

By Mark E Shellshear

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I want to thank my sons Neil and Peter for their constant encouragement and wisdom and to my beautiful daughter Rosemarie who has been a wonderful support always.

It has been these three who have cared so much and been my inspiration to continue to build my life, thank you all.

Preface

After thirty years in the Art business as an Artist and working in Galleries, I thought that I should put some of my abstract thoughts into one collected edition.

It has been my desire to help Artists navigate the stormy waters of the Art business, I certainly floundered in it, making mistake after mistake but learning from every situation that I went through.

I started doing a blog years ago and it has evolved over the years into what it is today. I felt that my blog was the best way to reach out and communicate with other Artists, I have compiled many that I felt were pertinent into this book of collected thoughts.

I was asked to take over the Gallery, Galeria de las Islas in Intramuros Manila, Philippines and saw it as a wonderful opportunity not only to help the Gallery but also to reach out and help Artists from a Gallery perspective as well. I understood long ago that continued learning was the way to be successful, if you did not know what to do then read a book, do a workshop, listen to a tutorial and learn.

I also realized that continued personal development was the most important thing I could do. If you want your life to get better, then you need to get better. Getting the new skills I need, reading books, watching videos and listening to inspirational talks continues to help me grow today. The most important thing you can do if you want success in your life is to work very hard on your personal development.

I trust that this book will cause you to think and grow as an Artist and challenge you in your personal life to embrace change and give more of yourself to others in as many ways as you can. The more you give of yourself with no expectation of return, the more you will get back from unexpected sources.

I do appreciate all the wonderful Artists that I have connected with over the years and I look forward to continuing to do blogs and do videos to benefit Artists and I hope to continue to make many more new Artist friends.

Mark E Shellshear.

Chapters:

I admire those artists who paint purely for the love of painting and never put a price on their paintings.	4
Is now the right time to quit your job and become a full-time Artist?	8
Are you ready for a solo exhibition in a Gallery?	12
You cannot rely on family and friends to support your Art career.....	16
This Artist really touched my heart, I felt for him, been there.....	20
He was copied, and it nearly ruined his art career	24
When is it ok to copy?.....	28
Are my paintings worth more than what you say they are worth?.....	32
Don't be a hindrance to your sales	35
Convince me to live with your painting?	40
Work hard on yourself and your Art, you deserve it	43
How do I get their attention?	47
I wish I had learned about this when I was trying to sell my paintings	50
It's not going to change	54
Strangers are your future collectors	58
The best study of life is how it is.....	61
What if I could promise you Artistic success, but it will take some time to achieve it?	63
Discouragement, the reason they don't paint any more.....	65
Keep Moving Forward.....	71
Some people are positive and some people are negative.....	75
My thoughts for Artists.....	77

I admire those artists who paint purely for the love of painting and never put a price on their paintings.

There is a lot of controversy and opinions out there in the Art World, especially the constant discussion about how much should they charge for their painting and what is success?

What is success as an Artist?

For me, there are two types of successful Artists, those who make a good living from their art and those who paint for the love of painting, I will describe both here.

I thought of two examples of two very successful Artists but failed as selling Artists.

When I was a young man starting out in the business world in the 1970's, I would go to a barber in the suburb of Sandgate where I lived. The reason I would always go this particular barber was that he was an Artist, a very dedicated Artist. His Barbershop was filled with his paintings, every space on the walls was covered with his paintings, and all the paintings were of his local area.

When he had no customers he would work on his paintings. He taught me so much about the business of Art.

As a prolific Artist, he was very successful, he painted at every opportunity that he could and he had a large body of work to show for his efforts.

Whether they were good or bad paintings it was never discussed, what was discussed was his great love of painting and art. To me, he was a successful Artist.

As a full time selling Artist, he was a total failure, and he told me in all the years he had sold one or two paintings. He had prices on each painting, very little in cost, but the prices just hung there like his paintings, year after year.

People did not understand his work and did not want it, he was a naive painter, today we would call his work Outsider Art or Brut Art.

It never upset him that people did not understand his work.

Was he a successful Artist? Yes of course.

Was he a good selling Artist? No.

His view was that he loved to paint and he loved art and that he would never stop painting. So, he was successful, and he painted a large body of work which he loved, but he never sold.

My Mother was also an Artist, a painter of beautiful still life paintings and landscapes. She loved to paint, as her Father had painted and taught her and of course she instructed me when I was a small child. She painted for the sheer pleasure of painting and she got great joy in giving her creations away to appreciative family and friends.

Her paintings were not painted to sell as she did not need to sell, my Father more than adequately supported her.

Her problem started at this point when some of her friends who were Artists also encouraged her to join them and their art group and paint with them. She did and she had a lot of wonderful days with the group roaming around the countryside painting, they were wonderful days for her and she would bring home her work and proudly show it off to the family.

The group decided to have a group show and exhibit at a local shopping centre. They were all excited about their upcoming show and discussed for hours, how much they should price their work at.

I was painting full time and Mum came to me to get advice on prices, she told me what she was asking and I just agreed as I did not want to comment on the prices, she was asking as like all hobby artist when they decide to enter the Art Business have an unrealistic view of what their art is worth.

Mum for the first time in her painting life priced her work.

The show came and went and some paintings were sold, but none of Mum's were sold. At the beginning, before the show, she thought she would become a popular selling Artist.

Many more shows and a few years later with very few sales, Mum was talking to me about her work and her great concern was that her paintings were too cheap, should she increase her prices and why don't people buy them?

I asked her if she still loved painting and she said she did off handily, but her concern now was the market.

She had sold very few paintings, but she was consumed with prices and selling and why people did not buy her paintings, but they bought someone else's paintings and she seemed not so happy now with her paintings or her painting.

Finally, she came to me and said she was going to stop painting as nobody wanted her work and they would not pay her prices.

I said that before people loved your painting and were so happy to accept them as gifts and hang them on their walls.

She said to me, true they liked them but now they will not pay for them.

I said Mum these people would never normally buy a painting you know that; they will accept one as a gift but they do not buy art.

I looked at her and said, "Why did you paint before?"

She thought about it and said because she loved painting and it was lots of fun to do with friends and she loved blessing people with her paintings.

I said to her, "Mum to go back and paint and do what you love to do, paint and get out of the Art Business, it is destroying your love for painting and the blessing of others. Leave the Art business to those who want to play there and go back to being a successful painter."

It was like Mum needed permission to get out of the Art business and go back and paint just for the love of it.

She went back to painting her beautiful paintings again, no more prices on them and blessed many people with them, who appreciated her beautiful work and proudly hung them in their homes.

Artist paint for the right reasons.

The Art Business is exactly that and the moment you try to sell your paintings you are in the business, do not kid yourself, you may live in denial if you wish but once you price your work you are in the Art Business, and the truth is the Art Business can be brutal, they do not take prisoners.

My Mum and the Sandgate Barber were both very successful Artists, but they were failed full time selling Artists.

The love of painting and art is a great a wonderful hobby and pastime that brings great joy and happiness to the Artist and those who are blessed with one of their paintings.

Selling is the Art Business, like my Mum, you have permission to go back to painting for the sheer love of it and never having to put a price on your painting again.

Painting for the sheer love of it.

THOUGHTS: Passion and reasons.

I believe in writing things down, especially goals.

I believe that all Artists should have a list of goals for their Artist practice, not goals in your head but written out goals and I also believe that you should write them out every morning before you start work.

You have no time.

If you watch morning television you have plenty of time, turn off the television.

Now, why do I believe that they should be written out each day?

There is self-affirmation in writing something down and saying it as you write it.

Is now the right time to quit your job and become a full-time Artist?

I saw a post on an Artist group page where someone had decided to quit their day job and go full-time painting and earning their living from their art and then wanted to know what those in the group thought?

I read all the encouraging comments about his great decision, but I really only agreed with one comment and it said,

“Can you get your job back?”

In my business, I get asked this question a lot by Artists believing that they have what it takes to earn a living from their art. The answer I give is always the same.

Are you already selling more than you earn from your day job?

If not, do not quit your day job.

It does amaze me the blind optimism of some Artists, who always tell me about the thousands likes they get on Facebook and all the encouraging comments they get, mainly from other Artists and I do point out that if likes do not translate into sales, then they are just likes.

I know unfortunately I come across as negative and I am not that at all, I do want all good Artists to succeed and I know some do walk out of their day jobs and do make it but they are the exception to the rule.

The reason I always caution Artists from making this decision as I do not want to see them make a foolish decision that in the long run will hurt them not just financially but more importantly hurt them emotionally and personally.

So you want to be a full-time Artist?

Here is my plan for your life if you were engaging my service. [I remember what my mentor said to me many years ago, free advice is exactly that and usually goes unheeded.]

So here we go, four simple steps to think about. There are more but this is a good start.

[1] Do you have enough money in the bank to live on for 18 months with no income?

[2] Do you have any collectors who are prepared to help you by buying work on a regular basis?

[3] Do you have a Gallery that will represent you and show your work regularly in group shows, art fairs and give you one man shows?

You need to be selling one or two pieces a month through the Gallery, remember Galleries take commission so know that up front and how much?

Remember Galleries are not miracle workers and you will need to be present often in the Gallery to meet customers and potential collectors.

I am presuming you want to the Gallery route, but maybe you want to do the Art Fair circuit, then there are costs involved there as well.

[4] How are you promoting yourself?

It is your responsibility to get your name out to your potential audience unless of course, you engage the services of an agent, but there are no guarantees that sales will come.

Facebook: Use them as your billboard to connect with potential buyers.

Twitter: Don't just put up pictures explain your art, sell it.

And other social media platforms.

Artists do not like it when I say they are their best salesperson.

Emails...regular weekly emails to all your customers and supporters, telling about your latest work, what's happening in your life and occasional specials you are offering at your studio. Invite people to your studio, people love to see where the Artists create their work.

Blog, a weekly blog to tell people about your art, your work progress, your studio, your life your dreams and this has to be every week. Story telling.

You must promote the whole package, your Art, the Artist and Artist life. All this creates the package that people will buy into and like you.

Remember you are not just selling paintings now, you are selling "you" and selling "the artist life" and of course "the Art."

This is just a few of the marketing tools that you will have to use to survive.

All of this takes hard work and time and then you still have to paint great selling paintings and that also takes preparation and time.

I am hoping that you get the picture and today in such a crowded Art market even when you make it big time, you will have to market yourself to stay there.

To be a successful full-time Artist is hard work, no more 9 to 5, and you work until it is finished.

In the early years, no more weekends off, because you are out promoting your work and then come back to the studio and paint.

I know one financially successful Artist, a friend, and I know he works 7 days a week from 4 pm to 4 am every day. It's not good to ring him before lunch time, but he produces great work and has very loyal collectors. However, it has been 25 years of hard work; I admire his work ethic, and he has earned all his success.

As a hobby painter, you love painting and being a creative person and doing wonderful paintings at your leisure.

To be a full-time Artist now that you are in the Art Business, there are two words Art and Business, and until you are successful, you will be every employee you need. You will do everything and still, you have to paint, and on top of all of this, you will need some luck and connections.

What is the best time to give up your day job and paint?

I consider the best time to give up your day job to go and paint full time is when you are forced to. Meaning that you are selling so well that your day job is hurting your painting sales.

