

## Chuck Larivey – The Business of Art

**I thought it might be interesting** and perhaps useful sharing some of my journey over the last 3 1/2 years with a more organized recap version of what I actually did and how it related to the business side and what it took to merge my art into it.

**My career path is design specific to me**, and not necessarily adaptable, but it does have a lot of common ground.

**What surprised me** is that it had a very logical flow, sometimes intuitive but looking back very deliberate with regards to where I was at the time.

**As we move from one sand box** to the next we naturally rise to the occasion - work the sand and move on. Very much like one of my favorite subjects, Koi, however unlike the Koi, we have control!

**As we grow, opportunity has a way of presenting itself** - absolutely fascinating how that works too!

### HISTORY



#1Landscape 16x20 oil on cotton panel (3-16-09)

**With this small painting** I had some choices to make as an artist. Would it be as a pastime or as a professional, and if as a professional, would I treat it like a normal business? And if I did, what did I want out of it?

I had the answers before the paint was dry and before my 2nd painting, in fact the very next day.....PROFESSIONAL!

### GOAL

- Become a financially successful oil painter enjoying an International reputation.
- Paint at least 5000 canvases, leaving those not sold in a trust for the benefit of my family. I also included an endowment to the arts, supporting emerging artists.

**NOTE: Currently at #731 with 4,269 to go**

## PLAN

- 15-Year time frame (I'll be 83..LOL)
- Develop a marketable product (all businesses need one) In my case "Best Wall Paintings"
- Establish a value for the collection through sales
- Gain Credibility and peer validation (prestigious juried shows held at prestigious galleries)
- Market through galleries, internet websites, blogs and most important, for name recognition, a national ad campaign.
- Set up a Trust

**This was a good outline** to start my new career from. I allowed 15 years; enough time to accomplish all my goals. Now all I had to do was start working at it. My logical course was to break it down to basics with a yearly goal.

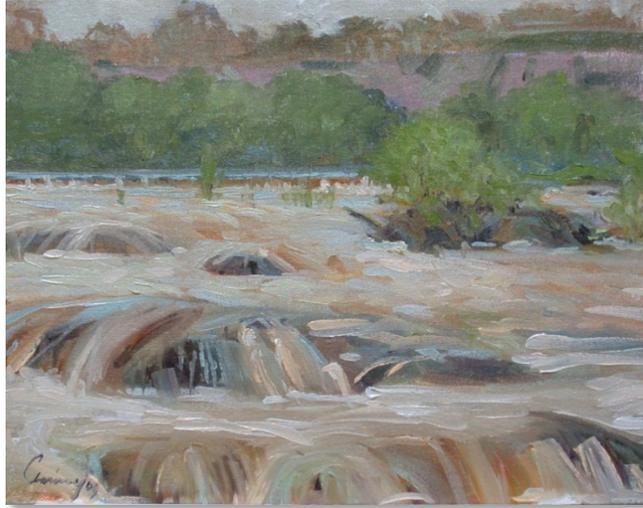
## 1st YEAR 2009

- Redevelop my skills as an oil painter - I allowed (1) year and this was not about sales
- Join professional artists groups - meet other artists and become involved
- Website ([FASO](#)) Fine Art Studio Online as a launching pad - a stable address where I could be found and my work shown with prices. At the beginning [FASO](#) was an important tool and a way of judging me against other artists.

**I spent (6) months painting Plein air daily** (almost exclusively) rain or shine, only later moving into the studio.

**In my 1st year I completed 202 paintings** of various sizes and subjects - no subject was out of bounds.

**While doing Plein air I also discovered "Our James River" and "My Sun"**, and for the most part these were a basis for all my studio paintings during the 1st year.



31 James – View to Hollywood – en Plein air

**My first year was remarkable** - my plan was working to perfection. I did my entire list and even got in a few national shows on top of it, including one in London at the W. H. Patterson. Love it! Hanging with the big boys!

