To Acquire

- Establish Value**
- Continue The Conversation**
- handle objections

10 Work On Commission

- Take A Meeting**
- Write A Contract**
- Work Your Plan**
- Carry Out Your Sales Program**
- personal calls
 - phone calls
 - emails
 - notes
 - provide client services

Galleries

Client

Institutions

Potential Client

WHERE DO YOU FIT INTO THIS PICTURE?

America tends to see its artists as visionaries, rebels, outsiders or eccentrics. These are misleading stereotypes. Artists make things and perform services, just like other workers, and these goods and services have an emotional, inspirational and economic value. Artists play an important role in America's cultural vitality and economic prosperity. Along with painters and sculptors, we have craftsmen, designers, animators and so on. Almost every product and service that is produced and distributed in this country has been touched by an artist in some way.

Artists play a big role in the economy. Altogether, there are nearly two million professional artists. Of these there are over 200,000 fine artists. They tend to fall into one of three groups:

- working full-time as an artist and making a living from their art.
- working full-time as an artist with a part-time job to augment their income
- working as an artist plus working at full-time job to make a living

However, artists often struggle with underemployment and below-average incomes. Over all, artists make more than the national median income which is \$30,100. Fifty-five percent of the artists surveyed said they had worked full-time for a median income of \$45,200. A very small group of artists make over \$100,000, an estimated 4,000 nationally.

American artists tend to be educated and entrepreneurial, twice as likely to have earned a college degree as other U.S. labor force members but less well paid for their educational level. Artists are also 3.5 times more likely to be self-employed. American artists are creative not just in their art but also in managing their lives. Sound like someone you know?

Most artists are strongly committed to art as a career and will not change. The challenge for all artists is to increase art sales and open up more time to create art. So there is a lot of competition out there but there is also a lot of opportunity for the artist who is willing to rethink his or her art business.

And don't miss the Appendices:

- A. **75 Reasons Why People Buy Artwork** – the same ones you'll use to sell your art
- B. **Art Words** – to stimulate imaginative conversations with collectors
- C. **An Artist's Website Sales-Ability Test** – to design or fine tune your site to serve collectors
- D. **Web Site Design Guide** – detailed guidelines for producing a collector-friendly website
- E. **Artist's Marketing Toolkit** – a chart of 22 essential marketing tools for artists
- F. **Forty Media Release Ideas** – to grab the attention of editors and drive stories and articles
- G. **Word Of Mouth Generator** – how to manage the most powerful tool of all
- H. **Sample Customer Information** – forms for a clean, friendly business relationship
- I. **Presentation Pointers** – how to get your message across while enjoying yourself