Otherwise take the sage advice of the person who commented on the earlier post,

“Can you get your day job back?”

THOUGHTS: If you do not do it, it will not get done.

Small disciplines produce lasting results.

If you do not do it, it will not get done.

You can dream about it all you want.

You can procrastinate all you want.

But only doing it will make it happen.

Sometimes self-motivation to start work can be so difficult especially for Artists.

That is why I believe that Artists should have a set work time every day, it is so important for Artists to work a normal day just like anyone else.

If you wait for inspiration, then you could be waiting a long time.

Start painting and the painting will come.

“The advice I like to give young Artists, or really anybody who'll listen to me, is not to wait around for inspiration. Inspiration is for amateurs; the rest of us just show up and get to work.” ...

Chuck Close, Artist.

Are you ready for a solo exhibition in a Gallery?

Artists are always posting their painting on Facebook and say things like, "It's not quite finished, but be honest and tell me what you think?"

I always wonder what they are really looking for here?

Is there a difference between being honest, being nice or being politically correct?

I agree that nobody needs to be criticized or berated for doing a painting, good or bad, hateful words have no place in this debate.

But how does it help the Artist if everyone says how wonderful it is, how talented they are, when really at best the work is just student work and at worst, just not a good painting?

Yes, when this happens maybe the best thing to do is to keep silent, no comment is also a comment.

I was friends with a Gallery curator who looked after a Gallery in a reasonable sized town in Australia. The Gallery then was free to residents of that town, but to get an exhibition one had to get past the "Gatekeeper," my friend the curator. He was an Artist of 30 plus years and very experienced. He had a very good eye for talent, and on a whole, the Gallery hosted good shows, but tact and diplomacy were not his strong points.

I was witness to an Artist who came in to see him and to show him his paintings in the hope of his approval and then, of course, a show. This particular Artist had been painting a few years, not long, and was very proud of the painting they had brought in.

I looked at the work, and it was not very good.

This particular Curator carefully looked at the paintings one by one, he then sat down at his desk, picked up his newspaper and looked at the Artist and said, "No."

The Artist said "Why? What did you think of my paintings?"

He just looked up and said, "You can't have a show."

The Artist looked devastated and should have left at this point, but they were determined to get a show and challenged the Curator.

He looked up and said, "Your work is not good, get lessons."

That was it for the Artist, they looked shocked at his words, picked up their work and left.

After the Artist had left, I said to him that he was a little harsh and that it wasn't that bad.

He said to me, "Would you hang it?"

I said, "No."

He said, "There at least I am honest and don't tell them lies like their family and friends do."

He said, "I did them a big favor, they will now go and get lessons and become a reasonable painter or they will give up and stop painting, both would be good outcomes."

Now I do not agree totally with what he said, but I understand now when you have been running Galleries for a long time why you can become blunt and abrasive, it is not an acceptable behavior, but it happens.

I would never say what my Curator friend said, I am very careful to recognize talent and craftsmanship and also to be able to gently persuade those do not have the ability to paint and sell their work, to just paint for the love of painting and give them away to understanding and loving friends and family.

Feedback must always be honest but not brutal and hurtful.

I see a lot of work on the internet by Artists who are mostly self-taught, and I am not critical of that fact, but we do need lessons, and I do not mean from the local friendly Artist who teaches on a Tuesday evening, but I mean Art School or workshops or find an Artist of longstanding who is prepared to help you and teach what is needed.

Feedback needs to be constructive, it needs to praise the attempt but not say it is a great painting when it is not.

I rejoice that people have a desire to paint but like all crafts, it takes time, years to master the craft and become proficient and saying things like you are very talented, and this is an amazing painting, I believe does not help the Artist who has only been painting a few years.

To encourage and acknowledge the level of the work is good but if it is not a great painting, don't come out and say it is, that does not help the Artist, it just sets them up for disappointment further down the track. How many stories have we heard about Artists who have been told how wonderful their paintings are and then when they have a show and nothing sells, those words now seem so hollow and empty. As I wrote in a previous chapter my dear Mother, she believed the flattery and the market became a very harsh reality for her.

Feedback should, I believe, be honest and encouraging but not to the point that it is not truthful.

I get lots of emails from good, genuine people who want me to look at their paintings and tell

them what I think.

I cannot do that as I am not judge and jury and most times I do not comment but talk about other things unless it is really exceptional work. I will not enter into the “Please be honest with me and tell me what you think?”

What are they really asking?

Honestly, what I think is not important, the only important thing is, will it sell, did it sell?

In the end and I know this gets many Artists upset because they say it is unfair, but the Market decides, not the Artist, not the Gallery but that person who is prepared to spend their hard earned money on your painting. That is the true decision maker.

Friends, what others think really is not that important, and don't search for praise. What is important is, do you love the painting and do you love painting, and if the answer is yes, that is all that matters.

THOUGHTS: Put the oxygen mask on yourself first.

I believe I need to have goals; I write them out every day.

I also need to learn as much as I can if I want to be a continued successful person, the world will not wait or change for me.

I need to work on me to be better able to face all the challenges that the Art world can throw at me.

I do not want to wake up one day a tired, complaining old man; it is my desire to continue to improve right up to my last breath.

Why?

Because that is good for me, I want to change for me and so should you want to change for you, to be a better you. Not for someone else but for yourself.

Remember you put the oxygen mask on yourself first, before you help others.

You can blame the economy for lack of sales if you want, it will not change anything, still no sales?

You can blame the customers for not buying your paintings and how terrible they are, but it will not change anything, still no sales?

Or you can decide to change and become a better person, learn to sell, get good people skills, set goals for your life and read about how to run your Art Business better.

In the end, it is up to you?

There are two types of Artists, those who make excuses and complain.

Those who change and set goals and work hard to take themselves into a successful Art future.

The choice is yours.

You cannot rely on family and friends to support your Art career

I decided to tell this true story as it will show how Artists sometimes really do not understand what they need to do to grow their Art business and build lifelong collectors. I just had a fine young Artist do a one-man show at the Gallery, unfortunately for him, it was not a financial success, he was very disappointed, and it reminded me about this Artist that I had known years before.

This Artist I had known years ago was quite a talented young man; his paintings were good, not outstanding but very saleable. I got involved after this happened as he needed some direction and advice.

He had a large group of friends and his partner was able to help him, and together they put on his first one-man show; this story takes place in Australia.

They scheduled the exhibition at a large rented space in a gallery and his partner was well connected and was able to get a large group of friends and business acquaintances to the opening.

It was an extremely successful opening. His family, friends, supporters and his partners' business acquaintances all bought paintings, and this young Artist felt that he had arrived; he had a sellout show. The press said nice things about his paintings and over a few weeks he did some interviews and he was feeling very confident.

They were both so happy with the show that his partner said that they would do it again next year.

The young Artist painted a new one-man show over the next year, and they put on an even bigger and better opening and invited all their family, friends, and business acquaintances again to the opening. They expected that this show would also be a sellout and the press were invited, everyone expected great things.

Unfortunately this time, he sold two paintings, and the show was a financial failure.

The young Artist was devastated, he said it was so unfair after all the work and time he had put into the show and the cost of putting it on. There were no interviews, and family and friends felt sorry for him.

Unfortunately, he was back where he had started, and now he had to kick start his career all over again before it had even started.

Why tell you all this?

Family, friends and business acquaintances cannot be relied on to buy your paintings, yes they

will come and support you and may buy a painting at the beginning of your career but if they are not collectors then that's all they will buy or if you are very lucky they may buy another one or two.

This young Artist made the mistake of thinking that if his family and friends bought once, that they would buy again and continue to do so but this rarely happens.

What did this young Artist do wrong?

After his first initial success, he should have looked for a Gallery to represent him where he could get his art before serious collectors. Collectors who would begin to buy the Art and follow his career and continue to buy.

He was never going to earn a living from his art, relying on his family and friends and after the first show, instead of working towards another one-man show, he should have spent time selling himself, marketing his work in the art world, not locked away in the rent out art space world.

What should he have done?

As I said, look for a good commercial Gallery to represent him, he had a good first show and good sales, and there were very good press reports. These would have got him interviews with good Galleries. He had their attention.

He should have joined some like-minded Artist groups and be involved in group shows getting himself before strangers who may like his work and buy and become his collectors.

Donate a painting to charity where his name will be published and again get before collectors who often support charity events.

This young Artist needed to use his initial success to build his future career and not look away painting another show that just would not fly.

There is no easy way to the top of the Art World; it is hard work.

Yes, you need talent, but you will also need a ton of self-belief, and you will need to work harder than everyone else and never give up. You need to be noticed, get attention.

Obscurity is death to Artists.

This young Artist was noticed, he got attention, but he was never able to capitalize on the first success and after the second exhibition, all his good press was forgotten.

You are only as good as your last exhibition.

You will need to market yourself and your paintings on social media and get people's attention especially collectors.

Many Artists I advise get upset when I tell them that, but the truth is if the collector sees you and likes you, then they will like your work, it is just human nature and the collector will want to be your friend. Not go out to dinner with you but every time he sees you he expects you to talk to him, be friendly and tell him all you are doing with your art. Collectors love to connect, to be close to their Artists, to be in the know. They are spending their hard earned money on you so give back. It pays off in the long haul.

Lastly, as an Artist, play the long game, it's not about selling a painting to a person; it's about selling paintings for a lifetime to many people.

Connect, get attention, build relationships, treat your collectors like friends and always give a little more than expected to your Collector, and add value.

I am not talking about discounts, a subject I want to address, but a small sketch, just a little thought, it builds relationships.

To let you know, this young man never did recover because the first show was so easy, and he could never accept that he would have to work very hard to build an Art career. By the time I got involved, he had lost interest in painting, and he was not able to forgive people for not supporting him, especially his family and friends and he was angry at his ex-partner, who was not prepared to fund a third exhibition.

He stopped painting and started a small coffee shop.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."

THOUGHTS: Turning up every day

Turning up every day is an attitude as well as an action.

Plugging away every day takes patience, determination and self-belief, in your Artwork and talent.

So an artist should turn up every day and do what needs to be done and out of this discipline comes the miracle.

People want the “miracle” without the hard work, and often the hardest work is just turning up every day and painting, even when you don’t feel like it or want to.

The miracle comes when you turn up every day; you are patient and determined to never give up and work hard while you are in the studio.

Perspiration precedes inspiration.

Attitude, determination, patience, turning up every day and working precedes the miracle.

This Artist really touched my heart, I felt for him, been there

I looked into the eyes of the Artist; he was misting over, tears were visible, he could not believe he did not sell one painting. He knew that there was a Gallery charge for no sales and I watched him count off the money.

I felt so sorry for him; his work was good, yet with all the promotion we did, nothing sold.

His disappointment started at the opening; the two celebrity guests failed to arrive, some excuses, and he was visibly devastated that they did not come. A friend filled in for them at the opening, but there was a real sense of lack.

The show opened and closed without a sale and now after all the expense of producing the show, canvas, art materials, frames, transportation to the Gallery from far away, the cost of the Artist reception and he now stood there counting off the Gallery charge for no sales.

He was prepared to pay it; he never asked for a discount or complained about no sale. I admired that, no excuses, just pay the man.

He offered me the money, but I said: "No, you keep it."

He just looked so hurt, and he put the money away, collected his paintings and prepared to leave.

