

15 QUESTIONS EVERY ARTIST NEEDS ANSWERED

A study guide for use in conjunction with:

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/audioPop.jsp?episodId= 24994>

This guide is designed to help the artist remember the information by filling in the blanks as he or she listens to the podcast. I suggest listening to the entire podcast before filling in this study guide during a second hearing. If you are listening on your computer the podcast may be paused at any point by placing the cursor on the || symbol and clicking. Restart by clicking the >.

Q1. What average sizes worked best in terms of selling? Were you more successful at selling smaller sizes in the \$50 - \$500 price range or were larger pieces still needed within that wholesale price range?

A1. I sold art in all sizes, from bookplates to oils measuring 4' x 5' and in all price ranges from a few dollars to thousands. Interior designers usually buy art to fit a _____ in home or office – could be big or tiny. The more _____ the asking price the more likely it would sell.

Galleries may be more interested in fitting a _____ they have on hand, but designers most often _____ for their clients. If you consign art for a gallery or a framer with a “gallery” it will be more likely to end up on a wall it fits one of their standard frames, instead of in an acetate _____ in an art bin. First, always ask them to _____ the art. If you must consign, ask how and where it will be _____.

Q2. Is it your impression that this market absolutely relies on seeing the artwork live? I was wondering about the impact on the Internet and if more interior designers are getting comfortable buying images they see on line . . . or is the designer business basically gotta-see-it-before-I-buy-it. Lots of art is being sold on eBay – what are your thoughts?

A2. For the most part a designer, and often the client, must see the actual art before money changes hands, even if the initial interest is because of a digital or on-line image. If you have interest from an out-of-your-area buyer, try to arrange to ship “_____” – buyer pays shipping to (and from if it is returned.) get a credit card or PayPal authorization you agree to hold _____ final approval.

Ebay is a terrible place to sell art, except cheap, cheap, cheap!

Q3. I was wondering how designers and architects pay? Is it usually on terms and if so, were collections ever an issue for you, and what was the

typical wait to be paid? Were you successful on full payment at the time of the sale?

A3. If the designer selected a piece of art from a portfolio I carried, I usually received a check on the spot. I worked with some designers over many years and if they wanted terms, I was happy to comply – usually _____ . In twenty years I was never “stiffed” by a designer.

Q4. Would you say the print or giclee business is more attractive to the decorator or the originals? Was one more requested than the other?

A4. The choice usually depends on the client’s _____ and/or the _____ the designer is working with.

Q5. I’ve been thinking about how I can use the internet and email for selling into the decorative art market, but could it be, other than email follow-ups, it is still a call and make a live appointment find of effort.

A5. Call and live appointment is always best, but buyers are becoming ever more comfortable with Internet sales. If I were on the road selling today, I’d be trying to cut down travel and would be actively looking for ways to contact designers with digital slideshows, offering to ship “on approval” as in the answer to a previous question.

I’d Google “_____ zip codes in US” or “most _____ real estate markets” because designers locate their businesses where there are _____ homes and _____ owners. Then I’d go to the Yellow Pages for phone numbers (and sometimes email or web addresses) make phone calls, ask to send a slideshow of art and then follow-up with notes, phone calls, emails.

Did you know you can store an unlimited number of digital slideshows at no cost at www.kodakgallery.com and send them to any email address? It’s an excellent, easy to use website. When you share an album by email, I’d suggest you _____ the “Require friends to sign in to view your photos.” Some people think they are “signing up” for something and won’t look.

Voice over Internet phone services like Vonage allow unlimited long-distance phone calls for a small flat fee.

Q6. Can you sell to the commercial market without “selling out?” Selling Fine Art to decorators, craft fairs, etc. is seen somehow as “selling out.” I guess in the sense one makes images one thinks the public will buy, it is, but there’s nothing shameful in making a living. It would be nice to

educate the public to what is actually good work rather than catering to the decorator colors of the day – does it match the sofa? They should buy the art first and then decide, does the sofa match the art?

