

Visual and Verbal: Why Talking About Your Art is as Important as Creating it by Shantel Susan

As an artist, you are a visual being. It takes the immersion of your imagination, creativity, decision-making and concerted hard work to make your art materialize.

Being an artist you likely draw upon a combination of your artist-muse and your unyielding imagination that allow you to create work that is and should be unique to you. In addition, you have interpretative abilities that are often misunderstood.

So how with all this ambiguity do you sell art when you as the creator can be so complex?

Let's start with the premise that art is an enigma. Artists are fascinating, likely because artists as individuals are distant to the regular, everyday experience of most people. This lack of exposure also makes it difficult for people to know about the creative process and what it takes to create.

Although this may sound like a barrier to selling your art, it actually is a splendid opportunity. Why? Simply put: if you enlighten your potential buyers about you and your art, the more comfortable they feel in buying it.

Think about how art galleries and museums post placards with information next to displays. It is because they want engagement from the audience, to draw them into the world of the art work they are viewing. The more people know about something, the more connected they feel to it and this often points them in the direction of wanting to buy into it.

How communicating helps you to sell art:

To begin with, consider that you have a wealth of information about your art to draw upon.

Whether you create art to communicate a particular viewpoint or your work is mainly for decorative purposes, there is always a story of how it got from your creative soul to something tactile that can be viewed. Even people who are familiar with art, are not necessarily adept in interpreting exactly what your art is about, so it is dependent on you to explain it to them. Moreover, the how and why your art came to be, is something that only you can tell.

Everything from your initial thoughts and feelings about your work to the subject matter, the medium, the techniques that you have employed, the duration, size, scope – are all creative and practical decisions that you had to make even before you began to create.

Then there is the execution of your art. Along the way there were the usual set-backs, obstacles, re-thinking and editing that you may have needed to perform. Your thoughts and methods are what people want to know about.

Guidelines to communicating about your art:

There are a few things you should keep in mind when you write or speak about your art:

1. Don't use complicated art words,

descriptions or metaphors that make it challenging to understand what you are talking about. Clarity is the key to success. Work at becoming a good communicator about your art.

2. Many people from all backgrounds and income levels find art an intimidating subject. Help them to see how accessible that art can be. Use quality descriptive language that has an "everyday" expressiveness to it – you want to encourage interest in your art – do this through being approachable.

3. Remember to write and speak about your art – not around your art. Target specific technical aspects of each piece – for example, your choices of medium, colour, size, art techniques employed and composition – detail why you made those choices. You can choose 1 or 2 of these aspects and focus on them.

4. You should have titles for each piece of art that you wish to sell. Use this as a starting point and just expand on the title.

5. When you begin your art creation process, get in the habit of keeping notes about that piece, little notations that you later can draw upon to expand on for your art stories.

6. Be original when you write about your art – that is, don't take words from other artists. It won't sound authentic and it will never communicate your art as being distinct. Try to find what makes your creation unique.

7. Consider if you had any set-backs in the creation of the work that made it challenging for you to continue or complete the art piece. People love to hear about obstacles that are overcome.



8. Here are some questions that you should ask yourself to get started :

- What happened to make you want to create this art?
- How did you have the idea about it – where did it come from?
- Was there anyone who was involved in terms of your inspiration?
- Why did you think it would be good to create?
- What materials did you use to create it?
- What special art techniques or choices did you make?
- How long did it take you to create it?

Uses for your art narratives:

Some of the places you can post your art work stories include:

1. If you are interested in gallery or art consultant representation, it is really appreciated when you have more information about your art for use in promoting you to their art buyer clients.

2. Selling art online is fine as far as it goes – but when people buy art, especially if they are looking to collect your art over the longer term, they have to personally connect with you. Your art narratives will help with that objective.

3. Next time that you have an exhibit or you participate in an art fair, be sure to post your stories about each of your art works on display and watch how many people stop, read and take interest. You can also talk to them about your art in specifics. Remember this interest will lead to sales!

Is this a bit of work? Yes, indeed – but don't become discouraged.

Remember that people want to engage with your art and buy it, but they must have a reason to do so. If you concentrate on how your art made you think and feel in order to produce the finished piece and you can convey this to your audience – you will be pursuing that verbal aspect of your art that will increase your audience interest and help to lead to sales.



Authored by Shantel Susan, Art Consultant & Founder of Shantel's Art & Design Inc., providing art consultancy services to a variety of art buyers and business advisory services to artists. To receive Curated Art Highlights please visit shantelsartanddesign.ca/stay-in-touch

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