The Gallery staff looked at me and asked why I did not take the money, they are all young, I said, "You have to taste failure to understand how devastating it is, he is hurt enough without us adding to his pain, he is a nice guy."

Before he left, he asked me what he had done wrong?

I said," Nothing, the problem is you are unknown, the curse of the Artist."

I told him to go home and build a following in his own city before he tries again in a big city like Manila and get a presence online where people can get to know you, it's all about getting people's attention.

You may ask, why did I have this show?

I inherited it. It was arranged before my services were engaged.

This really is an example of what happens so often, big dreams not quite thought out properly and it leads to rejection and disappointment and that horrible word, failure.

I do not want to see this happen to any Artist; the art business is hard enough without this kind

of devastation. I know what it feels like to fail and I hope that this Artist can pull through this devastation.

Lessons to be learned from this show?

- + Do not try to have a large one-man show where you are unknown, it is a difficult task.
- + Build your personal following before you attempt that big show in the big Gallery.

I know people will not like me saying this but, "if you are unknown, then you are unknown."

+I talk so much about Facebook, emails, blogs, storytelling and just meeting people and making strangers into collectors and then friends; you have to do it.

+ Galleries are not miracle workers, and yes we have lots of collectors who like to see most shows, but if they do not know you, as I said, it's a difficult ask. To get attention, get known, is your responsibility.

This is just a few thoughts about Artists.

Artists, take care of yourselves; this can be a brutal business as I just described.

Make sure you have a network around you of loving, caring family and friends so if it all goes wrong, and in this industry it can very easily, you have caring people to talk to and share with, that love you.

A lot of Artists suffer from depression and have some very negative thoughts, if you do, get help. Please, get help.

I went through depression, and I did not get help straight away, but when I did, it all turned around.

+Be gentle on yourself.

+Talk about your dreams and struggles.

+We want all Artists to be successful, not only materially but also emotionally.

+Rejection is a bitter pill, try not to take it personally, I know that is a big ask, but smile and remember, you can't please everyone.

As I used to say, "Smile them off, don't react."

I really do care about Artists whose dreams get shattered; that's why I want to give value back

to Artists, because when I needed help an Artist was there for me.

THOUGHTS: Love yourself so you can love others.

I talk a lot about the Art Business and what you need to do to earn a living from your Art.

I talk about changing yourself, so your whole world changes and I mean what I say and practice all that I write about.

I had to deal with an Artist with a substance abuse problem, and I also realize that within all the striving to be the best you can be and always being positive, we also need to care.

Some people slip through the cracks, and it is up to us to reach out a helping hand, not a judgmental hand.

We all need to be concerned for the Artist who is doing it tough and feeling lost, dealing with the overwhelming problems that life throws at them.

If that is you and you are in pain and struggling, ring someone. Please friend, get help.

I am all for being tough in business and setting big goals, but I also see that we are human and we are all dealing with what life throws at us.

You are not alone; we are all going through life. It is the way it is, so please be gentle on yourself, take care of yourself, you are important, and you are worthwhile.

So friends take care, love yourself so you can love others, and give yourself to others. A smile costs nothing.

Be slow to anger, be slow to judge, be quick to forgive and be quick to love yourself and others.

Talent is a gift.

Compassion and self-love is a choice.

He was copied, and it nearly ruined his art career

For me, this is an interesting story as I would never have thought that being copied and bad advice, which was heeded, could derail a good art career.

This Artist, who had shown great promise in his early years, but, with the pressure of life and the need to earn a living, he started working to support his family. He is very good at his job and has the respect of many people and he kept painting in his spare time.

When I met him, he was painting abstract paintings, and they honestly did nothing for me. He showed me a big abstract painting he was doing, and I was not impressed, not because it was a bad painting but I just felt I had seen it all before and it lacked that wow factor.

He had a couple of one-man shows with his abstract paintings that did not go well and he ended up in debt.

When I started working with him, I asked why he was painting abstract paintings, and he told me that before he was painting in a surreal style and that people liked them and he had a small following.

I asked why he had changed his style as he showed me some pictures of his surreal work and I thought that they were very good, he said because he was copied.

He told me the story of how he and a group of his Artist friends went to a prestigious Art Fair here in Manila and a well-known Artist at the time, had copied his painting and had exhibited it in the Art Fair in a well-known Gallery.

He said he was shocked at seeing his painting and all his friends told him that this will continue to happen to him and he should change his style?

Amazingly he listened to them and changed his style and started painting abstract pieces.

I asked again, why did you change your style? I suppose it's a little in disbelief and he repeated the story and said his friends told him to do so

He did what they said and he said he also needed to distance himself from the known Artist?

So he did that and changed his style and lost the small following he had.

He asked me if I had been there with him what would I have advised him to do?

I said I would have told his friends to take photos of him standing in front of the painting with the known Artist and I would have told him to point at the work. Then I would have told them all to post it Facebook saying, "Isn't it great that so and so Artist thought my work good enough to

copy.”

I would also put a picture of my work up as well. I said if this guy stole your work, promote that and use it to your advantage. Don't just run away in fear because you were copied.

He should have stayed in front of the painting and every time some collector made a nice comment about the painting, thank the known Artist for copying his painting and say it in front of the collector. He only had to do that a couple of times before the painting would have been taken down, because no Gallery needs that kind of publicity.

He said he was so hurt that someone would do that to him, so he changed his style so it would not happen again and he was right, it has never happened again.

Yes, I felt sorry for him, he had no one to advise him and help him in that situation and it is easy for me to say, you should have done this and that in hindsight.

I asked him to bring into the Gallery any of that style of paintings that he had left so I could look at it.

He bought in four paintings, they were very good and I said this is the work you should be painting not those abstracts. Compared to the abstracts he was doing, these paintings had life, they showed a passion and strength about them that abstracts did not have, and these paintings had that wow factor for me.

I displayed the four paintings and they have been sold already and I am sure that others will sell as well.

This artist is very good and if he continues to work hard, he will rebuild his art career and his self-confidence and if he is copied again, he will handle it very differently.

What did he learn from this experience?

If someone copies your work, use it to promote yourself as the original Artist who did the original artwork.

Believe in yourself and your Art; self-belief is the catalyst for success.

People will always copy other paintings; it is just part of this business, a sad part and often they do not realize that it is copyright infringement, so use it to shame them and build on your strengths.

Please do not listen to well-meaning Artist friends and your own friends.

They may be really nice people, but the advice that they give you comes from their own

insecurities, bad self-esteem and all the hurts of rejection and low or no sales. It is free advice and worth as much.

This artist should have sought real help, professional help and not listen to his Artist friends who set him back a few years, years he cannot get back.

Yes, I know he didn't have to listen to them, but it is hard to be positive when you are hurting, and everyone is telling you to run away because that is exactly what you want to do.

Friends, get good advice even if you have to pay for it.

Believe in your own creativity and yourself and do not lose sight of why you are doing what you are doing.

Yes, there will be disappointments, but that is part of life.

Nobody said it would be easy and that there would not be highs and lows in the Art business. Every day is different and challenging.

So put on a smile and start painting and if someone copies your work, thank them for considering you to be such a good artist that they copied you. But do not change your style, it must be good people are copying you and go and get good advice on what to do.

Stay positive and stay true to yourself.

THOUGHTS: How you think defines you.

I was listening in the taxi to Michael Jackson singing his song, "I am looking at the man in the mirror," and I thought how profound that song was. How true it is, yet every day we see the man, woman in the mirror but we do not look at them.

Looking at ourselves in the mirror is learning to think about ourselves, correctly.

Thinking is so very important and yet we so often just allow any thoughts to flow through our head, unchallenged and unhindered.

As Artists, often the difference between success and failure is the way we think about a situation and what we tell ourselves, and so often, it's automatic.

One person says, "I knew this would happen and I know I will not sell."

Another person facing the exact same situation says, "What a great opportunity, I will sell here." Same situation, but seen through different eyes and different thinking.

How you think is everything.

We are all the masters of our own universe, so how we talk to ourselves can define the reality that we live in.

We can be negative and always finding fault with everything?

Or we can be positive and always look for the positive in everything?

Again the same situation, different people, different thinking.

How important you think you are, largely determines your quality of life.

It determines how you think of yourself, whether you love yourself or not.

Listen to how you talk to yourself; you are important to you because you are the one person you have to live with for your whole life, so we need to get our thinking right.

What you say in your mind to yourself, your self-talk defines you, positive or negative.

You can change the way you talk to yourself, every time you go negative, stop and say to yourself, "No, you are wrong it is not like that."

It took me a long time to change negative self-talk, but you can do it, start today and slowly make the necessary changes.

If you change your thoughts to positive and self-affirming thoughts, you will change your world and improve your Art.

Everything starts with what you are thinking.

A penny for your thoughts?

When is it ok to copy?

When you draw the image from nature or life and use it in your paintings.

When you take the photo of the scene and you use it as your own photo.

When you are in Art school and have permission to do so.

If you are copying another Artists work and then selling it without their express permission in writing and also acknowledging them on the painting, that is wrong.

If you are copying one of the masters and then you are going to sell it, you must first try to get permission from the owners of the copyright of that painting and then also acknowledge it is a copy of the painting by the master. Write something like, "after Picasso." above your signature.

I had one Artist who wanted to put a portrait of Elvis into a Gallery I was involved with and I said "Only after you get permission to use his image." I told them to email Graceland to ask for permission to use the image and then print out the email, even if they do not get back to you, your intention was to get permission.

At one opening, a photographer told me that he really liked a painting and wanted to take a photo of the painting and then he would get it printed onto a canvas and hang it in his home. I told him, "No, you cannot do that without the written permission of the Artist,"

"But no harm is done." He argued.

I told him that he was stealing the image of the Artist. If he wanted to take a picture of the painting, he should talk to the Artist and pay for the use of their image. He got upset with me and left.

I remember one exhibition I was in, a long time ago, where an author came up to me and said he loved one of my paintings and asked if he could take a photo of the work and use it on the cover of his book. I asked him if he was going to buy the painting, he said no. I asked him if he would pay a fee for using my image, he said no.

I then said in front of witnesses, "No, you cannot use my image in any way at all."

He got upset and blabbered on about how it would be great promotion for me.

I still refused him; I didn't need that kind of promotion or exposure. He didn't use my image.

We must respect the owners of the image.

I was asked to be the guest curator for an exhibition of wildlife paintings. It was a one person show and they were looking to build a career as a wildlife painter, especially of birds. The

exhibition was quite big and there were a lot of paintings. I looked at the paintings and they were quite good, some great action paintings of birds and a lot of rare birds.

I was looking through them all and a friend of the Artist came in. Curious, I asked the friend where the Artist went to get these great poses.

Did she take photos or draw in the wild? How did she start?

The friend replied, "Oh no, the Artist copies them off calendars and books by a certain photographer?"

I was stunned, and then I asked if the Artist had permission from the photographer?

I knew this particular photographer as he was quite popular and also had a reputation to litigate, if people stole his images.

Later that day, I saw the artist and asked her about the paintings; especially how she painted them. She said that she had copied them from the photos of this particular photographer.

I was honestly shocked. I explained copyright to her and she said, "But, I painted them. I might have copied them, but it is my work now. They are my paintings."

