SELLING ART: Presentation by Dawn Teall, June 20, 2017

"Displaying, Pricing, and Selling Your Art" workshop

There are lots of ways to increase the chances of selling your work without "hard selling" it, and some of them are extremely doable… they just take some thought and preparation. Hard selling usually backfires, so we never do it.

DO

1. Make your Sales/studio area extremely welcoming: snacks, water, seating, shade. Think of making this a place people will want to sit and relax awhile. The longer you can keep people in your space, the more you will sell.

2. As weird as it might be for you to have a lot of strangers walking through your studio or home, it can be equally awkward-feeling for attendees to tromp around in someone else's space. Eliminate that awkwardness immediately. Consider each attendee as someone you've personally invited to your studio or display space. Welcome them like they're a friend of a friend attending a BBQ at your house. What are some things you would say to those people when they arrive?
    a. Hi, how are you doing today? (And mean it! Give them space and attention to answer that question honestly… it goes a long way).
    b. I really appreciate you taking the time to come by my studio.
    c. Can I show you around a little bit, or would you like to just browse on your own? (By show around, I mean walk with them a minute and offer a little information about some of your work).

    If it's crowded, make every attempt to do at least some of this, then excuse yourself to greet additional people: "Have fun looking around, I'm just going to say hi to a few other people."

3. Show your process: Either demonstrate your art during the show, or have samples of your work in different stages available for people to view, or have pictures and descriptions displayed of your process. If you aren't comfortable talking to people about your process, write it up like a little mini presentation and display it next to your work.

4. Have prices marked very clearly, along with descriptions of materials/processes used. Many people will be hesitant to ask, but won't' want to consider buying your work unless they know these things.

5. Have an email sign-up list, and invite people to sign it (don't just put it out and hope). Explain to people that you don't send a lot of emails out… no more than one a month, and that you'll never share their address with anyone else. This is important for the LONG GAME, which I'll talk about in a minute.

DON'T

1. Do NOT hide in the corner, behind a work table, behind an easel. There's no better way to make attendees feel really weird about being in your space. Remember, you've invited these people over. Greet them like friends of friends, introduce yourself. BE ON! It's exhausting, especially for introverts, but it's only for a couple of days and it will make a big difference. If you can't do this, find someone who can do it for you… a family member or a friend who knows your work and can help you talk with people about it.

2. Don't focus right away on the sale… focus on the opportunity to talk about your work and your process. The more enthusiastic and excited you are about your work, the more engaged attendees will be and the longer they'll stick around and the more likely they'll be to buy.

3. Don't be surprised that some people are jerks. Expect that it will happen occasionally in the course of the show, and try not to take it personally. If you let some people's thoughtless remarks, grimaces, or rude behavior get to you, your enthusiasm will deflate.

Now for the harder part: Engaged customers turn in to buyers.

-Sometimes just because they love love love your work.

-Sometimes just because they appreciate you and your passion and want to own an example of that passion.

-Sometimes just because the work now has a story behind it: about how they met the artist and feel like they understand the artist and the work.

Engaging customers

1. Starts with the comfortable ambiance and welcoming greeting from above.
2. Try to get a read on each customer… are they open friendly, open to talking? If so, that's your cue to ENGAGE! Ask them about themselves first. How are they enjoying the tour so far? Is this their first time going to Open Studios?
    a. Regardless of their answer to the last question, this will cue you to start a conversation about you and your work… Is this your first Open Studios? Tell them! And explain how excited you are to be in the show. Then offer to show them around a bit, or let them know you're available if they have any questions.
3. Engaging if someone isn't open and friendly…
    a. After greeting them, say "let me know if you have any questions," and give them a little time and space to look around.
    b. When you see they've seen almost everything, approach them one more time, asking something about themselves… "do you live in the area or are you visiting?" Is this your first Open Studios tour?" Start a conversation any way you can, and then offer to tell them a bit about your work. If they don't take you up on it, just say "okay, thanks again for taking the time to come by… would you like to sign my email list… etc."

Examples of ways we engage our customers:

1. Do you live nearby or are you visiting? Always works because if they live near, we jump in to the local nature of our gallery, etc. If they're visiting, that's great for follow up questions about where they live, their vacation plans, etc.
2. We're huge fans of our artists work, and the minute we see someone focusing on a particular artist, we are there to tell their story and to explain what we love about the work. Sometimes it's easier for someone else to do that for you… don't be afraid to have friends/family on hand to talk you and your work up.
3. Email list… THE LONG GAME: If we only considered high sales days in our gallery as successful days, we'd be very unhappy a lot. Some days we don't sell a thing. But most days we have really great interactions and conversations with people who are just browsing, and we'll get those people on our mailing list. When they hear from us, they pay attention! Because we took the time to talk with them, even though they didn't buy anything. Invariably, those people will come back to us when they need a gift, or because they couldn't get an item out of their heads. The very best mailing lists are those that include names of people who you've spent some time talking to. The emails get opened and the customers come back.