



CANADIAN ARTISTS REPRESENTATION /
LE FRONT DES ARTISTES CANADIENS

ADVISORY NOTE

Marketing Strategies for Visual Artists

By Robert Christie for CARFAC SASK © 1998

Preface

I would like to preface this advisory note by stating that the information contained herein is a personal viewpoint, based on my experiences as both an artist and an art dealer over the last twenty-five years. *This information is neither specific to a medium or to a tradition of art making, nor is it intended as being all-inclusive. It is solely intended as a basic overview of what the average art maker might encounter when he/she pursues the business side of art.*

The Art Market In General

I am taking the position that the Art Market, for all its idiosyncrasies, generally retains much proximity to other markets that we deal with on a daily basis. The artist is essentially a small business person who, like any other business person, is trying to make a product or offer a service that he/she can exchange for money. The following example may seem very simple to some, but I am continually amazed at the number of people in the art business who either try to reinvent the wheel or who assume that standard business practices do not apply to their business:

The Standard Business System

A producer/manufacturer
Develops a location/warehouse
Mixes raw resources
Creates a product
Seeks a market place
Attracts the customer
Makes the transaction

The Standard Business

A widget maker
Develops a warehouse/shop
Assemblages raw widget stuff
Makes widgets
Finds a retail outlet
Attracts the customer
Transaction/sale

The Average Art Business

The artist
Develops a studio
Mixes paint, applies to canvas
Makes paintings, etc.
Looks for a dealer/agent/etc.
Attracts the collector/customer
Transaction/sale

The ultimate goal in business is the **transaction**. How we achieve this goal can take many routes (as many as there are participants in the process), but as small business people we all share the same aspirations with only a few variations. As small business people/artists we all want the following to some degree:

- **We want to maximize the amount/value of the transaction.**
Some of the factors that enhance the value are quality, uniqueness, and reputation of the artist.
- **We want to increase the frequency of the transactions.**
Obviously, we want more customers. However, this requires more product and quite likely more market places. Advertising helps, which can often take the form of exhibitions (which in turn have announcements, newspaper ads, reviews, etc.)
- **We want to minimize our overhead costs.**
Studio costs, advertising and promotion costs, transportation, travel, materials, are all overhead costs. Finding ways to reduce them sometimes requires creativity. Grants can help as can a shared studio for instance.
- **We want to sustain the number of transactions over a long time.**
Do not assume that once you start selling that you are going to automatically continue to do so. Customer interest can change or wane. As with any other business, the artist must continue to pursue quality, and continue to advertise.
- **Ideally we want to be personally satisfied with what we do regardless of the financial returns, the costs involved, and the time commitment.**
I would like to think that this last point would separate the artist from the average small business person, however the artist is really no different. Like many others, the artist simply wants to do what he/she wants to do -- and have the bonus of being paid for it.

It has been my personal experience that the old cliché about artists being poor business people generally rings true. I would further suggest that the term “poor” actually has a double meaning. On the one hand, the business of art would not normally fit into anyone’s list of the top ten moneymaking industries. On the other hand consider the fact that as a business group we do not tend to conduct our business in a very efficient and organized manner. Two major strokes against us right from the outset.

Consider the following standard artist practices that tend to have negative results:

- **We tend not to pursue our art with the ultimate goal (the transaction) in mind.**
At least in the early years, we tend to be idealistic about what we do. We work for ourselves, not for others.
- **We have limited or no business training/experience.**
I am willing to bet that not one artist reading this note ever got a course in “the business of art” at school or university. Very few artists come from a business background and go into art (no one rationally aspires to move down the financial ladder).
- **We tend to have terrible work habits.**
Very few artists I know work a 40-hour week. In addition, many have other jobs that tend to have priority; consequently, the time devoted to the art business is often reduced even further for the sake of social and many other reasons.
- **We tend to be loners in the business.**
Because we usually work alone, there is seldom anyone watching the time clock. We can arrive late, go for coffee whenever we want, leave early or go visit friends. Habits and routine become engrained.
- **We usually start off with nil to limited resources.**
Most new businesses prepare with a three to five year plan that considers little or no profit in that time period. Most artists start off with no plan whatsoever other than to get started on their work. As a result, most artists are either supported by someone else or they work part-time at their art while they maintain a day job to pay the bills.
- **There are limited traditions in the art business.**
There are few standard practices, procedures or methods in the art business. The business of art is attractive to the individual who normally does not like rules and procedures. Consequently, we have none and the result is that everyone learns the hard way. Remember, we are artists not bookkeepers.
- **We are in a business that has a fickle and unpredictable clientele due, in part, to the luxury nature of the product.**
There are very few connoisseurs in the market place. Most clients purchase art for decorative reasons, however, some buy for prestige or potential investment. Most follow trends and as we’ve seen many times, fads and fashions come and go.
- **We can do very little to control the various market influences.**
The *media* is always looking for new material and new issues to explore and captivate its audience. If you try to keep up, you are always one step behind. If you don’t try to keep up, you are ignored. You can play the game for a while but you can

seldom win at it. The *dealers*, like everyone else, are just trying to make a buck. If your work isn't hot today then you can be sure that someone else's work is and you can further bet that the average dealer will be promoting the hot one. The *public galleries*, like the media, are always looking for new material. They have to be fair to many interests and they have to at least appear to be current. The bottom line is that if you've shown at a public gallery recently, your next turn is not going to come around for some time. The plus side for some is that if you haven't shown at the public gallery lately, then maybe your turn is just around the corner. And then there is the *collector*. Ultimately, the collectors are the most important factor in the art market. Without them we don't eat as well. The trick is to keep finding new collectors. The old ones eventually fill up their walls.

So, if you are discouraged by all of the above downsides to the art business, then my advice to you is to get out of it now. You are simply not artist material; that is, you are not bull-headed, stubborn, egotistical or idealistic enough to be in this business. If, on the other hand, you find some of the above to be of interest to you, then you obviously have some of the aforementioned character traits or you simply have nothing else to do right now. In either case, read on.

MY PERSONAL OPINION ON WHAT IT TAKES TO SURVIVE (IF NOT SUCCEED) IN THE ART MARKET:

- Accept yourself as an artist. Consider that what you do is not only worthwhile but is also potentially worthy of being marketed. Do not think of your interest in art as being a hobby. It is, or could be, a business if you treat it as one.
- Be *idealistic* in your goals but *realistic* in your methods of attaining them. As with any other business or endeavour, those who work the hardest are usually the ones who move ahead. There are not too many successful people who dreamt their way up the ladder.
- Work real hard. Play the lotto occasionally.
- Make contacts. Don't wait for potential clients or gallery people to beat the weeds down to get to your door. Go out and meet them. Make yourself visible.
- Always strive to make your work better. Don't rest on your past accomplishments. Develop an attitude or a habit of constantly pushing yourself to discover new possibilities for your work.
- Persevere.

Consider the following requirements in a standard business system as they apply to the artist:

A. The Product

I don't think that I can stress this first requirement enough. Even the conceptual artist must have a product (ideas/concepts) that is entertaining enough for others to contemplate. Most of us still produce some sort of tangible object, i.e.: paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, earth works, performances, videos, etc. Regardless of what it is, the product must compete in the market place.

The **quality** of the product is what is most important. Skill and uniqueness of expression are tied to quality. It's interesting to note that the term quality became somewhat fashionable a few years ago. **Consistency** is also critical to the product. It's what galleries, dealers, the media, and collectors look for. It's what they identify you with and it makes their jobs so much easier. It makes your job easier as well.

It's hard to develop real insights in your work if you don't follow some sort of pattern. Developing a pattern does not mean that you cannot explore and experiment within the pattern. **Uniqueness of image** is a critical component of both quality and consistency. This is truly what distinguishes you from the rest of the pack even if you are working from within an established tradition. As an example, I can think of several very highly sought-after landscape artists from Western Canada, each with his/her own unique approach to the subject, the paint handling, and the experience that is evoked. The subject is the starting point only; what the viewer gets from it is most important.