I explained that it wasn't her work; the image belonged to the photographer. I warned her that the photographer, if he finds out, will sue. The Artist was not fazed and stated that as far as she was concerned, it was her work and that she would show it and sell it.

I excused myself from the exhibition and explained why; because they were breaking the law and stealing.

The show went on. I did not attend and I was told there were no sales.

Artists, you cannot take someone's image and use them as your own; that is stealing!

I know so many people do it and get away with it, but that does not make it right.

A copy is a copy, and will always be a copy.

In Australia, one of my big complaints were Artists who go to weekend Art Workshops and paint one or two pictures under instruction of a notable Artist and get their help.

Then go on and put those workshop paintings into a show and sell them, without any recognition of the Artist who taught them. Those images belong to the teacher and you need permission to sell them.

Most teachers do not pursue this as they want the work, but that does not take away the fact that the Artist does not own the image, or have the right to sell. I know some people might argue, "Yes, but I painted the painting," yes you did, under the tutelage of a notable artist.

There is so much in life that you can paint and draw without having to copy other people's work. Be like Van Gogh and Rembrandt when they couldn't find anything to paint, they painted themselves—at least you would have a timeline of self-portraits.

We all want every Artist to prosper and develop to their highest potential doing original Artwork.

Producing original paintings that you created out of your own imagination and creative ability without having to use another Artist's images.

How do we stop people copying other peoples Art work?

If you see your work copied on a Facebook Art Group site, report it.

If you walk into gallery and see your work copied, speak to the Gallery owner and ask to have it removed. Most gallery owners would listen and then clear it up with the offending Artist. If they refuse to do anything, seek legal help.

Now really it does come down to all of us doing the right thing.

I know that there are websites out there that steal images to put on t-shirts, placemats, cups and the list goes on. Sadly, there is very little you can do. Email them and ask for your content to be moved. If they refuse, then it is up to the courts to decide, if you have the money.

One Artist suggested watermarking your pictures. That is good, but you can remove them.

Another suggested keeping a photo journal of the creation of the painting, great idea.

I think that these are good ideas but sadly, once your work is up on the internet it can be easily downloaded and used by unscrupulous people.

One of the best ways to stop someone stealing your image is use low resolution photos but it does not stop someone copying your image.

For the majority of Artists, they work from their own original ideas. Yes, everyone is influenced by others, but influence and outright copying are two totally different things.

Original artwork is just that, something created by you that is original and totally yours.

THOUGHTS: No one cares about boring.

You might say that it has all been done before.

Remember, once there was no Facebook, now there is.

Once there was no Picasso, now there is.

Once there was no Rothko, now there is.

Once there was no iPhone, now there is.

Once there was no you, now there is, so be original.

No one cares about boring.

No one cares about copies.

No one cares about average.

People care about original, different, breathtaking and extraordinary.

Yes, it will be scary

Yes, it will be fought with fear.

Yes, it will take a leap of faith and much self-belief.

But, there is only one like you and to be original, you must be you.

Believe it and act on it.

Artist, pick up your paintbrush and paint.

Be original and be extraordinary.

Are my paintings worth more than what you say they are worth?

This is a question that I get asked many times a week.

The issue of 'how much my paintings are worth and what formula should I use to price them?'

The simple answer is, at the price that they will sell at.

I am not sure why Artists become so engrossed in this issue of pricing.

How much should I sell my paintings for?

Are they too cheap or are they too expensive?

Do I price by the square inch or do I use the formula, time + supplies + profit?

Now, I do understand your need to price your paintings.

But if you have been in this business for only a few years, then I believe the question should be, "How do I get my paintings onto the walls of strangers at a price that we both can be happy with?"

I really believe that price in the beginning should be that you recover your costs and sell your paintings.

Now, I know I will get lots of comments saying I want Artists to give away their paintings, but I do not.

I want Artists to build a business from their art so that it can sustain them in the future.

Art is like any small business starting up; it will take a few years to make any money. The idea is to build your business so that it will make money in the future.

Sell at a price in the beginning that gives good value to the buyer and yourself.

Do not give them away but also do not price them like you are mature seasoned Artist.

So how do I do that?

Think about this; you need to build a following and a reputation as an Artist.

You need to put your paintings on the walls of strangers at a price that you are both happy with. Remembering that, you will increase your prices as the years go by and your reputation grows.

If we could get past the romance of being an Artist and selling our work for big money, we would then understand that it takes time and patience and hard work to build your Art business.

The painting you are selling today for \$100 in five years you could be selling for \$1000, same size, same Artist, same talent, the only difference is that you have built your Artistic reputation and your Art business and you now have a group of collectors who invest in your artwork and your collector base is growing.

I want Artists to do well from their art; it takes time, it takes hard work and it takes a sales strategy, start reasonable and build on your prices each year.

The key to surviving as an Artist is sales and strangers.

THOUGHTS: One drip at a time

Artists we need to understand that this Art business is a marathon not a sprint.

So many Artists give up to early and quit.

If you are really committed to your goals, then it does not matter how many times you fail, all that means is you are now closer to success.

It takes time to build a reputation in the Art world.

It takes time to get known by collectors.

It takes time to build all the skills you will need for success.

Learn to be patient and build on your career every day.

A dripping tap will fill the bucket, but it takes time before the bucket gets filled.

For most Artists it takes 10 years to become well known and respected in this business. So many people desire to be Artists and they start off with a flourish and they get ignored in the beginning and they quit after a short period of time, disillusioned and hurt, this can be a brutal business.

Collectors are always wary of new faces, how long will they last, and will they still be Artists this time next year?

Once you understand this then you can see why it takes time to get known.

Building on your Art career every day, work hard on your Art practice, another drip into the bucket.

Being positive always, understanding that it is not personal, just the Art business, another drip in the bucket.

Smile, every day in the Art business is an achievement and you are one step closer to your goals and success, another drip in the bucket.

Don't give up to early, let the bucket fill, it takes time.

One drip at a time. Patience dear Artist, patience.

Don't be a hindrance to your sales

I knew an Artist who was very experienced (40 years painting) he had sold reasonably well but never built a great career. He loved the Art Business or “the game” as he called it, but he had one major problem.

His Artwork was very good; he was extremely talented and was able to capture his subjects with wonderful line and minimal brush strokes. He would be what one would call a minimalist abstract landscape painter.

He had the ability to go into the landscape and capture it with the minimal brush strokes. I like his paintings very much and I collected his work.

His prices were very low.

His work was very good.

He had sold very few paintings over the years.

What was his problem?

His attitude.

He really believed that because he had been around for a long time and he knew lots of named painters, that he deserved respect.

His work was very good and he would tell people so when they looked at his work; of course people did not buy.

Sadly, he was very dismissive with people and believed his work would sell itself and if people did not buy it, it was because they did not appreciate good Art.

I liked this Artist very much but I used to cringe at the way he spoke to people and I realized why he would never sell, his people skills were terrible.

He was not interested in people and he did not care what they thought. He believed he was very talented and deserved to be respected.

Nobody deserves respect; respect is something earned.

What to learn from him?

His paintings were good.

His prices were very reasonable.

He was very talented.

Unfortunately, he did not win people to himself.

For the sale to work, the buyer must like you as well as your paintings. You are selling yourself, as well as your paintings.

If you want to be the brooding, misunderstood Artist, that is fine; but do not complain about your lack of success.

My friend believed he deserved success and demanded respect because he was good and had been around a long time. The truth is, no matter how talented you are or how long you have been around, if you do not treat people with respect, they will not respect you or buy your paintings.

He needed to work on his people skills and be nice to people and he would have sold very well, but he did not believe it mattered because his art sold itself.

Not true, it did not sell itself and he did not sell it, he was a hindrance to the sale.

Don't be a hindrance to the sale; sell your paintings and yourself, be the best.

Have the best smile.

Have the best greeting.

Have the best explanation of your work.

If you want the best results, then be the best you can be.

It is so easy to be a friendly face.

It is so easy to just chat with a stranger about art.

The idea is to get people talking and once they are comfortable with you, then talk about your Art.

You might say, "Yes, well that's easy for you, but I get so embarrassed and I get tongue tied and I do not know what to say, it's scary."

I understand it can be hard. So here are a few tips I learned from when I first started public speaking way back in the 1970's.

Write out your greeting and learn it off by heart.

Practice it in front of a mirror and smile. Say your greeting out loud, over and over in front of the mirror. No matter how silly you feel, do it; it will empower your life.

Look at your smile and practice smiling, look at how you stand and say it over and over. It's called preparation and that is how we learned to talk in front of people.

Repetition is the mother of skills.

Do it over and over until you feel confident and then practice on family and friends, role play, they are the customer and you are selling to them, the more you practice the easier it gets.

As you feel more confident, you will be able to talk to strangers and smile confidently.

I have to walk up to strangers every single day of the week and engage them in conversation. My attitude is not to sell something to them, but to become friends with them so that they will like me, and later like what I sell to them.

I chat with them and ask them their story and through what they tell me, I will decide if they are there to buy or just looking. If I am unsure I will ask them a selling question like, "Do you collect art?"

That answer, and with what I have already learned, will usually tell me whether they are a potential client or not.

If they are, I will proceed and lead them into the sale and if not, I will try and find a way to help them with information or knowledge. I just want to deposit some value into them for free because who knows, in the future they may need something and remember how helpful I was.

Always try and add some value to the person, even if they buy nothing, it is a deposit in the future and a blessing to them.

Remember,

Have the best smile,

Have the best greeting,

Have the best explanation of your work.

Be that friendly Artist that they remembered from the last Art Fair or exhibition.

Always add value to the people you meet, so that you deposit into your future.

Caring about people is not a weakness and people always remember that happy smiling face.

Add value to your customers and be a blessing.

Don't be a hindrance to your sales like my Artist friend.

THOUGHT: Doing the work at hand.

I was thinking this morning about how every day can seem the same.

You can write out your goals each day, have good positive thoughts about the day, yet some days are long?

You work hard in your studio or hard at the office, dreaming always about the day you will sell your art and go full time.

Yet sometimes in the monotony of the day, you can wonder if it is all worthwhile?

All your wonderful dreams,

All your achievable goals,

All the expectation and positive attitude,

Yet some days are very long.

How do I deal with these long days?

Remember all your dreams, goals and expectations are your seeds planted in the soil of life and they are growing at their correct growth rate.

Be like the good Farmer; don't worry about the growing seeds, for they will grow. Your job is to deal with the weeds.

The miracle of life will take care of the seeds.

You need to pull out and kill the weeds, because they will strangle your growing dreams, goals and expectations.

The weeds of disappointment...Pull them out.

The weeds of a negative attitude...Pull them out.

The weeds of criticism and murmuring... Pull them out.

The weeds of giving up to soon...Pull them out.

The weeds of jealousy and envy...Pull them out.

The weeds of self-doubt...Pull them out.

The list could go on. Be a good Farmer and pull out the weeds while you are waiting for your harvest.

It is growing time, be patient and do the work at hand, pull out the weeds.

The miracle of life will look after the seeds.

Be Patient like the Farmer, harvest time is coming.

Convince me to live with your painting?

“My paintings speak for themselves, I do not need to say anything about them.”

“My paintings sell themselves, I cannot talk about them.”

“ I am too shy to talk about my paintings to strangers, if they like them, they can buy them.”

