

ART AND PRESENTATION = MONEY

Koi grow exponentially to their surrounding - Guess what? Artists do too!!

The bigger a Koi gets the more lovely it becomes....well, I don't look any better but my paintings do!

Space and the evolution of an artist go hand in hand. My alternative gallery gave me the space and freedom to pursue my art and allowed it to evolve unhampered.

This was just one small part of my journey over the last few years but as it turned out, a very important part - I'm not sure the rest would have worked without it and here's why.

Because of my experience here I had firsthand knowledge of what worked and what didn't. I didn't have to get that information second hand from a gallery - if they even give it to you all. This is no fault of the gallery system. They have a different objective, to "sell" art that works for them. As artists, if we want to use the system and sell, it's our job to find out what makes a client JUMP! Unless they do, you can't sell it....even a gallery can't! Art sells itself and can't be sold otherwise.....even by the artist himself. A smart collector (not a greedy collector) won't buy art as investment unless he likes the piece, regardless of what it is. A good salesman is not a salesman but fills a need or solves a problem - if it makes sense the sale is made!

I always knew a good product, well presented, would exceed and have more perceived value than one which was not. It's fairly basic knowledge but it's only as good as the presenter - a junk dealer will get less and the antique dealer will get rewarded handsomely for the same junk.

I knew from day one who my client would be and what they would expect from me as an artist. It can be summed up in one word, **"QUALITY"!**

When I walked into Crossroads the first time I was already well established in the juried exhibition world, on a website, had lots of international art buddies, was a member of at least (3) organizations and had work hanging with some big boys in an upscale gallery. My work held its own in my sandbox; the juried exhibition

world. But, this was never my reason for painting in the first place - it was simply a required step in my overall goal of painting only "Best Wall Paintings". I knew my client well and they would want major art works to hang on important walls and I wanted to be one of those artists considered. They would not be interested in smaller works typically associated with these exhibits, unless the painting had serious presence and not likely in a frame to frame presentation; also very typical of juried exhibits. And, unless they were part of the art world they would not be aware or follow these events. I hung around with them for decades and I certainly wasn't.

Galleries like what I now call "peer credits" and use it to add perceived value to a painting. So basically I did it for the galleries. However 3 1/2 years into it, I don't think the galleries necessarily know my client either, because they call them "Collectors". The only thing I know for sure, my clients like collecting money and stature amongst their peers. While that clearly could include art to fill a particular space - it has to get their attention first. I call it the "jump factor" and fun watching it too!

Especially when we all do it at the same time :=)

Eventually I realized a juried show's true value was allowing an artist to compare himself against other artists (the completion) and grow from the experience. [Boldbrush](#) by Fine Art Studio Online is a wonderful platform for it.

Many artists are very happy to stay in the juried sand box their whole career. Certainly for a teacher it has benefits and the prize money is significant along with peer prestige. None of this has much value in why art is bought in the first place....it's a luxury few can afford and a status symbol just like designers are....to make an impression. They buy art and hire designers as a status statement. I promise you if you're not exposed to this you wouldn't know it!

As a commercial designer it was less true, but once you enter the residential market it is! It also becomes personal and then you get it!

My main objective here at Crossroads was to evaluate my work on a gallery wall, get reactions, establish some local price points and look for the "jump factor"!!

The gallery also has well attended opening exhibits including a juried show I could enter and did. The all media and member shows are held every (2) months - it was very useful too, especially when I had a large painting. I could use these exhibits as a way of showing, and they hung for (2) months.

JUNE 2010 (\$300 to \$2500 artist)



If a gallery presents your work like this, WALK! That is unless of course you have a different objective than selling.

My original 12x8 foot gallery wall - space shared with 3 other artists. No lighting but harsh industrial overhead lighting, this washed paintings out. I used a few designer talents and made it work.

A variety of subjects salon hung, almost frame to frame, comprised of 8x10, 11x14 and 20x24 paintings. My first sale off this wall was (2) 8x10 paintings @ \$300 each (one was my first lily pad painting)

During the first (5) months Crossroads sold an 18x24 for around \$2500 + the pair of 8x10s above for a total of \$3100 - My expenses were more than covered.

However this space had served its purpose and it was time to move on. I could not lift my prices any more without going larger than 20x24s. I needed better walls and the "**Jump Factor**" to do that!

Better Digs for 2011(\$550 to \$5000 artist)

Crossroads offered me a better location at the entrance but shared with another artist.....it was better, and it had "track lighting" albeit not the best looking system I ever saw, but it still worked!

BEFORE



I was offered the left half of this shared space.

AFTER



Notice no red rug....LOL it was the "best wall painting" above - OK, if you're selling rugs!!

After Betsy and I repainted and hung our work, it looked fresh and neat - all the paintings were well lighted with some air. It started to look a bit more professional.....more like a gallery presentation.

The walls are a much darker taupe than the original colour....not similar as it looks here. It was an odd little space with an alcove.

Betsy was a good space mate, a very accomplished pastel artist with an outstanding list of national shows and more earned initials after her name than god! Our work was compatible.....progress! Love it!!