Pricing of your work is always an entertaining subject. My suggestion is to be realistic and make comparisons with other, more established artists. Remember that you have competitors and remember that your work is part of a renewable resource. Do not penalize the early collectors. Start out low, it's always easier to raise your prices than lower them. Also, your clients will always be pleased to see a slight increase "after" they've purchased your work. Also, keep in mind that you have to get your work out into the market. Works that have sold will often lead to additional sales. And finally, it has been my experience that ultimately, the artist becomes his/her own biggest collector, so unless you have lots of storage space, try to move the work out, right from the beginning. **Diversity in size and medium** should also be considered. On average, smaller works sell for less money. Collectors come in different financial brackets so don't limit yourself to a specific price category.

B. The Production Process

Every individual is unique. Our backgrounds are diverse, our personalities are distinct, our interests vary and our energy levels as well as our financial situations are wide-ranging. Consequently, it makes sense that what we choose to do in art (the product)

will likely vary tremendously. Nevertheless, we do share some common ground in the production process:

- Normally we require some sort of equipment and raw materials. Often we go through an early period of exploration, which means that some of the equipment becomes redundant as time goes on.
- Normally we require a designated workspace. We have to store the tools, undertake the work, store the incomplete as well as the completed works and eventually we may even want a designated show area. All of this can be as basic as the kitchen table, however, the more committed you are to your work area, the more committed you will be to your work.
- Normally we have to actually do the work. How much you work is dependent upon your circumstance and your degree of commitment. You can dream all you like about showing at the MOMA in New York but without putting in the work you haven't got a hope. Also, keep in mind that you do have competitors in this business. And by the way, some of them are working while you're reading this article.
- Normally it takes time to develop the product. Do you really think that you have a marketable product after four to six years at a university? Usually we have to go through a lot of wrong turns and blind alleys before we find out what path we really want to explore. Take the time, work out the ideas and consider that quantity often leads to quality. And remember that there are many more artists out there who have been through this process long before you got into the business.

C. The Market Place

Whatever form this "place" might take, ultimately, the artist has to position his/her products to their best advantage. Usually this is the place where the producer (the artist) meets the retailer (the dealer perhaps) or where he/she has to make a decision about becoming both the producer as well as the retailer. There are various traditional market places for the artist and to some degree they tend to form around the following:

- **The home/studio.** There are obvious financial advantages to the use of the studio as a place to sell your work; however, there are several pitfalls, not the least of which is that the salesperson is you! There may be some advantages if you happen to be involved with the Internet system but traditionally the artist (who often fits the cliché of being a poor business person) is better off sticking to what he/she does best and leaving the sales to someone else.
- **The public gallery.** Normally the public gallery cannot accommodate direct sales for the artist but they are really good advertising and promotion vehicles when they mount an exhibition of an artist's work. They will buy, they just can't sell.

- **Auctions.** Traditionally, the auction houses are not the best place to sell contemporary art. They used to be the place where dealers picked up stock for their galleries but more recently they have become attractive to the general public as well. On average, the auction buyers do not want to pay retail. They go for deals and consequently most contemporary art sells far below what the artist would like to see. Generally speaking, the auction houses will not accept works by non-established artists.
- **The agent.** Although not very common, the agent usually acts in a similar manner as a dealer -- only without an established location to present the work. An agent will normally take a fee for services such as promoting the artist's work to both public and commercial art galleries. Occasionally, the agent will actually arrange for an exhibition of the artist's work at a temporary location such as a hotel, hall or even the studio.
- **The commercial art gallery.** This is probably the most common market place for traditional object makers. I will present more specific information on this area under *Artist-Dealer Relationships* (page 9).