These are some of the things I get told when I ask Artists to come and talk about their paintings.

Here is a statement that most artists never think about,

The collector, buyer lives with your painting many years longer, than you live with it.

Now when that sinks in, it is easy to understand why they want to know all about the art work and the Artist, they want your story and the story about your painting.

Artists if a painting is worth putting all that precious time, love, money and energy into, it is also worth telling the story behind it. The story invites me, the potential buyer, to connect with you the Artist and your painting.

Next time you put a painting up on a Facebook artist group, tell your story about your artwork, “The Why?”

People/Collectors want to connect with the Artist, they want to get to know the reason why the Artist produced the work.

What were you feeling at the time?

Why did you use those colors?

Why did your composition have circles in it?

Too many Artists are asking the wrong questions and not telling their story.

The question for the Artist;

“Why are you not telling me about the process, so I can be part of the painting? I will live with it longer than you will.”

Instead you give me details I am not really interested in, you tell me the title, that's good.

You tell me the medium... I do not care what medium it is in, that will not make me buy, it may influence me later.

You tell me the size... Not that interested, I can tell if it will fit on my wall.

What I want to know is, "Why should I buy it?"

Give me a reason to connect with your painting.

Give me a reason to fall in love with it.

The Collector/ Buyer is in the Gallery, is looking through Facebook Artist groups, they are interested in paintings and they have bought paintings in the past, the Collector says,

"Please Artist, tell me why I should buy your painting and live with it. Help me to connect with you, your painting and your process."

"The World does not need another painting."

But the World does need paintings that they can connect to, emote to and become part of the artistic process.

I am convinced that the paintings that have a story about them will without a doubt create more interest than just another lonely painting out there fighting for attention among all the other orphan paintings lost on Facebook art groups.

If you want people to take notice, then tell the story of how your art work came into existence.

You must think about why you are doing it, not just doing it.

This is why Artist biographies are so popular; they connect us with the Artist, tell your story.

Please Artists, remember the buyer/Collector lives longer with your painting than you do.

THOUGHTS: Warning! Brain is in retreat mode.

I was talking to a talented young artist who is so worried all the time about what people think of him and his Art, that he is so afraid to do things differently just in case he gets it wrong and people laugh at him. This was my answer to him.

Innovate in your art, be different.

Increase what you ask of yourself, push yourself to do more and be creative.

Do not let fear stop you, it is the gateway to your success.

Look for this sign: "WARNING brain is in retreat mode."

When you are about to innovate and be different or do something new and your brain says, "Stop, wait, think about this, this could all go terribly wrong, just like it always does!

People will laugh at you.

People will think what you are about to do is childish and silly.

People will ridicule you.

People will criticize you if you try to be different.

People will hate you.

People will talk about you behind your back."

I said to him, "Just go and do it, what is the worse that will happen?

You will not be decapitated.

You will not have your hands and feet cut off.

Maybe some people might criticize you, so what? You are an innovator, a trail blazer, an Artist, and you are creative. Don't let fear hold you back from doing your best and being successful.

Be innovative, be different, get attention...it is not a crime, just do it."

Art is about pushing the boundaries, unsettling the establishment, challenging the norms, looking deep into your own creative soul and being different and turning a blank white canvas into a miracle.

Work hard on yourself and your Art, you deserve it

A question I received from an upset Artist,

“Mark, you seem to expect so much out of Artists, you expect them to tell stories about their paintings, you expect them to be business people, you expect them to be sales people and you expect them to be exceptional Artists.

Don't you think you expect too much out of us?

We are Artists not writers. We are Artists, Artists are not business people, we are not able to run a business, we do not want to sell and be a salesperson, yes we just want to paint and be Artists, you are wrong.”

I understand most Artists do not want to story tell, its hard work to learn a new skill.

I understand most Artists are not business people; I get it, it's hard to learn a new skill.

I understand most Artists do not want to be salespeople; yes, it is hard to learn a new skill.

I also understand most Artists just want to paint and stay in the studio, I know it's all I wanted to do, but it will not lead most Artists to success.

Sadly, most Artists are ambitious for fame and fortune, most are not ambitious for hard work and learning new skills.

The difficulty for most Artists is that they have bought into the Artistic Myth of the brooding, troubled, starving Artists railing against the establishment(people like me), who say Art is a business, a very big business and you better learn a lot of new skills if you want to prosper in this business.

What I say is not popular, and most will not do it, but some will learn new skills and approach their Art as a business and will gain success.

Success in the Art world is not being the most talented Artist, we have lots of very talented failures, success in the Art Business is being an informed, educated Business person, whose business is producing Art and selling it.

I hear stories all the time of Artists being ripped off by Galleries, collectors, Art Fairs and Art groups they belong to and I always ask, “Did you read the contract? Did you get advice before you entered into the deal?” So often I am told, “Well, no, I trusted them?”

What? You trusted them?

This is your business, your money and your career and you just trusted them?

We have all heard the horror stories, so why is there such a reluctance to get better skilled? It's because of the Artistic Myth, this is what we are like, we are Artists.

Artists, if you choose to change and get more skills to improve your Art business and yourself, you will change your life and Art Business for the better.

All the tools you need to improve your Art Business and yourself, are all out there and most are for free, you just have to go look on the University of YouTube.

And therein lies the problem, I can get most to agree, but unfortunately the majority will not do it.

Why? I have no answer to that. It is life. Life is life, some do and some don't.

So I put out what I know is best for Artist on how to improve their Art Business and their personal lives, but they have to want to do it.

Learning new skills is not hard and you can all do that. It just takes small disciplines and work.

I read in a book, "If you want to be a successful Artist, don't do what failed Artists do."

That is a very good advice.

Learn to story tell your paintings.

Learn all you can about the Art business, how to run a small business.

Learn all you can about selling, once you know how, it can be fun.

Learn all you can about your craft and practice it every day.

Last, work hard on yourself and your Art, you deserve it.

THOUGHTS: Artists you do not need approval you are an artist.

I receive lots of emails asking me to look at paintings and give my opinion. I do understand why artists do it, but I make it a policy not to comment on whether a painting is good or bad, according to me.

My reasons for not commenting,

Artists you do not need my approval or anyone else, you are an artist.

If you want to be a very successful artist or really successful in any area of your life, then these are the things I believe you need to do.

Ask not for approval.

Ask not for permission.

Ask not for a map.

You must approve of your work not others.

You must give yourself permission, you do not need it from others.

You must make your own map for you to follow.

Get council and advice from others, and then decide what is best for you.

Seek out the wisdom of older artist who can mentor you, but you do not need their permission to be you.

You make your own map, because this is your life and you are special and creative and there has never been anyone like you before.

Give yourself permission to be creative and ignore the critics and haters.

Give yourself approval, this is your artistic career, own it.

Write the road map for you as you go forward, because you are writing your map as you build your artistic career.

Artists, do your best and new work, be free of the shackles of needing others approval.

Artists you do not need permission to go and create the “new”.

This is your artistic life, you be a trailblazer not a map follower.

How do I get their attention?

I could go over all the different things that I have told you before and they are very important; being on social media platforms, being part of Artists groups on line, sending out your emails to collectors and friends of your Art and being part of group shows and art Fairs. I am sure you all doing most of this, but still, I say you need to get attention.

One of the most successful selling Artists that I know who knew how to get people's attention, will never show in the MET or in a National Gallery, or any highbrow gallery; but his paintings are in lots of homes and loved by many. The reason I say that he was successful is that he made a consistent living from his art and he got people's attention.

He painted portraits and houses and pet portraits and you all know my thoughts about those, but he knew how to get people's attention, and if you use the principles he employed, I know that they will work for you.

He used to turn up every Sunday morning and set up his easel on the street in front of a closed store near the open Newsagents, where everyone would come early Sunday morning to buy their newspaper. He was always there from 6am until after 11am when the Newsagents would close and he would do this all year round.

He had his name on the back of his chair and a display beside his easel showing photographs and his original painting with sizes and prices, examples of his portraits, pet portraits and people's houses that he had painted and he sold very well.

Every time I met with him, he was always working on new commissions and delivering finished work.

Why was he so successful?

He had a product that appealed to the masses.

He always turned up every week and people began to notice him.

He was prepared to put himself out there on the street and get noticed.

He was friendly and always stopped painting when someone came up to look at him, he would get up and chat with them.

He built a client base because like the newsagent, he was always there every Sunday and people noticed. At first they laughed at the strange Artist sitting there painting, but one by one, people got curious and came up and spoke to him and bought a commission. His prices were very reasonable and he painted enough commissions that he earned a reasonable living doing the thing he loved the most, painting.

Now you can apply the principles of what he did to your social media presence, the local weekly market, the monthly Art Fair or whatever Art show you are a part of.

He turned up, he was reliable, same time every week of the year, rain, heat, cold and sunshine he was there, he was in the Art business and he treated it as work.

The simple principles that this Artist used, knowingly or unknowingly, worked.

These principles can be used online or at a Gallery or Art Fairs or anywhere you want to sell Art.

1. Consistency: He always turned up, same time, same place. If you say you will be there, then be there.

2. Self-belief: He believed in himself, and put himself out there.

3. Good product: He did good portraits and pet portraits and he priced so that the customer could see the value. His paintings were priced to sell and he gave good value for their money. When value exceeds price, you will sell every time.

4. Hard work: He always did what he said he would do, he worked hard on his commissions. He promised long and delivered short.

5. Patience: He was patient and built his business over time. It took time to get the first sale. Patience is so important.

6. He was good value: He had good people skills, his product was good and he sold it with a smile and he was chatty. He was a nice guy and people liked him.

If they like you, most times, they will also like your paintings.

These are simple steps you can apply to social media or the local market, you need to be there, be consistent, believe in yourself and be patient, it takes time.

Sadly, a lot of Artists give up too quickly, lose hope, stop painting and go and watch television.

He was there in the middle of winter; at 0c, he turned up.

You have to admire that kind of diligence, persistence and self-belief; and other Artists wondered why he sold so well.

THOUGHTS: Being taken seriously.

I get lots of correspondence from Artists, especially about pricing paintings and I am always very happy to give my opinion.

Many Artists seem to believe that because you have picked up a brush and have started to paint, that success is guaranteed. Unfortunately, it is not.

Many starting out Artists are so concerned about how to price their work.

Do I calculate it by the hours it takes plus supplies used?

Do I do price it by the square inch?

I read about all the different formulas for pricing Artist's work.

If you are starting out, in my opinion, pricing your work is not as important as, getting the attention of the buying public and getting your paintings onto the walls of strangers and lastly, being taken seriously by collectors.

At this point, I get criticized for saying Artists should give their paintings away.

I am not saying that; I am saying price them so that they are good value.

When you are starting out, the name of the game is getting your paintings onto the walls of strangers.

As you sell and become popular, your prices will rise.

You see if you are selling, you will be noticed and you will begin to be taken seriously by collectors; but it takes time, sometimes years.

Work hard at your Art business, price to give good value to your buyers, and get your paintings onto the walls of strangers and you will begin to be taken seriously.

I wish I had learned about this when I was trying to sell my paintings

Your weakest skill sets the height of your success.

If you don't know your best skill, you had better find out your weakest skill, because it's the weakest skill that holds you back.

As Artists we so often coast along, depending on our strongest skills to get us through, never realising that it is the weakest skills that hurt us the most.