A6. When I speak of “decorative art” I don’t mean to imply the quality is _____ to the art _____ buy. Much of what I sold was fully as fine as art produced by artists with established _____ and a large following, where buyers were paying for a BIG name and the potential for _____ in value.

Yes, some of the art I sold was selected because it _____ the sofa. And some of the sofas the designers sold to their clients were upholstered with thirty yards of fabric that went for \$350 a yard. The designers’ job is usually to create a comfortable environment to fit their clients’ _____, personalities and _____. The best do try to educate their clients about art.

In truth, they are most often focused on the _____ of the images they recommend and how the art complements “the look” they are working to achieve, not the “_____” of the artist.

Q7. My husband and I just listened to the podcasts together. The timing was perfect. He has a meeting with an interior designer later this week and you made us think about how the approach should be different than when we meet with galleries. (Then this follow-up)

Today was that appointment. They will be taking several of his originals and prints to hang in their showroom. With your podcats we had the right information to go into the meeting.

A7. I worked with hundreds of interior designers over the years and have great respect for these professionals. Many are artists in every sense of the word, able to use all the _____ every artist uses, color, composition, subject matter and imagination to accomplish an end result greater than the sum of its parts.

Q8. I live an hour away from Las Vegas and was thinking of trying to get my large collection of art into a gallery there, but after listening to you, I think I may try the interior design studios. Should I worry about framing? Most of my work is unframed and it is a major hassle to frame even if it really does make a difference. Would you suggest showing a few framed pieces along with the unframed work?

A8. Your work is absolutely stunning! I’ve never seen a “monumental” 5” x 7” painting. Until I looked at the prices I didn’t realize these weren’t 5’ x 7’. How gorgeous they would be in that size! Now, with _____

printing that is possible. My guess is, if you carried a selection of your small paintings to the interior designers along with a couple of samples printed as larger giclees (maybe 30" x 40" on canvas, rolled to carry easily) and said, "I can have these made to your _____," you'd have to fight them off.

I'm assuming that, as it is in Florida, new residents who have abandoned snow and cold will want art that reflects their _____. In large homes with big walls and lots of light almost any of your paintings could be the "drop dead beautiful" focal point in any room.

The other concern, because of the _____ of the originals, is how large a giclee can be made without _____, but that digital technology is advancing so rapidly a really good giclee printer should be able to guide you on _____ size.

No need to worry about _____. Interior designers usually _____ for their clients and many have favorite framers they work with regularly.

Q9. I sell direct to collectors and through galleries to collectors and designers. I think the most a designer has received from galleries is 10 to 15%. Does the difference in commission depend on volume? Or do designers feel they should get a better deal if they are cutting out "the middle man?" I can rationalize why a gallery would get such a large cut, but why a decorator? If their cut is 50%, they are actually profiting more than the artist because of canvas cost, paint, etc.

A9. If you are selling to collectors through a gallery, the gallery is the "_____" just as the designer is "_____" for people buying their services. Whether gallery, designer or rep, each needs to be compensated for time, overhead, expertise and ability to _____ an artist with a _____ buyer. Designers usually get a 10-15% _____ from a gallery because they brought a client to select art – a buyer the gallery likely wouldn't have had except for the designer's _____.

If you sell your art directly to a collector, you are the "_____" and deserve the commission for your _____ efforts.

The worst "sin" a gallery or designer feels an artist can commit is to make a _____ "back-door" sale to one of their clients at less than the _____ retail or gallery price.

Q10. Do you see any benefits in contacting designers by phone and giving them web links to your work, or do you see the best approach seeing them in person and getting the work physically in front of them?

A10. Seeing them in person is always the best way. But, here is one _____ that may work: Make the call. You will probably be answered by a secretary. If you know the designer's name ask to speak to him or her directly. Usual response: "What is this in reference to?" Your answer: "I'm an artist and I believe my work will be a _____ for the designer. Would it be possible to set a convenient appointment to show the work – just _____ minutes will be fine?"

If the answer is NO, say: "I'm updating my _____, is this address and phone correct?" Is there a _____? Is there an _____ address?" If there is an email, ask: "Would it be alright if I send a link to my on-line gallery or a digital slideshow?" If the answer is YES, ask that the address be repeated.

