

Cory Huff: Hello everybody. It's Cory from The Abundant Artist and I am here with Gwenn Seemel.

Gwenn Seemel: Hello.

Cory Huff: So all right, so we'll get started in just a second. Then Gwenn, so you can run through your stuff Gwenn, and as people surface questions and stuff I'll just watch the chat and I might interrupt with some questions. For those who are here and just getting started, if you are not 100% familiar with what we're doing today as sometimes happens, then just as a reminder if you are here you are most likely a member of The Abundant Artist Association unless you got in through a backdoor somehow. We'll talk about that later.

We are- today this is our first edition of our monthly challenges that we're doing for the Association, where we're going to talk specifically today about how to land paid commissions. I know many of you who are listening, you've already landed some paid commissions, you've already done a few of those. I asked Gwenn to join us today because Gwenn is a commission veteran. That's a lot, a big chunk of her revenue comes from commissions. It's a big part of what she does and she'll talk more about that. She's done everything from individual portraits to large public art projects, so this will be a fun conversation.

If you are somebody who is new to commission work, I think this will be valuable for you too. We want to help you not only get your first commissions, but also continue to step up to bigger and bigger commissions until a year from now, when everybody in The Abundant Artist Association is doing six figure commissions.

Gwenn Seemel: Sounds good.

Cory Huff: Fingers crossed. All right cool, Gwenn, I will turn the time over to you. If you are watching, please feel free to leave questions and questions are best asked using the "ask a question" feature on Crowdcast. If you hover on the left hand side of your screen in whatever device you are looking at, there should be a little link that says "ask a question". Leave your questions there and feel free to vote on other people's questions, we want to make sure that we get to as many questions as we can.

Some of them we may not get to just depending on time and how much material Gwenn has to cover, and the questions are best left over there because the chat can be a little bit busy and we want to make sure that we get questions. Gwenn, it's all yours.

Gwenn Seemel: Okay. I think maybe some of you know who I am already. Just to summarize a little bit: I've been making my living as an artist for 14 years now. I am more

than a teenager, I'm two years into my teenage years and while finding out what that means I'm definitely going back into that angst of my teenage years in a good way. In that time mostly I've been doing commission portrait work, some other commission work as well, but a huge focus on portraiture. If you all want to tell me if that something in particular that you want to focus on portraiture and see what the audience is interested in I can focus on that, otherwise keep it more general.

I want to start with three things that I think it's important to know when you are selling work generally or when you are doing commission work. The first is that art is not a luxury, it is a necessity. A lot of people generally will disagree with that statement, but these same people will be making sure that they pay for their televisions so that they can see their shows that they like because TV is art. It may be not independent art, it may be corporate art but it is still art. It is providing that connection that people are looking for with art.

Being aware, like as you move into your business or do business type things with your art, that art is a necessity on par with like food and shelter and healthcare and things like that. It is literally something that people cannot live without, I think is really important and will shape- just sort of navigate, being someone who is selling art as well as making it. That's important; art is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

Then I think something to keep in mind always is that people want to be seen as special. I always think back to a sales seminar that I went to when- this was years ago, it was a sales seminar by Jeffrey Gitomer. His work, and it's a lot of books, he has written a lot of books. They are very salesy, they are not art focused, and his voice and his general person is outrageous and sometimes in wonderful ways sometimes in annoying ways.

Anyway, the point is that I went to the sales seminar and at some point in it he asked his audience, "When it's you and the client, who is the most important person in the room?" Someone trying to get the answer right said, "It's always going to be the client." Gitomer responded by saying, "No it's you and the client thinks the same. They think that they also are the most important person." I think that when we enter into sales stuff we are generally relating with people, understanding that everyone is coming to the table thinking that they are the most important person and in a sense they are. To them they are the most important person. This will help you to negotiate better and navigate better everything that you are trying to do.

Keeping that in mind is a good one and especially since when you are doing commission work, knowing that is a powerful thing, because you are taking into account what the client needs and wants and weighing it properly. Which is something I'm going to get into a little bit later, about how there is a difference between doing fine art on commission and doing commercial work or being like a graphic designer. There are different rules that you are going to play by, and

it's important for you to be aware of them and then also to communicate that to people, but I'll get into that later.

The first thing that you should know is art is not a luxury but a necessity. The second thing is people want to be seen as special. The third and probably the most important thing as you start with this challenge is to get other people talking about your art. This is true for selling your art generally, but for commission work it's really important. Well, it's great if you want to talk about your work and make sure that people know about it. That's awesome and that's a place to start; getting people talking about your work. You really need to get other people saying good things about your art because that's going to create the buzz that really sells it. Art does often sell by word of mouth or by words generally, by buzz as opposed to what it looks like.

With that I'm going to dig into a little bit each of the levels that I talked about in the description for this webinar, this challenge. In the beginning level I talked about how you wanted to get away from saying, like in your Instagram profile saying commission is accepted, that's cool that you are making sure that people know that you are open to that. That's definitely important. When, I guess what I want to say is that a lot of people are more verbal than visual so some people are going to be able to see that you say commission is accepted. They are going to look at your feed and see what you do and they are going to be able to imagine I can commission them to do something like what's here.