D. The Consumer/Collector

This is really the cornerstone in the business of art. Without the consumer, we don't have money to buy the food, pay the rent or buy the supplies to keep us producing. An understanding of what and who the consumer is will go a long way in sustaining one's market.

The art consumer will generally fall into one of the following categories:

1. The general public

The public buys art for many reasons, some of which are simply unexplainable. However, the most common reasons are: home decoration; gifts for events such as weddings, anniversaries, and retirement; peer pressure or peer acceptance (keeping up with the Jones); addiction (you might be surprised at how many people will continue to buy art long after their walls are full); connoisseurship (occasionally there is the tasteful, thoughtful and deliberate collector who takes his/her time to research and develop a very fine collection).

2. The corporate collector

Not as prevalent in 1998 as they were 10 to 20 years ago. The bloom appears to be off the corporate collection. Unfortunately, too many bought simply to fill up the corporate walls. Now that they are filled, there is no room for the present generation to leave its mark. Most corporations buy for many of the same reasons as the private collector such as: humanizing the work space (decoration); corporate image or corporate competition

(peer pressure); connoisseurship (there are some very fine corporate collections that have been well selected and thoughtfully developed over a period of time); corporate sponsorship; tax advantages.

3. Government collectors

Most governments have collections of some sort. One of the most prominent in recent years was the Canada Council Art Bank (which is no longer active). More visible on the local level would be the Saskatchewan Arts Board and, to a lesser extent, the Department of Foreign Affairs. Government departments are by nature accountable and consequently, their collecting habits demonstrate a need for fairness and equity (to some degree) so they differ from the private or corporate buyer who can be as personal as he/she likes in his/her interests. The government collection is usually much broader in both time period and types of art collected.

4. The public gallery

Most public galleries collect and most have an acquisitions budget for that specific purpose. Since the early 1990s however, with the opening up of the Donations to the Crown program which enabled artists to gift their own work to a receiver on behalf of the crown (a public art gallery), the collecting habits of most galleries have changed slightly due to the increased potential of soliciting and receiving works via the donation route. Nevertheless, the public galleries still purchase. The public gallery interest will reflect aspects of all consumer interests, however, because of their more knowledgeable staff, they are in a much better position to make informed decisions about acquisitions. Generally, a public gallery will have a collection mandate that will determine the nature of the works of art to be acquired. Occasionally a board of directors might have to ratify the potential list of acquisitions.

E. The Transaction

This is of course, the ultimate goal of the business of art. Even after several years in the business, I'm still amazed when it actually happens. But typically, the best is often saved for the last. After having gone through the various stages of getting set up, working diligently, establishing contacts and then presenting works for sale, you would think that the final action would be relatively easy. It isn't. Remember the old saying about artists being poor business people? This is where it really shows.

If you conduct the transaction, consider the following:

- Be reasonable in your pricing. This is a renewable resource, and you are hopefully going to produce more works of art. Remember that it's always easier to raise your prices than it is to lower them. Also, keep in mind that you have competition. Check out what others are selling their work for. Give the early buyers a break. Penalize the latecomers with the higher prices.

- Price your work. As simple as that may sound, I'm always surprised by the number of people who wait for the last minute to come up with a price. Don't wait to check out the potential client. It doesn't matter whether or not he/she looks wealthy. The price should be the price and it should be predetermined. **DO NOT BE SUBJECTIVE** about your prices.

There are many systems of pricing, however the most common is based on size. The bigger the work, the higher the price (this assumes that the works are in the same medium). Some people use a square inch formula. An example would be as follows: a 16" x 20" work would have 320 sq. inches; a 22" x 30" work would have 660 sq. inches; multiply both by the same factor (regularly: \$1/sq. inch.) To arrive at the prices \$320 and \$660 respectively. The problem with this system is that as you get larger, you sometimes have to reduce your factor or prices can get out of hand.

