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SUCCESS AS AN ARTIST . .. OR . . .*MAKING IT*

It’s unlikely that you, the artist, will be ‘discovered’ and jet to fame. It just doesn’t happen that way.

Much of your time will need to be focused on networking and getting out into the community. Go to every art show and cultural event (even plays and poetry readings). Aside from constantly MAKING your art, you will need to promote yourself, and make your work known. Just SHOW UP, in person.

This will include joining professional organizations, regularly posting on various social media, donating your work to fundraisers, showing your work at every opportunity (even if it seems beneath you), creating a resume, maintaining a website, getting business cards made with an image of your art ON them . . . and passing them out!. Find the websites that offer announcements about upcoming themed shows, and enter. Often it’s $35 a pop, but this IS an excellent way to add to your list of ‘credits’; resume, and, of course, get your work in the public’s eye.

If you’re just starting out and have a body of work, visit EVERY gallery or venue to see where your art fits with their aesthetic. Once you’ve found a spot you like, when you’ve made an appointment to show images of your work, tell the gallery how much you admire what THEY SHOW; HOW BEAUTIFUL THEIR SPACE IS. Tell them why you think your art FITS into THEIR scheme of things. If you’re making glass art but the gallery only shows paintings, no wonder they say no. Don’t set yourself up for rejection unnecessarily.

Do not walk into a gallery with images in hand and expect them to take an interest. Either call them (not text, not email) to ask what approach they’d like. You can walk in with ONE postcarded image to leave with them as you ask about their approach to seeing new work. Every venue will be different in how they handle accepting new artists into their representation.

Pricing is hard to figure out. This is another reason to visit places that are selling art. It’s rare that a gallery will help the artist with pricing – they don’t want to be responsible if your work doesn’t sell. You might take the approach: ‘which would I rather have, this artwork or $300?’ Maybe you’ll keep track of time and materials, maybe you know the competition is stiff so your pricing might be lowered. Or, you’ve had some encouraging sales so your prices can go up. No advice here.

In today’s world it’s challenging to get a printed review but always work that if you can. It adds authority to your art when patrons see your name in print, plus you can quote from it. Keep EVERY scrap that has your name/art on it. It helped my career that for EVERY one person show I printed hard-copy postcards of a sculpture with me IN the image and MAILED those to a list I maintained. At a minimum you’ll create an email invite and maintain an art email list. These emails will go out at a MINIMUM of ten days out, and then send another round THREE days before a show opening reception.

If your venue doesn’t send out press releases no reason you can’t create your own. You’d get permission from the gallery and let them proof it before sending. This can be done in email and you’d be smart to gather email addresses of art publications, or, general news publications.

Finally, if you can, create a bread and butter product in order to pay the bills as you develop your ‘real’ art. Look up ART-O-MAT to see one approach in making miniatures to sell outright.

Good luck and don’t forget to MAIL thank you notes to EVERY person or entity who helps you.