For a lot of people if you have the words like "commission me to paint your pet" or you have an image that you've done of someone's cat, like a black and white drawing of someone's cat. You can say like, "Your cat stays here," or something like that, it's going to actually cause them to think in terms of what they can do with you, like how they can work with you.

Most people are not thinking in terms of images, a lot of us have internal dialogs and you can assume that a lot of people that you might be wanting to get to commission your work are also going to be having these internal monologues. You want to be able to insert your words into their internal monologue by saying things like commission a colorful watercolor painting of a childhood dream. That might trigger something for them; that's what I want to do. I need to have this dream memorialized in this way.

Being aware that while you are an artist, so you are probably more visual, but that other people may not have that same mode, is useful when you are trying to, when you are starting out and trying to get commission work. Also, as you are starting out really consider getting the accoutrements of the professional artists, things like business cards and your own website.

It may seem like, and I guess maybe I should say this may not be true across the board for every single artist. For example, I used to work for, write for an art magazine and it was, I was told or not really told so much as it was known that I wasn't supposed to be featuring artists who didn't have their own website.

Something to consider, maybe you don't want to be in magazines like that one and that's fine, but it is something to consider and maybe something that you want to look at.

For the intermediate level; these are people who you, have probably done commission work and you want to be doing more. The important thing, I think, with this group is to really focus on shifting from broadcast communication or broadcast outreach to individual outreach. I'm getting a feeling that a lot of people in this Association are pretty good at the broadcast outreach, by which I mean you are good at making sure that everybody knows on social media what you have going on. You send out your emails, the email updates, that sort of thing. You are good at reaching out to a wide group of people.

It's maybe a little bit harder for many artists, myself included, is that individual outreach where you are specifically asking one person for a favor essentially. In this case, you are asking them to talk about why they commissioned you to make this piece, you want to know about why they buy generally, why they commission art specifically and also what they like about your work.

As you are getting this feedback, as you are approaching clients that you've hopefully been keeping in touch with anyway but maybe now you are going to keep in touch with better. You need to recognize that they may say things that you don't like about your work and you don't agree, but the feedback always says at least as much about the person who is giving it as about whatever they are giving feedback about.

Try not to take it personally, and think more in terms of talking to multiple people about why they have purchased your art or commissioned your art in the past and then seeing patterns in what people are saying. Then from there maybe you are going to be able to turn that into a new commission or in any case you are back on their mind so they might refer your work to somebody else. This is really, I think the intermediate level is really about digging into your contacts or your network that already exists and treating them like they are important, because they all think they are important. They are actually probably pretty important to you.

I think an exercise that this is not just for the intermediate level, but for any artist at any level is to make a list of what I call your best people. People who over the years have supported you in a variety ways. Either they have commissioned you so they are a client, or they've curated your stuff into a show. Maybe they are just your friends, people that you get along with socially but also are interested in your art.

These are your best people, these are your advocates who have helped you in the past in one way or another and then making sure that you stay in touch with them. Maybe you even make a schedule. I am not really that advanced, but I have a list of my best people and I look over it every so often. Make sure like I

keep notes, I emailed that person it was six months ago now so maybe I should reach out to them again.

It doesn't always have to be about, "Hey this is what I'm working on right now," it can become more social as you get better at staying in touch with these people. The intermediate level specifically, but I think for all artists; staying in touch with people, doing that individual outreach, starting to ask for favors. Like, "Will you post about my work? Will you post this about my work," that sort of a thing, I think that's where you need to be headed.

Also, keep in mind there are two reasons why people buy art, I think. The first being that something in the artwork connects to something in their lives and the second being that they like the artist. Nowhere in there is there that you have hundreds of thousands of followers on Facebook or Twitter or whatever. For the most part people, individuals are not going to buy because you have that kind of crowd on social media. That's not going to be what piques their interest. I'm not saying that working for hundreds of thousands of followers isn't a valid goal, it's just not in this particular case. What we're really talking about is nurturing relationships, getting good at really building friendships, ultimately with these people who are going to be supporting your work.

I want to address a question that was asked before this webinar started and I forget who it was that asked it. She was talking about how she has been working with a gallery, and the question is that she was doing art through this gallery. Maybe I can follow up and see who this was.

Cory Huff: I think I have it, okay and I think it's was it Christine? Yeah.

Gwenn Seemel: Maybe.

Cory Huff: Gabriella.

Gwenn Seemel: Maybe Gabriella, maybe Gabrielle. Yes, Gabrielle. Gabrielle asked about how basically to get into a situation where the gallery is actually going to allow you to talk directly with your clients, because that is important. From what she described in her question, I get the feeling that there is maybe like an underlying issue there. Like maybe the relationship with the gallery is not as strong as it could be, as you are not communicating as much as you could be. This is really hitting back to what I was talking about, getting better at communicating and relating with people.