Another example would be the **united inch formula**. This system is as follows: a 16" x 20" work would have 36 united inches (by adding the height to the width). Likewise, a 22" x 30" work would have 52 united inches. Assuming a factor of \$10 per U.I. then the works would be priced out at \$360 and \$520 respectively. There are advantages and disadvantages to both systems. The big advantage is that you keep your prices consistent and objective.

- Be firm. Unfortunately, the business of art has become rampant with discounting. Everybody likes to think that they are getting a great deal but if you are always going to give a deal, then price your work accordingly. It all works out in the end, unless you regularly give deals when your prices are already at the bottom end. My personal suggestion is to set reasonable prices and then stick to them. If the client really wants your work, he/she will recognize the reasonable price and accept it. If you want to give deals, save those for the truly favoured client who might buy regularly and in quantity. Until that occurs, stick to your original price.
- Keep records and give receipts. Identify your work clearly and fully (on the back of the work preferably). Label the work with the following information: Artist; Title; Date of Work; Medium; Size. You can add price to this list, however it can sometimes be a bit embarrassing later in life. When you sell a work, give the purchaser a bill of sale that includes all of the above information, including the price and any taxes. If you are selling your own work than you are also going to be responsible for keeping a set of books for income tax and possibly GST purposes. You are also responsible for charging and collecting the provincial sales tax and remitting this to the appropriate agency.

If someone else conducts the transaction (i.e. a dealer) all of the above is still necessary but with a few variations. (Please see more details on this below under *Artist-Dealer Relationships*.)

Artist-Dealer Relationships in the Art Market

In the scenario that I have presented above, there are three important figures that play a role in the business of art. Depending upon the individual circumstances, one may play a more important role than the other, however, I think its safe to say that the artist (the producer), the dealer (the retailer) and the collector (the consumer) are all key participants. There are always exceptions and variations and its not uncommon for the artist to play two roles (that of producer as well as retailer). However, most serious artists at one time or another work with one or more dealers.

Why would an artist want or need a dealer? Simply put, the dealer will normally assist the artist with many, if not all, of the standard business responsibilities that the artist is either not interested in, incapable of, or has no time to pursue.

What does the dealer do? Primarily the dealer will act as the intermediary between the artist and the consumer.

Why doesn't the artist do this her/himself?

- The cliché of the artist being a poor businessperson often holds true. The artist is an artist; the dealer is a sales person. Some people just can't function in a sales situation while others are good at it.
- The artist may be limited in time. Ideally, the artist should be spending as much of his /her time in the studio as possible. Selling work can be a major and, hopefully, constant interruption.
- The studio may not be conducive to selling art. Consider the studio as being somewhat synonymous with a factory. It can be messy, it can have work in progress, and it can smell. Finished artworks may not look as good as they could in a clean, uncluttered space.
- Buyers often like a bit of distance between the producer and themselves. A neutral ground is often more comfortable for people. If they don't like the work, they can say so without hurting anyone's feelings. If the potential buyer is in the studio, he/she may feel compelled to buy.
- Commercial galleries are generally visible to the public and are known for having art for sale. As surprising as it may seem, many artists are not known to the general public. Very few artists advertise their studios. Clients from outside of the region, for instance, will often search out local commercial galleries to get an idea of what's happening in the area.

- Commercial galleries will develop a personal clientele. Usually, galleries will specialize to some degree and the gallery's clients will gradually come to expect a certain kind of work to be available. In many cases, young artists (or new artists) will benefit from the exposure that comes from the proximity to older, more established artists that the gallery provides or is known for representing.
- Commercial galleries may provide a degree of respectability. As stated in the point above, association to more senior artists can be of benefit to the artist just getting started in his/her career. In addition, clients will often put their trust in the dealer who has proven to be consistent. Consequently, artists may benefit from the reputation of the gallery before he/she has one of their own.
- Commercial galleries can legitimize the artist's professional standing. Whether or not it is necessary, the artist who is not affiliated with a gallery may be seen as not being professional. In addition, galleries will normally provide financial statements to the artist, which are necessary for tax purposes as well as to substantiate any participation in the Donations to the Crown program.