Now, I have learned what not to do, because as an Artist, I never did this but after years in Galleries I wish I had, it was a weak skill that determined the height of my success.

Question, "From your last exhibition or showing, what was the worst part?"

Now you cannot criticize anyone or anything, this is all about you.

I don't want to hear about the terrible Gallery, terrible economy or the terrible public who just didn't appreciate your work.

No, no blame on anything, just talking about you.

What could you have done better?

As a gallery person, I now sit on the other side of the table that I sat on for many, many years and it is very clear to me what I didn't do and what I really should have done, to have had a different outcome in my art career.

Here is a small example.

Many Artists have one person or group shows with us.

They spend a lot of money on materials, frames and they put in so much time doing the work, their most precious commodity. They pay for food and wine at the opening—this is a big investment in their career.

Then many at the opening are too shy to greet all the visitors who have gone out of their way to come and look at their paintings, or they sit in a corner and only talk to their friends.

After the opening night, we usually only see the Artist a couple of times before the end of the show and that is to see if there are any sales, then they go again.

At the end of the show, they find out that they have no sales and then they criticize and complain about how terrible the Gallery is and the Art Market is dead and people do not

appreciate their Art.

It is always a blame game and I was also guilty of that.

So what do I think a successful Artist should do now, knowing what I know now?

Let's start from the painful part. No sales and a lot of money and time invested into a failed show.

That's not good, that hurts; believe me, I have been there, ouch!

Now, if you knew that doing all that work would produce a failed exhibition, surely you would do it differently from the beginning.

So we are back at the opening night.

Now I am presuming that the Gallery or group has promoted you well and have competent staff and now people are coming into your opening.

First, Artist, please appreciate the fact that the people who are coming to your show have given up their precious time to come and look at your paintings.

Show your appreciation by going up and speaking to every guest, yes every guest, who compliments you by coming to your opening.

Ignore your friends unless they are buying.

Talk to people about your work and try to say more than "yes" and "no".

Appreciate that people are coming to see your work and you are the center of attention, no place for the brooding Artist.

If the Gallery introduces you to someone, that is an invitation to tell your story, because this opening night is your night and you cannot have two opening nights.

Now after the opening night, be at the Gallery every day you possibly can, even paint in the Gallery, people love to watch the Artist work.

It is paramount that you be there every weekend from opening to close.

Now why do this?

You have invested a serious amount of money into this show, so why not give it your best for the full length of the show. This is your money.

So often as Artists, we forget how much it all costs in time, money, effort and we trust others with our future and allow them to control the situation and then when nothing sells, we are terribly hurt and complain.

If you are going to put this much investment into your exhibition, then get in and put all the effort and work you can into being there so that when customers do come in, you can interact with them. You be the reason for your success.

This is your career.

This is your money.

This is your future.

So strengthen up on the skills you need for success.

Learn to sell.

Learn to market.

Learn the people skills you need to reach others.

Learn all the skills you need to sell your work, you will always be your best salesman, as you know your paintings intimately.

I can hear Artists saying that it is not their place to sell their work, that's for the Gallery and my painting sell themselves. Well sorry, not true.

You need to sell yourself and your work

As I always say, if the collector likes you, they usually like your work and buy it.

Yes, you are not a sales person you are an Artist, well you better become a sales person for your art, or you might not be an Artist very long.

Your weakest skill sets the height of your success.

THOUGHTS: Why paintings last centuries and The News lasts minutes

I thought I would share this with my Artist friends so you get a look at how we portray you when we are talking about your art and you the Artist. It is often a nice reminder of how others see you and think of you.

An Artist is a very important part of our social fabric not only as a recorder of the visible world around us, but also a recorder of human emotions played out on the great stage of life.

Your work shows where you are, or were, at a particular place and time; and whatever you were encountering in that journey is reflected in your work.

Artists are necessary as you are really, as a collective, I believe, the only truly honest interpretation of our world as you show it through your emotions and creative instinct and often, you are unaware of doing so.

That is why paintings last centuries and The News lasts minutes.

It's not going to change

I read so much on the Facebook that does make me wonder sometimes what Artists really think is happening. I do not mean to be disrespectful, but sometimes Artists forget that this is a business, it's called the Art Business and it really is a business.

In this business, paintings are sold for under \$50 and some for more than \$50million; it's all part of the same business.

An Artist contacted me and wanted to ask me if I could help him as he was totally frustrated with the Art Business and he did not know what to do next, we had talked before and I had given him some pointers.

He started to tell me that sales were slow and it was hard to get people to buy and that he blamed the bad economy.

He said he got lots of likes on Facebook but they seldom translated into sales.

He was showing in street Art Fairs and in group shows, but people were not buying, they talked to him and those who were interested asked for discounts which upset him and he would get a little angry and then tell them how long it took to paint the paintings and that they were his creative babies and that they were worth the money, of course they did not buy.

I listened as he talked.

He told me Artists deserved a salary and that people should support local Artists, I agreed.

Finally after telling me all the woes of the Art Business and how much materials cost and his costs going up, he finally finished with, 'but I know it's the economy and there is nothing I can do, just life.'

I thought about what he said, his story was not new and had been repeated many times to me by Artists.

I looked at him and said,

"You know the Art Business will not change, it will remain the same mostly, give or take a little change."

"The economy will not change, it will be more or less the same as it has always been."

"People's attitudes will not change; it is the way it's always been."

I asked him if he had started to learn to sell and watched all the videos I gave him.

No, he had been very busy.

I asked him if he had written out his goals for his art and his life.

He said I needed to understand that he did not have extra time to do that, he had been very busy.

I asked him if he had begun to work on some of his personal shortfalls, his swearing, his bad attitude, his negative outlook, his questionable work habits and his continued education.

He said no, he had not got around to doing it yet, he was very busy.

I said, "You know the Art World will not change, the economy will not change, people will not change, there really is nothing you can do to change them, it will not happen.

There is only one thing in this world that you can change and that is you, but you are too busy.

If you want the world to change, then you need to change."

You see I really believe that being a successful artist is no different from being a successful business person, just different skills in play. But the thing both Artist and Businessmen have in common is that they both deal with the same world, same economy, same people, and the same challenges. The successful person knows that they need to change to improve themselves, build self-confidence and to continue to learn new skills, adapt to the times we live in.

I asked these questions of this Artist and I wonder why he does not get it.

Do Artists need to sell their paintings? Yes.

Then why not learn to sell?

People upset you when they do not buy and ask for discounts? Yes.

Why not work on your people skills?

I ask you what do you want to achieve and what are your goals? Not sure.

Why don't you sit down and write them out?

Artists we can all be too busy but if you want success in the Art Business, then you are going to have to change and learn some new skills.

If you cannot sell, learn to sell.

There are lots of great free material on YouTube and the internet.

Learn to deal with people change and learn new people skills?

It's not hard, it just takes some effort.

This Artist told me he was too busy, so I asked if he watched television and he said, "Yes."

I said, "I thought you were too busy but you have time for television?"

He said he needed to relax and of course everyone watches television.

I said, "I don't. I have no television; I am too busy reading and trying to improve myself and my skills."

You see friends, even at my age, I believe I need to have goals, I write them out every day, I need to learn as much as I can, if I want to continue being a successful person. The world will not wait or change for me. I need to work on me to be better able to face all the challenges that the Art world can throw at me.

I do not want to wake up one day a tired, complaining old man. It is my desire to continue to improve right up to my last breath. Why? Because that is good for me, I want to change for me and you should also want to change for you, to be a better you.

You can blame the economy for lack of sales if you want, it will not change anything, still no sales.

You can blame the customers for not buying your paintings and how terrible they are, but it will not change anything, still no sales.

Or you can decide to change and be a better person, learn to sell, get good people skills, set goals for your life and read about how to run your Art Business better.

In the end, it is up to you.

There are two types of Artists, those who make excuses and complain.

Those who change and set goals and work hard to take them into a successful Art future.

The choice is yours.

THOUGHTS: Break the mirror before your next show.

Artists, I want to let you in on a very well-kept secret.

Your collectors and buyers do not see you the way you see yourself.

You see yourself with all your failings, problems, insecurities, fears and short comings.

Your collectors and buyers see you as this incredibly talented, creative person who is an Artist. They admire and envy and want to know you.

Imagine that?

They do not see one of your fears, insecurities or inhibitions; you see that. They see a talented Artist.

Start seeing you the Artist also, and not you standing in front of the mirror, it will make such a big difference the next time you are approached by a collector or buyer.

Break the mirror and let you, the talented Artist, talk to your collectors and buyers.

Strangers are your future collectors

Friends if you have been in the Art Business, trying to sell your Art work and have been selling for 5 years or less. Then the price you put on your paintings or how much you think your painting is really worth is not as important as getting these paintings onto peoples walls.

So many starting Artists have put the cart before the horse. Their prime objective should be to get people, strangers, to buy their paintings and hang them on their walls, not achieve high prices; if you are successful that will come.

Make your prices so people will want to buy and you will become popular.

I am not saying to give them away, but I am saying make them very competitive.

Unfortunately, family and friends and Artist friends, though trying to be kind and concerned for your well-being and career, can sometimes be a big hindrance to your future.

Yes, if you are good, your paintings are worth good money; but if no one is buying them because you are unknown, then you must listen to the market place, not well meaning family and friends.

Sometimes when dealing with new unknown Artist and I say, "No that is too expensive. It will not sell for that."

It is the family and friends who rise to the defense of the Artist. I try and explain that yes it is probably worth more, but you are unknown and we are trying to introduce you to collectors, who are always cautious of new Artists, they ask questions like, "how long will they be around?"

I deal with Artists who get upset with me because I say that they must be realistic about their prices, especially when they see works by a known Artist not as good as theirs, but sells for a high price. They question why there are prices so high. The answer is, they are a known Artists.

They always tell me that their family and friends love their work and they are selling to them at good prices and I usually reply something like this.

If you believe that your family and friends and friends of friends will buy your work at these prices for the rest of your Artistic career then do that, you do not need my help.

But if you know that they will not, then you can listen to me and I will help you, or you can go and complain about how unfair the Art Business is and how you are doing it for all the right reasons and do not want to deal with people like me who have no soul."

Yes, I have been accused of many things, I do not react just smile and say: "I wish you the best of luck."

If you do want to listen then this is what I tell new unknown Artists.

The object is to sell your paintings and get them onto walls of strangers.

To introduce you to strangers and convince these strangers to invest in your work at prices that they will consider reasonable for an unknown Artist.

I want these strangers to become your collectors and your friends and lifelong collectors of your work and the price of your work will rise as you become more popular and more collectable.

I am not interested in selling one of your paintings to someone; I want to sell all your paintings that you produce in your Artistic career to strangers. Now that does not happen often as Artists move on, but it does happen.

I know three Artists in this Gallery I am presently engaged in who have been with the Gallery since the 1970's, they continue to sell and have a loyal following.

It's not about the short term rewards; it is about building an Art career, putting paintings onto the walls of strangers.

Selling paintings to strangers,

Turning strangers into collectors,

Turning collectors into friends.

Not selling one painting but selling a lifetime of paintings.

THOUGHTS: Beware of erosion in you Art career and life.

Erosion is learning to do a little less than you should.

A little less work.

A little less effort.

A little less thought.