### VENICE IN PERIL 2009



151 Venice Moon 18x24 Oil on linen (date)

### FIRST NATIONAL JURIED EXHIBIT – OPA 2009



126 Libby Sunset - Richmond 18x24 oil on linen panel (8-4-09)

**Even with my 1st year's progress, I was a long way from my goal of having a saleable "Best Wall Painting"!**

## 2nd YEAR 2010

- Develop paintable subjects for the regional and International market place. This is a big deal if you want to move beyond your local sandbox. This did not mean gallery paintings (3rd year). Good examples; Venice and Koi, discovered while painting Plein air at Maymont.
- Regional market testing through sales (if possible).
- Peer Validation by entering more National and International juried bricks and mortar exhibits (prize money is significant and it's a very competitive sport)

**My second year was as good as my first - I stayed on task - painted daily, working mostly in my studio on paintable subjects like Venice, the James, Koi and the National Parks....many for juried shows.**

## VENICE



## JAMES



## NATIONAL PARKS



## FIRST KOI



**About mid-year I started looking** for a bricks and mortar place to show and test my wares - I did a lot of research too. In my case I was not ready for galleries yet. So instead, I looked into alternatives.

**Crossroads came into play here as being very important - especially with regards to creative control and product development, which is really what I needed to focus on.**

## MY FIRST WALL AT CROSSROADS



**Towards the end of 2010** I started painting large with galleries in mind - a whole new learning curve, but I was on the right track

## MY 2010 GAME CHANGER - FIRST QUALIFIABLE BEST WALL PAINTING



**389 Belle Isle Quarry Lilies 48x40 oil on linen (10-17-2010) Sold @ Crossroads for \$3600 soon after it was hung on my new feature wall in a shared gallery space with Betsy Kellum**

## MY second space AT CROSSROADS



**The gallery space was well placed** near the entrance, had some lighting and this one wall, not seen from the entrance but it could be seen from the reception desk (Jenni command center). Up until this point not a feature wall....that was until this painting was hung and well lighted and displayed as a single (best walls paintings would be)

**The “jump factor” took over in a Nano second and people got it..."Presentation and how a painting is presented is as important as the painting itself"**

By the end of my 2nd year, I had painted an additional 225 paintings for a total of 427. I even had some sales both online and at Crossroads

My next year 2011, would be important because the fundamentals were in place - I did my homework and it was make it or break it time...I now needed a 1st class product!!

## 3rd YEAR 2011

- Fine tune my subject matter based on sales
- Paint larger gallery quality paintings and paint only for the “best walls”
- Product presentation and framing
- National ad campaign - name recognition & gallery search
- Blogging
- Continue on with Juried events - more peer credits
- Increase sales and firmly establish my value as an artist

**The minute I started showing** some of these first “Best Wall Paintings” at Crossroads, I started selling, and my prices moved accordingly.

**Looking back, until I started to sell, my price points were all over the place.**

I used all the normal recipes like square inches and size.....however what worked in the end was going online using FASO and seeing how similar work was priced by successful artists.

Fine Art Studio Online from the start was a tremendous help in many other areas. It allowed me and anyone else for that matter, to access and search the websites of the top artists here and abroad. I could see their work, galleries, prices (if they had it) and any works they sold.....a very useful and necessary tool - after all, these artists would be my competition!

**Soon I needed a better gallery space at Crossroads.** I wanted a space similar to the Caboose gallery, more contained than a shared space. Jenni made it happen!

**Now Jenni got it too!!** She stepped in and got me (2) spaces we could combine into one gallery. Basically a 12x16 space or 192 square feet of well-designed gallery space with lighting! We designed it so I had (9) individual wall surfaces to paint for and it worked!

## 2011 NEW DIGS AT CROSSROADS



First Exhibit - Exterior View



Last exhibit - Interior View

**This may have been an "Ah ha moment" for Jenni, I know it was for me!**

**My little paintings finally had "space of their own".**

**Some interesting things happened** once I started showing larger works; the smaller paintings stopped selling - another oddity, I originally used size to move my prices up but it soon became clear a 30x30 could sell for the same or more than a 60x48. Pricing finally revolved around the "jump factor" a painting produces in a buyer. I was seeing it first hand with my paintings.