Other practical advantages that the dealer may provide:

- Occasionally, the dealer may host specific exhibitions of the artist's work. The commercial gallery exhibition will normally have definite P.R. advantages over the "open studio" exhibition, for instance. In addition, the exhibition itself can prove to be a major incentive to the artist – it becomes a goal at which time some major decisions have to be made.
- The dealer will normally make regular (if not daily) presentations of the artist's work to a variety of clients. This is a part of the dealer's daily routine that very few artists see or understand. It is not uncommon for the dealer to "show" a work several times, possibly to several clients, before the work sells. This might include bringing the work out of the back storage racks to be viewed, or it might entail the temporary installation of the work in a potential client's home or office. In either event, there is never a guarantee that the work is going to sell, hence the dealer may do this numerous times without making his/her commission.
- The commercial gallery will normally assist the artist with his/her general public relations. Another often overlooked area, the commercial gallery, in its own interest and, hence, in the interest of the artist, will normally send out biographical material, etc. to the public upon request. This might include slides, photographs, exhibition catalogues, etc.
- The commercial gallery encourages the promotion of the artist. As with the previous point, the gallery will not only distribute information to the public, but it will often actively promote the artists that it represents. This may take the form of exhibition announcements and brochures, posters, news releases, newspaper reviews,

magazine reviews. In addition, public galleries are usually aware of what's happening with the commercial gallery scene and will often "discover" artists who are made visible via the commercial art gallery.

- The commercial art gallery will often provide advice and assistance with financial and other matters. This may take the form of practical assistance with the artist's pricing system, with framing advice, with what specific works of art might be suitable for a specific exhibition. In addition, dealers are often invaluable sources of information on other dealers!

What are the disadvantages to having a dealer?

- It will cost you financially. Dealers need to make money just as the artist does and by sharing in the process of marketing the work, the dealer will normally require a commission for his/her service. The commissions will vary from dealer to dealer (just as the service provided will vary considerably), nevertheless, the average commission will be 40% to 50% of the retail value of the work.
- The artist will likely be required to give a degree of "exclusivity" to the dealer. There are various degrees of representation, however, the dealer will normally demand that all sales of the artist's work within a certain boundary should be channelled through his/her gallery. The dealer will not normally be too pleased about providing various services such as promotion and then have to be in competition with the artist for the sale of his/her work. The "boundary" can vary: for instance, a nationally known commercial gallery may require national exclusivity, whereas a regional gallery may require exclusivity in a specific city or province. Many artists are represented by more than one dealer, but very seldom are they represented by more than one dealer in one region.
- The artist must be prepared to accept the dealer's clientele. Usually, a commercial gallery will have developed a clientele that identifies with the type of art that the gallery generally represents. Sometimes an artist will be affiliated with the "wrong" gallery. This can be a major disadvantage but the relationship usually gets sorted out relatively quickly.
- As with the previous point, the artist must also be prepared to accept the gallery's sales staff. Some people can sell very well; others are terrible at it. Some are polite, some are not. Some are energetic and ambitious; others are lazy and could care less. Check out the gallery before you commit your work to it.
- The artist will likely have to standardize his/her price system. Actually, this is a good factor. However, for those who are not used to an objective price system, it may take some time and effort to adjust to it. Experienced art buyers will normally not accept a "subjective" price system. And, for the artist's own record keeping purposes, it is

much better to have a standardized system that allows you to keep track of your work.

- The artist will have to give a certain degree of faith and trust to the dealer. Keep in mind that when the artist commits to a commercial art gallery, then that gallery will be handling a large portion of his/her business affairs. If the artist is used to doing his/her own selling then there could be a period of adjustment required. Also keep in mind that the artist is giving up a lot of direct control over his/her finances as they relate to direct sales of art.

Prudent Artist-Dealer Agreements (Remember that a dealer is preparing this article.)

