



“The First Masterpiece”

My first column was on, what it takes to be an artist; I only touched the tip of the brush on that one.

While attending a painting session last week, one of the artists asked if any of us remembered how we felt when we completed our first *masterpiece*. That led to the questions as to whether we still had some of our old works at home and how did it feel when our first painting sold? The room was buzzing with excitement and laughter as each had a story to tell. It was a wonderful painting session. I do so enjoy this group of artists; they get everyone's creative juices flowing. And yes, I still have some of my old works but that is a whole other column.

When I first started my painting journey some twenty years or so ago, many of my works were donations to charities or gifts to friends and family members.

I am certain you too have given away many paintings over the years and occasionally a friend or family member might have given you words of encouragement regarding your work and so you keep painting. Somewhere along the way, one or two paintings sell and you the artist becomes more confident. The idea that someone likes your work enough to purchase it excites you.

You think to yourself and wonder if you should test the waters; you purchase inexpensive frames for your paintings and then you look into displaying your works in local restaurants or perhaps you rent a booth at an arts and crafts sale.

At the beginning, pricing is very difficult; you will be selling your works at give away prices if you expect to make any sales. Learning to deal with this is part of the journey; getting yourself and your work known to the public is another.

Many years ago, as a beginning artist, I learned that one would need to earn their Brownie Points before charging higher prices.

You earn your Brownie Points by entering juried competitions and having works accepted, receiving awards, holding group or solo exhibits, donating works. It is important to work hard at promoting yourself and your paintings getting the word out to the public. Share your heart and soul with them, show them what you do, let them know who you are.

Just the other day someone mentioned that I was good at promoting my work and myself. It is not a matter of being good; it is up to the individual to get off his or her duff and stop waiting for someone else to do it and believing enough in your abilities as an artist. Over the years, I have done a lot of legwork and advertisement to get my work out to the

public. And work, very and costly. I solo shows some were some not. Should you decide to have a solo



yes, it is a lot of time consuming have had many of the years successful and

exhibit, be prepared for the cost in framing, commissions for galleries, supplies used and cost involved in promoting your exhibition and the up and the down of it all.

As I write this, an incident that happened to me several years ago comes to mind. By then I had entered several juried exhibitions and had some of my work accepted numerous times and even received an award or two. For this particular exhibition, I had painted a lovely winter scene. A few weeks after the show I received a phone call asking if that particular painting was still available. I told them that it was.

The person on the phone went on to say how much the family really liked the painting and wondered if they could keep it at their home for a couple of days to view it. I knew the people so it was not a problem, after all it could lead to a sale. Days later, they called to say how the painting felt just right in their home but my price was too high. The caller proceeded to name a few well to do artists and added I was not as renowned an artist. Remember earlier when I mentioned the ups /downs; these types of comments are unfortunately part of the journey to becoming an artist.

I am thinking to myself; what is wrong with these people?

Before a painting even becomes a finished product there are photos to developed for reference, painting supplies to be purchased, many sketches to be drawn before deciding which is best. Then you the artist want to display your painting the best you can afford, after all this is a representation of yourself, so you bring the painting to a professional frame shop. Do not forget about the gallery commission, which is be added to the price, and all the hours of labor that went into creating it; this is one area an artist never gets his worth (hours worked).

All the above are some of the preparations for a juried show, when it comes to having a solo exhibition, boy oh boy does the cost go up.

The same painting was entered and accepted in another juried competition and was later purchased by a young couple. They paid monthly payments as they could not afford full payment but at no time did they tell me it was too pricy or talk about well- known artists. I firmly believe that everything that happens in life, happens for a reason, just as I knew, my painting was going to a good home.

There is so
artist to
deal with
decides to
pieces with



much for an
think about and
once he or she
share their
the public.

Critique is one of them; constructive criticism is a good thing and you have to be able to take it, deal with it and learn from it. You do not have to accept it; it is your decision and yours alone.

On the other hand, the public also needs to inform themselves regarding the art world before commenting on an artists pricing. The artist just does not pick a price out of a hat

and says this is what I will charge today. Art is not always about its value in money or if a well to do artist painted it. If you like the artwork, buy it, end of story.

You can view some of my works at *Canvas & Clay* in New Liskeard, *Kirkland Lake Museum*, *Timmins Museum*, *Olde Towne Inn* in Englehart, *Coffee Time/ Englehart*, *Busy Bee Restaurant* in Temagami and on my Web Site: <http://www.ArtistMom.net>

Until next time, keep those creative juices flowing.

Alice Y. Seguin Sawicki signing off