Then close with: "Thank you, you've been very helpful (if you know the name, repeat it), if not say: "My name is John Doe, what is yours?" make a note of which you _____ and the _____. If you are ever accused of "_____" though it's unlikely you can say _____ and _____ gave you permission to send an email.

Q11. Were designers mostly looking for original artwork or prints, or is that just dependent on the overall cost of the job? If prints, what medium . . . giclee?

A11. Giclees used to be the "wave of the future." Today they are the "tide of the present." Just look at trade publications such as ART WORLD NEWS and DÉCOR.

I sold everything from antique bookplates, open edition prints and posters, signed and numbered limited editions and original prints, to large commissioned original oil paintings to giclees on paper and canvas. Interior designers and architects are open to _____ art in _____ as long as it _____ the project and budget they are working with.

Most designers have multiple sources for art, know a number of reps and will buy from several for most jobs to get the _____. But here is something every artist should know. If you show up at a studio on a day a designer _____ buy art because of a deadline, a client coming the next day, etc. and you have something in your portfolio that fits budget and design scheme, you WILL walk out with a check.

Q12. Since most designers don't charge a commission up front like a gallery, wouldn't something closer to studio price be appropriate? Is cold calling designers a generally accepted practice? And lastly, I have a local printer who does high quality work, both prints and giclees. Would you recommend keeping a lot of stock on hand expressly for selling to designers?

A12. Most designers, particularly those doing residences buy at _____ – trade price, usually 50% -- and sell to their clients at _____, the _____ price their clients would pay in a fine gallery, furniture store or directly from an artist, if that is what you mean by “studio” price. They don't charge a “commission.” Some designers work for a design fee or a “_____” – when and why covered in other podcasts.

Cutting a “_____” deal, below established _____, if a customer comes to your studio is a sure way to _____ your art to the cheapest price you are willing to sell it for.

Almost every business relationship starts with a “_____” of some kind, in person, by phone or email.

Giclees can be printed as _____, no reason to keep an _____. You do need a sample to show, of course. The ability to tell the designer, “These can be printed to your _____ is a great help. That's no problem for a giclee printer, but you must be able to quote a square _____ or square _____ cost for the finished print.

Q13. I am worried that my pricing structure is all wrong. I currently use this method: I have a painting I want \$500 out of but know the gallery or designer is going to sell it for \$1,000 to a client. Because of the work they are doing they earn the markup, so I don't have a problem with that. However, if a patron were to come to my studio and buy it, it would cost \$500. Are you saying I should be charging the same \$1,000 the gallery or the designer would charge. I am concerned because I want to do art festivals and fairs as well as work with designers and the last thing I want to do is damage relationships and my reputation.

A13. Galleries and interior designers often have very large _____ costs, rent, light, heat / air-conditioning, insurance, accounting, travel, salaries, etc. The _____ - _____ to _____ covers a myriad of expenses and they couldn't stay in business without it.

If you have a studio in your home or one you rent and conduct business there, so do you. Your square footage cost may not be as high as

theirs, particularly if they are in a prime location, but you have many of the same expenses. Shouldn't you be able to cover them?

Put yourself in a designer's shoes. She shows a client your art; the client contacts you and you sell her the painting for half price. You've destroyed a _____ the designer may have worked years and spent many dollars to cultivate. You've destroyed yours with that designer and you can be sure the word _____ in the design community.

If you have worked hard to establish a following of collectors, spent time, creativity and dollars to do it, you _____ the mark-up.

Art festivals and art fairs are hard, grinding work, often expensive, always tiring and sometimes frustrating. I've done trade shows for Fine Art Publishers and artists I've represented. An art buyer there can't purchase at trade prices without a _____ number.

I don't really know how the Art Festival circuit works. There's probably an "ethic" involved that regular participants adhere to, but I suspect that many of the sales go _____ to the IRS or Sales Tax and much " _____ " takes place. Real business doesn't work that way – not for long, anyhow.