Occasionally, dealers will require written, contractual agreements. The majority rely on verbal agreements and it has been my personal experience that “trust” is the key factor in any agreement. If either party to the agreement doesn’t trust the other party, then no contract will survive anyway. Nevertheless, some sort of written understanding is usually the best; memories can fail, situations can change and time sometimes affects the senses, so having something on paper that either party can refer to will often serve to keep the peace. Normally, the dealer will request a certain degree of exclusivity. It is my personal opinion that only in exceptional circumstances should an artist commit to a national exclusivity. Normally, a local or regional boundary is sufficient to protect the dealer and to go further is usually to the detriment of the artist. In general, it would be prudent to discuss and come to some agreement on all of the following points:

- The retail/selling price of your work. Consider such factors as, “Does the price include frame?” Usually a system for determining your prices is the safest and most objective (see the section on pricing under *The Transaction*). Develop a price system; be sure that both you and the dealer have a copy. Update and confirm the price system regularly. Request that the dealer supplies you with consignment sheets that specifically identifies each work of art and its selling price.
- What is the frequency of payments to the artist? There are many variations on this area and many circumstances that affect it, however, it is prudent to request some sort of payment schedule (this could be quarterly, bi-annually or even “upon sale”). What happens to the payment system in the case of the dealer taking payments over time?
- What is the dealer’s territory of sales? Is it national, provincial, city-wide or confined to his/her gallery only?
- What are the circumstances that might warrant the dealer offering a discount on your work? There are many variations on how this might be handled so it’s prudent to discuss them up front.

- Who is responsible for the following costs (a short list):
 - ✓ Shipping
 - ✓ Framing
 - ✓ Publicity
 - ✓ Exhibition reception (food, beverages, entertainment, etc.)
 - ✓ Exhibition publicity (announcements, posters, catalogues, etc.)
- What is the gallery's average frequency of solo and/or group exhibitions and \what are the factors that might determine the frequency of your solo exhibitions?

What the artist should beware of:

- Exclusive, national contracts with regional galleries.
- A hesitancy on the part of the dealer to discuss business arrangements.
- Infrequent or no receipts for consigned or sold works.
- Poor bookkeeping in general. Slow payments. Errors or omission in payments.
- Poor gallery reputation (as with any other business, ask for references and then check them out.)
- A gallery that is not oriented to your style/type of art work.

Standard methods of approaching a dealer:

- Before approaching a dealer, obviously you need a product. Have it in abundance and be sure that it's consistent. Remember that you have a lot of competition out there. The dealer has to feel confident, should he/she take on your work, that it will not only be consistent in quality, but that it will continue to be available.
- Don't be in a rush. Don't waste your contacts early. If you commit to a gallery and then, for whatever reason, cannot continue to supply, you will have a hard time getting back into that gallery later on. Take your time and be prepared.
- Make an appointment. Hopefully, the dealer that you want to make a business arrangement with will be busy. Consequently, don't just show up with your work under your arm and expect him/her to drop everything to look at your work. Be reasonable.
- Be prepared. Call ahead and ask what the dealer would like to see and how he/she would like to see the work. Would slides or photos be sufficient? What about bringing a number of works down to the gallery? Or would the dealer prefer to visit the studio? Also, don't forget about your preferences. What circumstances would show off your work the best?
- Be realistic in who you approach. Make comparisons between your work and the work of others already represented in that gallery. I would not recommend the indiscriminate sending of slides with the hope of netting a dealer. Know in advance what the gallery is about before you approach it.

- Check out references. Pay attention to them. Like any other business arrangement, check out the people with whom you will be doing business and entrusting your work and money to. Ask other artists about the points outlined under *Prudent Artist-Dealer Agreements*.
- You could always wait for the dealer to approach you. This is not a bad way and, in fact, is fairly common. What it requires is making yourself visible by frequenting the gallery, participating in shows in the region and by generally making your work accessible to the public. Dealers do take notice of what is going on around them (after all, it is their business) and often they go on referrals from other artists as well.

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