My First Best Wall Painting (before)



Original gallery wall (same painting)

My First Best Wall Painting (AFTER)



The game changer wall my "First Best Wall Painting" with good visibility from the main desk but not from the entrance. Betsy had that view....a seniority thing :=)).

When the lights hit, this painting ROCKED! Betsy jumped first, I didn't see it, I heard it! It got my attention and everyone else too - but not near as much as when it sold quickly for \$3600.....**This was my first quantifiable best wall...the game was on!**

Note: During my later gallery show, a 30x30 sold for \$5,000 and a 48x44 sold for over \$6,000, the same size as the painting above \$3,600 - the gallery presentation was better, giving my work more perceived value.

I painted for these walls over the next (6) month and made some serious progress, both as an artist and the value of my art. I was a happy camper until I was offered and accepted a solo exhibit at a new gallery, well located in a sleepy upscale harbor town about an hour away.

Coincidentally it also lined up with my 1st full page ad in American Art Collector. You might think I'm deviating from the point of this article...I promise you I'm not.

I saw (4) very important things from my solo show; (1) My ad helped sell my ad painting a 30x30 Venice, within 1st half hour, for \$5000. and **(2)** Every solo show needs a serious anchor which I had in a 72x60 Venetian painting @ \$10,000; for "The Jump Factor", and it did! **(3)** A painting sold for over \$6,000 was returned the following day because the black liner frame was simply that, a black liner frame. Perhaps OK for the show but not in home surroundings....Duh! As a designer I knew, as a painter I didn't think about it! **(4)** I saw my work for the very first time as a separate large collection of (30) odd paintings. Going forward the latter #4 would be the most important.

The larger painting held the show and the smaller paintings were lost and for the most part ignored - not surprisingly either, because I see it at Crossroads and through my sales. A 30x30 with a 4" or 5" frame holds its own - anything smaller forget it! I also didn't like my paintings lined up like little soldiers on larger long walls. None took center stage, including larger works. I painted a very large 72x60, originally designed to break up the wall as an anchor painting.....well it didn't work, it was just a bigger soldier! We relocated it at the rear, on a wall by itself, and it "jumped", commanding all the attention opening night! Until then, not even a "Best Wall", it worked for exactly the same reason my Best wall Painting above did! It was presented without surrounding clutter "**space of its own**" and by my definition a "**Best Wall Painting**"

Any painting can be a "Best Wall Painting" providing it has "space of its own"

I came back knowing if I ever wanted to sell "Best Wall Paintings" my main objective....I needed better digs!!!

My current space had a top out of \$5,000....small works didn't sell much after the big ones started showing up. The space could only hold (1) big painting up to a 60x48. My other wall surfaces were secondary walls and not able to hold anything much larger than a framed 30x30. My other concern was not over- powering my space mate, a pastel artist who worked on a smaller scale.

Even at that, Crossroads sold a lot of paintings from this space - a few larger paintings, but mostly 30x30s well framed with some smaller 20x24s. Anything smaller was a waste of wall space.

However, I did notice a 30x30 could easily sell for the same price as a much larger 48x44. But, I couldn't get much more for the larger one after 5000. So size now was less important with regards to moving my prices forward.....**mmmmm....unexpected development!**

I mentioned this to Jenni (Crossroads owner) and she agreed, artists hit a value level; i.e. "this artist work sells around \$500 to \$1000....**mmmmm got it!**

During my gallery show a 30x30 sold for \$5,000 and a 48x44 sold for over \$6,000, the same size as the painting on my first best wall painting (above) \$3,600 - the gallery presentation was better, giving my work a more perceived value.

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

Great Digs 2011 - 2012

(\$6,000 to \$9000 artist)



First opening - exterior view

Here the red rug and large ottoman work as part of the gallery design because the "RED DOT" ottoman adds logical function



Interior view

The Venice painting is 72x60 (the anchor at my recent solo show) and the 20x20 studies in 23kt gold water gilded frames are left - no one looked at those (other than the frames) but they did the big one - oddly I didn't have a good wall to show the 72x60 right + plus it was a gallery wrap (to-date the only one). In this setup the painting looks unfinished and if nothing else it needed a clean floater frame.....visual lesson learned well.

Last opening in this space



My Clients understand this space because I'm showing up front how my paintings will work as standalone "Best Wall Paintings" in a softer home environment!!

If small paintings didn't sell before, they really didn't here....LOL

I augmented my gallery with a national ad campaign using American Art Collector. It was a very good sales tool for me and my galleries. In some cases the ads sold a painting. Aside from my first gallery, W.H. Patterson, I was now represented by other galleries.

Here we go again - never satisfied, but it was time to move on because the maximum dollar amount of \$9,000 was reached and again **my cool little gallery had size limitations**. I was not able to break the 10K barrier. I came close a few times and I already raised the painting bar and that didn't work so it was time to use size as a way of breaking through. It worked before, so there is no reason to believe it can't work again. To do this I would need even larger paintings and lots of space. Most galleries don't have this kind of space either. They carry many artists, which eventually causes them to reduce the large paintings. **Guess what, my alternative gallery did!**

THIS IS WHY I'M ALSO IN AN ALTERNATIVE GALLERY AND WISH THIS WAS THE NORM OVER THE REALITY FOR ARTISTS

2012 Exceptional New Digs