## A FEW 2011 BEST WALL PAINTINGS



616 Koi and Lilies 56x46 oil on linen (12-1-11)



619 Prussian Moon - James from Belle Isle 48x44 oil on linen (12-19-11)

**I had a product at the end of 2011** and a 1st class one at that! I painted 194 paintings for a total of 621, and sold about 30 or so from \$550 to \$8,500. It had a lot to do with my subject choice, size and how my work was presented and framed.....it made a difference!

**In 2012, I know this could not have been done if I had used the normal gallery system! WOW! That's a shift and it will influence my future thinking.**

## 4th YEAR 2012

**I had no real list going into my 4th year 2012.** This thing moved very smoothly, very fast and well beyond my expectations. I just continued doing everything that worked from the previous years because ....aside from gallery searching I really didn't know what to do next!

### **I knew there was a lot more to it though!**

- Set up my Trust - explore other charities where my art might be useful
- Find an agent
- Gallery search
- Elite art circles - Museums - Prestigious galleries
- Expand my ad campaign
- A major art project
- Declutter (after 3 or 4 years a good move)

**Going into 2012 I decided to declutter** by limiting my art organizations and juried shows to only one. I chose OPA (Oil Painters of America) dropping the rest. I didn't need any more peer and gallery credits, I had enough! In my experience, they didn't have any effect on my sales - my art and the "jump factor" did!

**Once they "jump" they don't care about anything other than taking it home.**

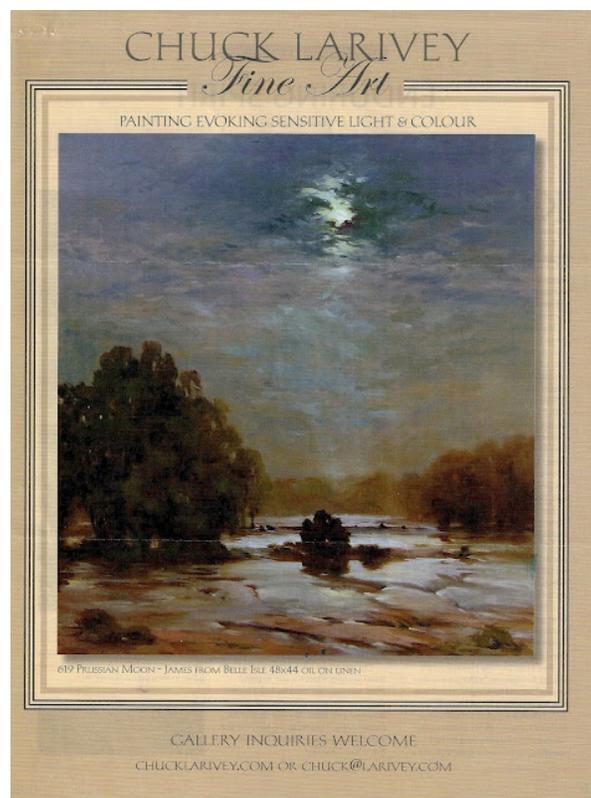
**Peer and gallery credits are useful to galleries and that was why I originally did it.**

**My interest over time had shifted to my clients, the buying public. How could I get to them? Well that was easy, national ads and the internet.....it works too.**

**National ads worked remarkably well for global name recognition, opportunities and my gallery search.**

In my case I used full page ads in American Art Collector, which I typically painted for....after all I needed the best!

## TYPICAL AD IN AAC



As it appeared in the March 2012 issue # 77

**It was directed to galleries and probably one of my more successful ads**

**However, the internet and blog is more useful: NO COST on a global scene.** My numbers grow daily - you gotta love Google stats and search engines! And now I-pad, because this is the game changer!

**I know my website is used by my clients making the search and final moves.**

Interestingly, the galleries want you to add their link but not reciprocate by adding you to theirs. I only have one which has actually done it.....LeGrand Fine Art did!

## GALLERIES

### **THIS IS A VERY PROBLEMATIC AND COMPLICATED ISSUE**

**Regrettably, many galleries are regional and less effective on a National level.** Galleries are not necessarily in the joint venture game with artists - many in fact, look at artists with websites as competition, and don't want involvement but want control, for fear we will sell direct to their clients.....I see it as their issue not mine!