A little less trying in any area of your life will bring on failure, slowly.

To begin with, it will not seem to make a difference, but you only have to move the steering wheel of the car a fraction of an inch so that down the highway you will eventually run off the road and crash.

So in life, failure starts with just a little less effort.

When you don't feel like painting and you know you deserve some time off again,

Stop and think.

I will not get this day ever again in all my life!

Even if I paint a bad painting, it is better than painting no painting at all and we do need to get all the bad paintings painted as well as the good ones.

Stop, think, work.

Erosion starts... when you begin to do a little less.

Make this day count for your future, put in more effort than you need to.

Instead of asking what's in it for me, ask 'how will this help me to become better?'

The best study of life is how it is

Sometimes the simplest truths can hold the most potential, and like all truths you have to act on them.

“The best study of life is how it is, not how you want it to be.”

So then we must take advantage of how it is.

Therefore, we must consider the things that we have, the things of life.

Here are just a few.

We have time, do we take advantage of it?

Do we use the time we have to get the best out of each day, or do we squander away time on unnecessary distractions?

When we should be painting, are we?

Are we being our most productive with the time we have to create, be it one hour a day or eight hours a day?

Take advantage of the time you have, it's yours to use, it's how it is.

Talent.

Are we taking full advantage of this wonderful gift we have been given?

Or are we in fear of what others may say, therefore we are not as adventurous as we could be with our talent.

Do you just let your creativity have full reign?

Do you strive to be the best you can be, to develop your talent to the fullest?

Or are you content to be like everyone else?

Take advantage of your talent, it's yours to use, it's how it is.

Self-belief.

Take advantage of believing in yourself.

No one can stop you; you have time, you have a wonderful talent, believe in yourself.

Or does that negative voice keep saying, “No don't do that, people will laugh at you. Stop, you will never sell that, it is too different, no one paints like that. You always fail so why are you trying something new?” and many more.

Take advantage of self-belief. Tell yourself positive, uplifting things. Build your self-esteem, it's yours to use, it's how it is.

Take advantage of how it is. Don't wish it was different. Life is how it is, take advantage of what you have.

The doing is your part, working hard on what you have, not on what you wish you had.

We must take advantage of every day when we go into the studio.

Artists take a blank canvas and make something out of nothing, how wonderful.

To me that is just so fantastic, a miracle every day you paint a painting, take full advantage of this, it's yours to use, it's how it is.

THOUGHTS: Courage.

If we really are Artists, then our first desire is to create and do beautiful original art work. Second, we want to give of ourselves and our art work. I find most Artists are very generous. Third, selling can be so difficult, for all the reasons and excuses we can imagine, but we do need to sell. Fourth, we put everything that is us into our art work and we then put it out there in a public place, naked and exposed, fearing that we will be rejected or mocked. Very valid fears; but how courageous of every Artist to do that.

Rejection or acceptance, it takes real courage and self-belief to put your work on sale in front of strangers.

Artist, you are courageous, believe in yourself and sell.

What if I could promise you Artistic success, but it will take some time to achieve it?

How long would you be prepared to work hard at your Art, until the success comes?

One year?

Five years?

Thirty years?

Until the last year of your life?

Would you pay that price for success and recognition?

How determined are you?

How convinced of your own ability to succeed in the Arts are you?

I know a wonderful Artist who is 79 years old, paints every day of his life and has not achieved Artistic success. He has survived because of one collector who has bought all his work which has allowed him to continue to paint and go on.

Asked about his life he says he will never stop painting it is his passion. He has been a full time Artist since Art School in the 1960's. How long are you prepared to work at your craft before you achieve the Artistic success that you desire?

This is not a sprint race but a marathon, it will take determination, persistence and a belief in yourself that can see through the heartbreak and disappointment to the prize before you.

Great Artists never give up.

Never stop creating.

Have a self-belief that can scale any obstacle that is placed in front of them.

Work hard even when there are no sales.

Believe in their gift even when no one is interested.

To be great at Art or anything is a lonely walk because you have to go and be a trail blazer, not follow someone else's trail.

You have to be the one to make a trail.

Never give up on yourself or your Art.

It is a gift and you have to develop it, love it, cherish it and be jealous of it no matter how long it takes to achieve success.

The gift makes way for itself.

How long are you prepared to work hard for, to achieve Artistic success?

One year or as long it takes..... 50years?

THOUGHTS: Get people's attention.

You can be safe.

You can be a very good Artist.

You can be the nicest person and best person in Art.

But if you do not get people's attention, you will remain unknown.

Nothing is more obscure, than being unknown.

Getting attention will mean,

* getting talked about.

* getting critics.

* getting haters.

* getting known.

* getting an audience.

* getting admired.

* getting sales.

* getting a successful long term career.

Get people's attention, so people know you.

Discouragement, the reason they don't paint any more

Over the years I have been in this business, I have seen many Artists come and go. All start out with wonderful enthusiasm and big dreams to hit the heights of the Art World and sadly a few years later, they don't paint any more. I am sure you all know someone like this, disappointment and discouragement slowly wears them down until they give up and stop painting. I had a friend who did wonderful paintings of military machines, beautiful paintings and nice landscapes. He sold a few to family and friends, had a one man show, but today years later, he does not paint and all the paintings are stored in a shed.

A woman I knew painted wonderful happy paintings that radiated joy, she sold a few had some shows, paid for publicity and now, years later, she does not paint anymore and her paintings are stored away.

What happened?

It's what I call "The struggle."

This battle is not fought at the end of the brush but in the mind of the Artist and if you cannot win this battle, then you will not be painting in the years to come. I better clarify that you will not be painting and trying to sell your work; but you may still be painting for your own joy, which as I always say is the best way to be.

I understand if you want to sell your work, because that will give you validation for pushing your goals.

Defeating discouragement.

Do not believe you will make it in the Art Business because family and friends say you are a wonderful talented painter.

If you do not believe it within yourself, take the prices off your paintings.

Self-belief is the key to lasting a long time in this business, because rejection is a big part of the Art Business.

You need a loving caring support group around you, so when times are dark, you have caring and encouraging people beside you. This is very important; we all need to be loved.

Do not be romantic about the term Artist or the Art Business. Let your buyers and family and friends be romantic about who you are. You are in business and you need to treat it as such.

Always be working on your self-talk.

Whenever you get negative or critical, stop yourself, change your self-talk.

It is hard work, but you can do it.

Listen to what you say about yourself and stop all negative self-talk, this is so important.

If you defeat yourself, no one can change that, you must change if you want to change your world.

Be gentle on yourself and reward yourself for small victories over negative self-talk.

Most discouragement starts with your own self talk, not others; they just confirm what you are already saying to yourself, so fix it.

Easy to say yes, but it can be done.

For me, lack of self-belief and negative self-talk are two big reasons why people fail in this Business, they defeat themselves.

Believe in yourself and tell yourself that, and stop the negative self-talk.

It is an ongoing battle and seems to raise its head again just when you think you have defeated it, work on this, it is so important, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

This is not for everyone but it works for me, faith, when times get hard—and it will. It's good when all seems lost to have a higher being to talk to, prayer works.

So build on your self-belief.

Get rid of negative self-talk.

Cling onto those who love you and go out and change the Art World forever.

Remember Picasso and all the greats were once unknown and faced all the road blocks you do, but they persevered and did not let discouragement deter them.

Go forward my friends and change the Art world and win the struggle.

THOUGHTS: “Sometimes the best gifts are badly wrapped”

I read this statement a few days ago and it really grabbed me. I pondered its meaning as I thought about my life and the life of many of the Artists that I know. I thought about all the difficulties that Artists face, the self-doubt ever nagging at their heels, and then all the noise out there, everyone trying to get heard and have an opinion on what the Artist should do or shouldn't do.

We all complain about the problems we face in this Artists Life, and that is life.

The difficult people we have to deal with, people who will not listen or see what they really should do, and of course, the “what about me” people that seem to be always there.

I realize that it is the Artist Life, the opportunity that Artists have been given that is so great a “Gift” and the crap around the gift is the wrapping.

Do not let the wrapping stop you from seeing the wonderful gift that you have been given, your individual, peculiar, random, outrageous, serious, creative, caring and beautiful Artistic self.

Artists are incredibly fortunate above all people because they “Create”. Yes, they make something out of nothing. Think about that?

Yes you suffer rejection, wrapping.

Yes some people do not like your work, wrapping.

Yes sometimes you do not get the prices you want, wrapping.

Yes sometimes you feel alone and doubt yourself, wrapping.

You have been given the greatest gift of all, the opportunity to be a creative Artist, to take a white canvas and create some beautiful on it.

To take a piece of clay and make something beautiful out of it.

A wonderful friend of mine takes pieces of unwanted material and turns them into beautiful quilts, how fantastic is that?

Artists, please stop looking at the wrapping and see the great gift that you have been given.

What a wonderful gift you have.

Love your painting, love painting and love yourself.

Artists, please turn off the noise

Turn off the noise. People talking at you about what you should do or not do with your paintings; they are your paintings, paint how you want to, you do not need anyone's permission. Please paint.

Turn off the television; the destroyer of original thought, creativity and painting time.

Turn off the radio; endless chatter full of unwanted views and advice.

Turn off the music; quiet is needed

Turn off the internet; It will still be there later.

Please turn off the noise. All of it is noise and clutter.

And get back to the place where Artists need to be; within your own creative self. Quiet.

For many people, quiet, is a difficult place to be, they are not used to it and many are scared of quiet. At night, I so enjoy my place where I can turn everything off and have silence, to think, reflect and ponder.

Asia has taught me that there is a personal solitude that is a very calming and healing place, a place to go to be alone, I enjoy my quiet solitude.

Quiet is that place where you will find the guidance you need to help you get past the negative things pulling you down and hindering your creative flow.

We live in a world where the noise is constantly assaulting us.

I watch people walking around the street, earphones in their ears and noise being pumped into their minds.

Television is always on, from the moment they wake up, until they go to sleep, all that fear and negativity going into their minds. I do not have a television, but when I see it at my friends place and watch the news and see all the death and destruction, I leave feeling quite down and depressed.

Most people today do not have an original thought and all their information which they believe is correct, comes directly from a very biased, fear generating media and we the Artists are also influenced by all of this.

Please Artists, turn off the noise and sit down quietly and think.

Not about your problems, not about the very scary world out there; but just think about painting. Not any painting in particular but just let the paintings ideas and ideas for paintings flow through your mind.

Get a piece of paper and scribble and create as the ideas flow.

Let the creative gift that you have operate, it is in you, let it flow, you are an Artist.

Turn off the noise and listen to that quiet creative voice within you and let that creativity flow out of you into your paintings.

I am not asking anyone to meditate or pray, but just to 'quiet' down your world. I used to do this whenever I was having difficulty with paintings. I'd just stare at them in the silence and I was always amazed that answer would come and the problem would be sorted out.

We are often our greatest critics, but also we have the answers within us to all our artistic challenges.

If you can discipline yourself to sit in the quiet and let your creative energy flow, even for only 15 minutes a day, you will change your world.

The world is a nice place, turn off the noise and paint your life.

THOUGHTS: Scary, hard choices

If you are looking at a number of choices that you have to make for your Art career, especially if it's something that will make you remarkable and remembered, compared to something that is easy to do, choose the hard and scary way.