Q14. Have you come across galleries that insist they should get a commission for every sale, even when it's not their customer? An artist friend of mine ran into that. He had several paintings at the gallery and they told him they deserved a commission simply because they had some of his work. It didn't matter whether is customers knew about the gallery or not.

I was invited to join an online gallery, but the caveat was only they were allowed to display it, and I wouldn't be allowed to sell any of my own work at all! I turned them down flat, because the last thing I want is to be limited by a gallery I haven't even seen and be told I no longer have the right to sell my own work.

A14. I've never run across anything so _____! Perhaps the artist should have asked: "How many dollars in sales will you _____?" Whether the gallery is bricks and mortar or on the web, an artist would be foolish to sign on to either rip-off, in my opinion.

Q15. I was surprised that depictions of faces and bodies rarely sell, because that's what I love to look at from the old masters like Rembrandt to Klimt to DeKooning. I enjoy painting them, too. Is there a place for

portrait painting? What about images such as a face that are more abstracted or colored or bodies presented as a landscape?

A15. Keep in mind I was speaking in general terms looking across the general “artscape” at what sort of images are used most often by interior designers and displayed where quality decorative art is sold. Stroll through a few interior design studios and high-end furniture stores and note how many landscapes, florals, abstract and semi-abstract images you see compared to styles and subjects typical of Rembrandt, Klimt and De Kooning and other great painters of faces and figures. Pick up a few copies of ART WORLD NEWS and DÉCOR, or go to www.bmcgaw.com (Bruce McGaw Graphics) or www.winndevon.com.

I just logged on to Winn Devon and clicked “10 Best Selling Limited Editions.” Nine were _____; only one contains figures, those quite _____. Of the “10 Best Selling Posters,” only two show faces or figures.

The art market is so broad and the tastes of art lovers so varied, the key to selling a particular style or subject depends on _____ and _____ a way to reach that _____ group of _____. Some galleries specialize in _____ art. Once you identify these the trick is to see the subjects you love with a _____ vision and _____ of your own, and then work to have your art _____ by these specialists.

Portrait painting is an entirely separate “market.” Not the decorative art market spoken about in these podcasts. It can be very fulfilling and lucrative for an artist, but I’ve had almost no experience selling there.

ANSWERS:

1. PARTICULAR, SPACE, REASONABLE, STANDARD FRAME, CUSTOM FRAME, SLEEVE, BUY, DISPLAYED
2. ON APPROVAL, PENDING
3. THIRTY DAYS
4. PREFERENCES, BUDGET
5. PRICIEST, EXPENSIVE, HIGH PRICED, AFFLUENT, UNCHECK
6. INFERIOR, COLLECTORS, REPUTATIONS, APPRECIATION, MATCHED, LIFESTYLES, BUDGETS, QUALITY, NAME VALUE
7. CREATIVE TOOLS
8. GICLEE, SIZE SPECS, NEW ENVIRONMENT, SIZE, LOSING CLARITY, MAXIMUM
9. MIDDLEMAN, MIDDLEMAN, CONNECT, WILLING, COURTESY DISCOUNT, RECOMMENDATION, MIDDLEMAN, MARKETING, DISCOUNTED, ESTABLISHED

10. PHONE APPROACH, GOOD RESOURCE, FIFTEEN, DATABASE, FAX NUMBER, EMAIL, SPOKE TO, DATE, SPAMMING, WHEN, WHO
11. QUALITY, ANY MEDIUM, FITS, RIGHT MIX, MUST
12. WHOLESALE, RETAIL, SAME, COST PLUS, BACKROOM, RETAIL, DEVALUE, COLD CALL, NEEDED, INVENTORY, SIZE SPECS, INCH, FOOT
13. OVERHEAD, MARK-UP, RETAIL, PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP, WILL SPREAD, DESERVE, SALES TAX, UNREPORTED, NEGOTIATION
14. OUTRAGEOUS, GUARANTEE
15. LANDSCAPES, ABSTRACTED, IDENTIFYING, FINDING, SPECIALIZED, UNIQUE, STYLE, REVIEWED

Many listeners have found that once they have listened to the podcast and filled in the study guide, just glancing over the answers will quickly and easily bring the important points to mind.