**I finally resolved my position** on it and will leave it to others to figure out.

**I know from my own experiences,** the gallery system had no value with developing my art (except Crossroads) or name recognition nationally - advertising in AAC and the internet did.

**Getting in galleries is easier than you think** - direct your advertising to them with a good painting and they come knocking! If they don't maybe it's not time yet...

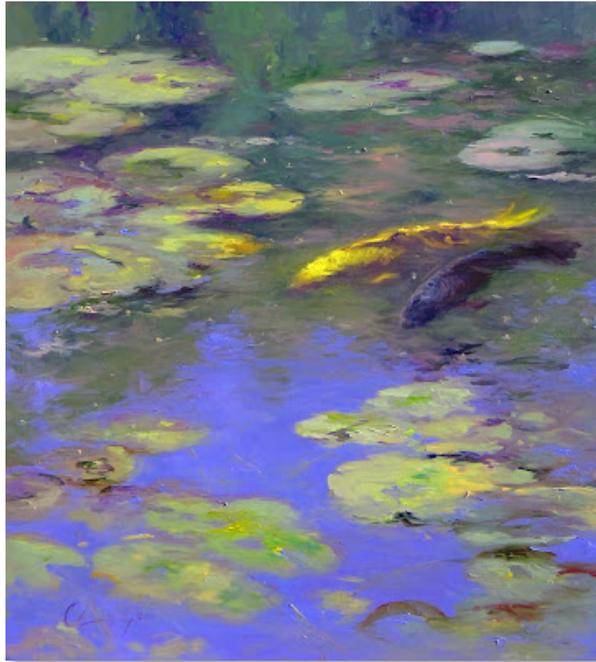
**I always felt the gallery system would be my main selling platform.** Of course now I know in 2012 it won't be. As an artist I need creative control over all things involving my career and I can't expect a regional gallery to do any of it other than perhaps show my work....**god knows they don't sell it because they don't present it right!**

**My focus shifted instead,** to how to break into the elite art circles - a must at some point - one of the ways is through Charity's and Fund raisers. So that's a work in process.

**The first six months was much about re-evaluation** - I only knew I was on the right track because by the 2nd quarter my sales exceeded last years - not as many paintings as 2011 but most 2012 were "Best Wall Paintings" which caused my numbers to rise faster and higher.

**It was proving my main business objective "why people buy art in the first place", of course, their "BEST WALLS!"**

## MY FAVORITE 2012 “BEST WALL” PAINTING



648 Koi and Lily pads 44x40 oil on linen (4-11-12) Sold @ Crossroads

**Going into October I have a fresh outlook and some new directions!**

### MY SIMPLE BUSINESS PLAN

**Produce a list of (18) important items** - and as of today I have done it all with the exception of #15. A few are still on-going and a work in progress.

1. Develop skills as an oil painter (1-year - Plein air, studio & life painting)
2. Organizing, numbering system, digital imaging with hard copies and a daily calendar showing painting history.
3. Website – Fine Art Studio Online - with prices
4. Blogs & newsletters
5. Key word titles for internet search engines
6. Join professional groups - meet other artists and become involved
7. Credibility & peer validation as an artist – prestigious juried shows (important at the front end - limited value in the overall picture)
8. Developing a product - subject matter presentation/framing & size “Best Wall Paintings”
9. Paintable subjects - Regional verses Global
10. Product market testing using alternative methods
11. Gallery search (National ads worked)
12. Galleries (yes or no?) & alternatives such as Crossroads and the internet with advertising....perhaps upscale fairs like Art Basil

13. Establish market value (wholesale & retail)
14. Art as an investment – protect your pricing
15. Marketing - P/R Firms and Agents
16. National ad campaigns – decide what you want out of it first?
17. Charity and Art as Marketing tools - mine is RVA based “ChildSavers” Crossroads
18. Finally, a professional artist with a saleable product

## CONCLUSION

**I split up the list, followed a logical flow, and it worked!**

**Galleries, Museums, residential and commercial properties, require**

**‘BEST WALL PAINTINGS’**

**I want to be one of those artist considered.**