

Marketing Your Art - Getting Started

by Pat Fiorello

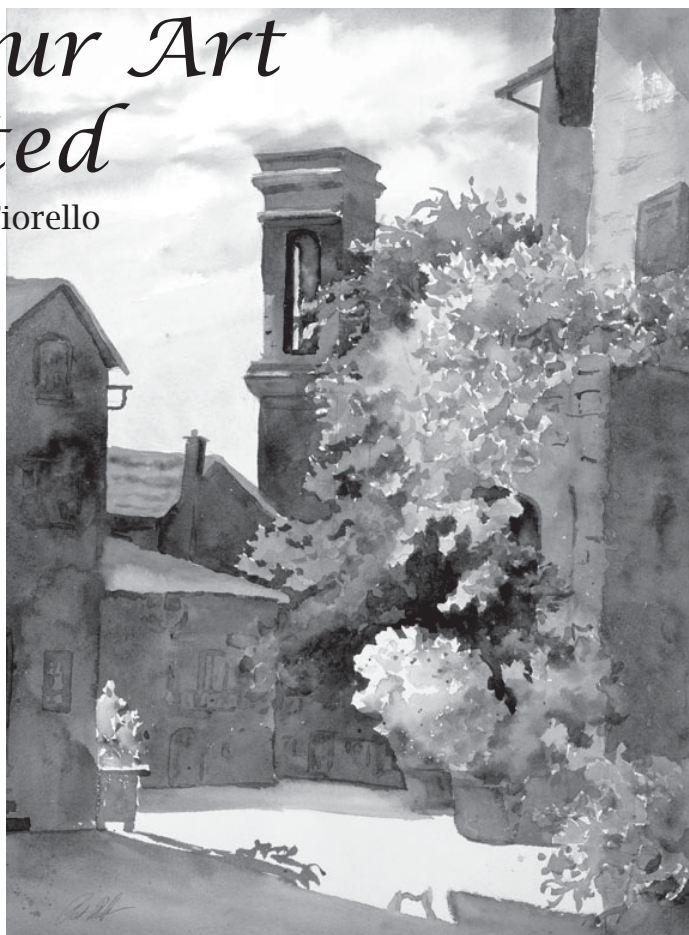
Often after creating art for awhile, artists start to consider selling their artwork. But how do you get started or even know if selling your work is right for you? First, ask yourself “Why do I want to sell my art?” It often seems like the logical next step and you see other people doing it - but you really have to consider if you are ready to share your work with others, and willing to part with your work. Are you interested in selling your work because you want to? Or is a well-intentioned spouse or family member encouraging you to do so without perhaps understanding the emotional side of putting your work out there for others to respond to? Creating artwork is one of the true joys of life and you don’t want the pressures of selling to weigh on you and take away from that joy in any way. That being said, if you’ve given this some careful consideration and are ready and committed to take the first steps, here are a few things to help you start thinking about your work as a professional marketer would.

1. Begin with the end in mind.

Once you have concluded that you are ready to start - give some thought to what you intend to accomplish by marketing your art. Are you looking to make a living by selling your art, become famous, just pay for your supplies and an occasional workshop or simply want to get your art out to the public to share it with others? Depending on your goal, your marketing approach will be very different. Take some time to reflect on that and create some goals for yourself. Studies show that people who set goals and write them down are 200% more likely to achieve them. So it makes sense to start with the end in mind. Try to be as specific, measurable and time bound as possible. Rather than “make a living as an artist”, a more specific goal might look like “Earn a minimum of \$40,000 profit (sales minus all expenses) annually from the sale of my paintings by 2010. Earn \$20,000 in 2009.” That makes it clear where you are heading and what it is going to take to get there.

2. Identify a position for yourself and your art.

Successful marketing efforts start with a brand and what that brand represents to potential customers. What do you want to be known for? When you tell someone you’re an artist - that could conjure up lots of different ideas of art in their mind. But what are you offering? For example in the automobile market, a Rolls Royce stands for the ultimate in luxury, a Volvo is known for safety, a Hyundai is known for affordability and a BMW for being the “ultimate driving machine” - well engineered and fun to drive.



Tuscan Sunlight by Pat Fiorello

All of these cars offer transportation, but they also represent different benefits to their customers. You know what to expect from each brand and where they fit in the overall scheme of things. Likewise where does your art fit in the art market? Do you offer realistic portraits in oil? Large contemporary abstracts in vibrant color? Black and white photography of Southwestern panoramas, Marine paintings in watercolor? The possibilities are endless. You need to begin to define your art. This is not meant to be limiting to your creative explorations, but only to help potential customers know what you offer in the vast world of all the different types of art out there. One of the biggest mistakes a marketer can make is to try to be something to everyone, and then end up standing for nothing. Many businesses have come and gone by trying to satisfy everyone and losing their unique identity. Pick your position and focus in on that. You need to be able to have a response to the question “What type of art do you do?” ready and at the tip of your tongue at all times. Think of well known artists - you could pretty quickly and accurately describe what they’re known for. What will you be known for?

3. Identify your likely target audience.

Once you have identified a way to talk about where your art fits in, it becomes easier to speculate about who might be interested in that art and where you are most likely to find them. For example, if you love to

paint boats and marine scenes ask yourself, who is most likely to enjoy those types of paintings, and perhaps be motivated enough to buy one? A good start might be people with boats, people who live, grew up near or vacation near coastal cities, sailing enthusiasts, etc. Marketing really starts to become more common sense than a mystery once you start thinking about who your target audience might be.

4. Identify places where you could sell your work. Artists often assume they need to be in a gallery to sell their work - and galleries can no doubt be helpful - but in reality they are not the only option. In fact, the art world is changing. Twenty-five years ago about 50% of art was sold through galleries, but today, that number is less than 15%. There are many options for selling your art, and there is no one right way to go about it. You can start out small - you don't have to start out in the top gallery in town (and most likely you won't anyway). Think back to your target audience. Where are you likely to find large groupings of those types of people? In the marine painting example, it would make sense to look for places where you would find people with those interests - like gift shops in Newport Rhode Island (or whatever the closest coastal city is near you), boat shows, yacht clubs (you could offer to do a one person show, hang a piece with your contact information in their lobby - or even donate a painting or do a demo at special events), etc.

So those are some ways to start thinking about your art as a marketer would. I hope you can see, it's not that hard and it actually can be creative and fun when it comes to getting started with your marketing efforts. I'm reminded of the inspiring quote by Confucius "a journey of 1000 miles begins with the first step."

Take that first step today!

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Pat Fiorello has a unique background that combines expertise in both art and marketing. She is a full time professional artist, selling her paintings after a 20 year career as a marketing executive in the corporate world. She coaches artists and offers workshops and teleclasses on marketing, financial management and goal setting for artists. She is an affiliate instructor for A.C.T.com (Artists Career Training).

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Azaleas Bloom by Pat Fiorello

Fall 2008 Workshops by Shirley Nachtrieb

Location: St. Peters Community and Arts Center, 1035 St. Peters Howell Rd., St. Peters, MO 63376.

September 19 & 20, 9am - 4pm

Watercolor Autumn Garden

September 26 & 27, 9am - 4pm

Collage Workshop, Making Collagraphs

October 10 & 11, 9am - 4 pm

Watercolor Portraits

October 17 & 18, 9am - 4pm

Collage on Canvas

November 14 & 15, 9am - 4pm

Watercolor Animals

November 21 & 22, 9am - 4pm

Collage Workshop

For a list of supplies and pricing, contact Shirley Nachtrieb at snachtrieb@charter.net or phone at 636-947-1936.