Why?

If you take the easy road, you will not grow, you will not stretch yourself and you will not achieve greatness.

The easy road is well-travelled; nearly everyone is on it and leads to the average, numbness and conformity.

The hard and scary road, not well travelled leads to growth, learning and greatness.

Being scared is normal, but seeing it as a challenge is not.

What you are scared of may just be the opportunity you have been waiting for.

Do not let the shadows and that negative voice in your head rob you.

Embrace scary, embrace change, embrace opportunity.

The very thing that you are scared of is the very opportunity you have to make a difference and bring change, growth and success into your life.

Keep Moving Forward

I realize that for many Artists, it seems quite strange some of the subjects that I talk about and also the subjects that I do not talk about.

I am of the opinion that it is not my place to tell Artists what to paint or how to paint or whether a painting is good or bad, I will let the market make that decision.

Art is so personal and each Artist has their own thoughts on what is best for them and what they should or shouldn't paint and what materials they should use.

My concern is for the other side of the Artist life, the Art Business and how so many are not prepared for what they will experience in it. So many good people have been hurt in this sometimes brutal business. I suppose I am really concerned for Artists as I personally know what it is like to fail in this business and how hard it is to rebuild your Art career and be successful.

I get told by many that Art is so personal and that Artists paint from their hearts and souls and I do understand and appreciate that, but I also know personally what the reality of no sales is like and still having to support your family.

The Artist life at best is difficult and I just want to personally give a hand to those Artists who wish to learn from someone who learned what not to do.

When you fail, you have two choices, blame everybody and everything, I did that; or learn from what has happened, I had to learn to do this.

What can you learn from failing?

Lots, you learn what not to do next time, you learn that there is a better way, and you learn you must change, if you want your world to change.

Failure in the Art World does not come because you have no talent or you cannot paint. There are lots of untalented, bad painters who are successful Artists, because they work very hard and learned to understand the market and meet what the market wants.

I know lots of Artists would react to this and say that they are selling out and I make no judgments here, these people are successful because they understand the market and work hard.

Now, what they have learned, all Artists can learn; and if the talented Artists who do great paintings and work hard, also learn about the marketplace they are in, then they too will be successful.

Artists need to learn about the market place, which is learning about selling and marketing, personal development and watching the trends in the market.

Also you should continue to work on your Artistic skills as well, honing your craft.

It does seem a lot of work, because to be successful requires a lot of work.

If success was easy, everyone would be successful; but it is not, it takes commitment.

I like that biblical verse, “to go the extra mile,” and that is what it takes.

You are early to the studio and late to leave and while you are there you paint, whether you are inspired or not, just work.

When others are watching television you are watching a tutorial on YouTube.

When others go to the mall, you go to a workshop.

While you are waiting for somebody or something, you are reading a book.

Using your precious, finite time to build your successful Artistic life.

Now I know everyone, will not do what I suggest, but if you want your Art business to change, then you are going to have to change.

I see so many seriously talented Artists, who really believe, because they are talented, then everything will work out for them and all they have to do is paint and wait for fame and fortune to come, just like winning the lottery. Unfortunately, winning the lottery can be a curse, because you never learned how to be a success. You need to learn those lessons or success will be your downfall.

I heard a wise man say once, “If you win a million dollars, pray you become a millionaire quick, or you will lose the money.”

I talk a lot about our need to change, personal development, because if we want to change our world, then we need to change. Change happens in small steps. A little change now can have a big effect on our life and career in the years to come.

Change takes discipline, discipline is not easy to have as it can take effort and determination, but the rewards of small disciplines far outweigh the cost; it's all a matter of doing.

To learn new things takes discipline, because at the end of the day, it is easier to turn on the television than open a book or watch a sales and marketing tutorial or personal development video on YouTube.

Everyone is capable of learning something new; it is a matter of doing it.

To move forward in the Art Business takes knowledge and skill.

Keep learning...keep moving forward.

Stop learning...stop moving.

If Artists only realized that their success depends on themselves, you cannot change the Art Market, you cannot change the economy, you cannot change the Gallery, you cannot change the attitude of buyers, but you can change yourself.

When you change, everything else changes with you and change takes discipline.

Start with very small disciplines, like getting up half an hour earlier and reading a book on sales or personal development and write out your goals every day.

That is all it takes to start the change, it's just a matter of doing it.

The rewards of small disciplines far outweigh the cost of losing a half an hours sleep, and the change in you, will begin to change your world.

Success is not just given away, it is attracted by working hard on your Artistic life and personal development.

THOUGHTS: It is far better to give than to receive.

If you wish to receive, then you need to learn to give.

I have learned that in order to receive, I must give first.

Now giving is not just about giving money; it's about giving yourself and being a blessing to others. Too many people today just expect to be given things first as if for some reason, they are special and entitled, but the truth is; you want to be a receiver, then you must first be a giver.

It is always better to give than to receive.

To start the receiving process, you must first give.

We all want friends, then give friendship.

We all want to be loved, then give love.

We all want success at our profession, then give help to those below us.

If you want to be a successful Artist, give help to young, up and coming Artists.

Giving to others and being a blessing to them, qualifies us to be receivers.

You see giving is the key to receiving in all areas of life.

You can be rich and have no friends. No one would truly love you because you expect others to always give to you.

Expecting others to give first will make for an empty, unfulfilled, self-centered life.

Give and you shall receive.

Giving allows us to receive a full and prosperous life.

Some people are positive and some people are negative

I have learnt that it is best not to defend your position.

I know many artists who believe what I say is wrong and come to me to argue. They tell me how wrong I am and want me to defend my position.

It is like you artist when you are at a show and someone says to you, "My 5 year old granddaughter could do that." there is no way, or even any reason, to defend against such stupidity.

Some unthinking person says, "You are trying to sell that? It's a terrible painting." Again, you cannot argue with such ignorance, best to smile and say nothing.

So how do I deal with this?

Ignore it, or if you cannot do that, then think of it this way,

As I said, I have my critics and haters and if I allowed them, it could hurt me so much that I would never write again; but for every critic I have, there are so many really wonderful people who say nice things and thank me for my help.

I have learned to listen to the nice people and ignore the critics, because I've realized this and I hope it helps.

Some people are critics and say mean things.

Why? Because they are the critics and mean-sayers. It's what they do, that is why we call them critical and mean people because that's who they are, you will not change them by arguing.

Some people say stupid and hurtful things.

Why? Because they are the stupid and hurtful-sayers, that's what they do and that's why we call them stupid and hurtful, it's who they are; you will not change them by arguing.

But the majority of people are nice and we need to focus on the nice people who are the majority and not on the negative people who are always going to be negative because that's who they are.

In a certain book, it says, "A soft answer turns away anger."

The next time you come across one of these critics, thank them for comparing your work to their grandchild, for I am sure they always tell the child how talented they are.

Thank the person who tells you your work is terrible. Just say you appreciate their input and their point of view.

Dismiss them with a compliment and forget what they said and hear what the nice and positive people say.

Don't let one negative comment from some uncaring person ruin your day, hear the positive and rejoice with the positive.

Some people are positive and some people are negative, there is no other way to explain it, it's who they are.

THOUGHTS: Self talk

Self-talk will make you or break you.

It is so very easy to let dark thoughts swamp you.

The way you think about yourself is critical to your success, if you think you will fail or think you will succeed, you will be right. It is really true, as a person thinks in there heart, so they become.

What you think about most of the time, most of the time you become.

The world is a nice place, think nice thoughts about yourself and paint your life.

My thoughts for Artists

The Artist life can be filled with rejection and disappointments, but these are not just reserved for Artists. Every human, from all walks of life, must experience these negative things.

The question we face as Artists is. "What are we going to do about it that will make a real difference in our lives, when we are challenged by these negative emotions?"

It rains on the happy and the sad at the same time.

The sun shines on the rich and the poor at the same time.

Life is life, and it happens to us all; how we handle it is the important question.

As difficult as it may be sometimes, we must respond to setbacks.

We must forgive people who hurt us and say unkind things to us.

We must, no matter how heavy the rain or how dark the night is, choose to smile and be positive.

Always look past the harsh word or insensitive comment and ask what is going on inside that person.

What could I do to help that person?

I believe we as Artists are on this earth to bring joy and happiness into people's lives.

We create beautiful things to fill other people's lives with color, creativity and joy to inspire them to see beyond themselves and the issues of their lives.

So artists, in the darkest of nights and the heaviest of rains, and as hard as it maybe to do, Choose to smile.

Choose positive caring words.

Choose to be positive.

Silence that critic inside your head and focus on the wonderful gift that you have been given.

Yes, it is easy for me to say these things and sometimes hard to put them into practice and yes,

I do not know what you are going through in your life, but I do know what life is like because it happens to us all.

As I told a dear friend of mine as she watched another friend slowly pass away.

Rejoice in all the gifts that you have.

Rejoice in all the people who love and care for you.

Take time to smell the flowers and look at the beautiful sunsets.

And most of all be gentle on yourself.

Life goes by so quick.

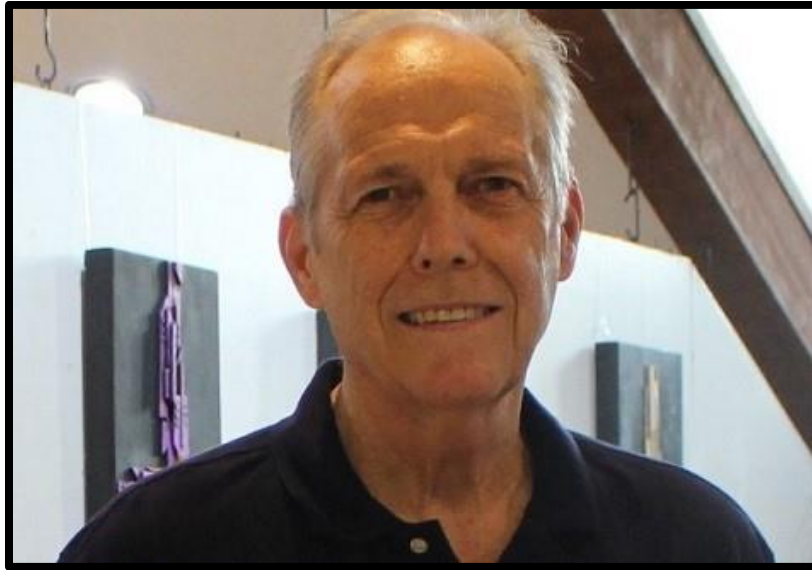
So Artist, get up and paint and be creative and be a blessing to everyone around you as you bring joy and creativity into their lives through your wonderful gift.

Give and the darkness slowly goes away and the rain gently stops.

In Closing:

I thank you so much for reading my book, it was a joy to write and I do hope that it has challenged you, encouraged you, blessed you, and helped you better understand this abstract life we live.

God bless. Mark.



Mark Shellshear has continued to be an inspiration to thousands of artists worldwide, offering his straight forward approach to the business of Art and all that is involved. His blogs and videos have given artists a true insight into how galleries and artists approach each other, offering real life advice and tips on being the best you can be.

Mark continues to write blogs and do videos daily on his Facebook page, to find out more click the link below:

[FACEBOOK](#)

If you would like to speak to Mark regarding your Art business or for speaking engagements, please email him on the link below:

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