I recently did a professional development thing through Creative Capital which is this great group that used to offer grants and I think they don't offer grants again, but they do a lot of professional development. They have this amazing process for doing negotiation that I want to share with you because it really helps as you are going into these situations, especially where maybe there are hard feelings, which I'm not sure if that's exactly what's going on for Gabrielle.

But if there has been miscommunication, and there is maybe some tension there, to go through the process. I'm going to go through what I imagine Gabrielle might be going through and maybe she can give, sort of explain if this is really what's going on as I make up this story.

The first thing that someone like Gabrielle would want to do would be to define the emotions and relationships that are going on there, so from her own perspective, but also from the gallery's perspective. This might be that, so like maybe she is feeling used by the gallery, it sounds like that might be the case. They are using her to make whatever is the commission that they take off of the commissions. Whatever the money their cut of the commissions is, they are using her without giving her access to actually evolving her network, widening her network. She is coming into the negotiations with that kind of tension of like "I'm not really being respected."

They from their perspective might be really happy with this situation, because they they get to use an artist. They may not think of it that way, hopefully they don't think of it that way, but they are probably pretty pleased because they feel really protected. What they are maybe lacking and something that you can maybe talk about as this, defining emotions and relationships aspect of negotiating is that they are not valuing what Gabrielle could bring to the table if she was more in touch with the clients. The clients might be even more excited about the work if they had more contact with the artist. They might be able to communicate better with her, what it is that they are looking for.

These are things that Gabrielle could use as she is trying to move forward and shift her relationship with the gallery. She needs to sit down and figure out what her priorities are when she goes into negotiation with them. The worksheet that Creative Capital gave is ask for three priorities, and I think it's important when I've used the worksheet, sometimes you are struggling, like "what is it I want from the gallery?" I want them to respect me, I want them to give me, maybe its first I want them to give me contact directly with the client. I want them to respect me.

Maybe there is something else that you want, and it causes you to dig deeper into what is going on in your relationship with these people and that'll ultimately help you to have a better relationship, or get out of the relationship if that's what's necessary at a given time.

Then also to dig into what the priorities are for the gallery. So they want to maintain control. That is probably their first priority. For them it feels like less of a time suck or a time investment if they can just be sure artists are not going to be going behind their back, so they just maintain that control and they don't have to do any more thinking about it. That might be their entire priority, that's all that they are really looking for. I'm not sure if Gabrielle can add to what maybe might be going on for them as well. That's what you do, you dig into their end of things as well.

Then you compare what your priorities are and what their priorities are and you ask yourself what you have in common. Well, probably, although I didn't list in the priorities, probably what you have in common is that you want the clients to be happy. It's only useful for the gallery if they are happy with what Gabrielle has created, it's only useful for Gabrielle if people like the work that she is creating for them. That should feature pretty heavily when you go into negotiations with the gallery and say like, "Look, I think that we are both after this one goal really, so how can we make that goal happen and be sure that it's happening? How can we be sure that we're being as effective as we can be?"

This is, that was maybe digging specifically into the question, but it comes back to what I've been talking about from the beginning, which is that when you are doing commission work you are intensifying stuff that's already happening when you are selling your work, or when you are making your work and showing it, even if you are not selling it. What you are doing when you put your art work out there is you are creating relationships via the medium of your art work.

Ideally if you are going to sell and if you are going to have a sustainable practice, you are going to have a situation where you aren't just talking through the medium of your art anymore, you've actually started to have real conversations with people who you are emailing back and forth talking on the phone back and forth with people.

When you do commission work that's even more important, because you are essentially embodying what all artists are navigating, which is societal pressures versus their artistic vision. You are embodying the societal pressures with one person that you've said, "Yes, I will allow you to be involved in my process to a certain degree," and that's where you decide where your boundaries are as far as what they can tell you to do. If they can tell you to fix the work or change the work afterwards, after you've said that it's done. It's really important to get good at listening.

Be prepared to some degree for what people might be saying, so that you are not shocked if someone gives some kind of feedback about your work and you can gracefully navigate it and acknowledge that's how they are feeling. That doesn't mean it's across the board about my art. Again, it comes back to real relationships. Not how many people you have who are following you. Not those kinds of metrics, but the real quality aspect of your career, the quality of relationships.

Now moving on to the advanced level, this is where you are trying to get public commissions or ... when I say public commission I mean anything that's going to be on display publicly or in a building that the public has access to. Sometimes these public art commissions are publicly funded, which means they are super political because people get really involved in whatever taxpayer money is going towards.

Even if they are not taxpayer funded, public art commissions tend to be political in a sense that they are really visible so people get really, sort of have big opinions about what it is that they are being shown and the art that is being supported or put in front of them by these institutions, whoever is doing the commissioning.

Be aware that when you are talking with someone about doing a public art commission, you are navigating not only their needs, so it's not like when you do a private commission where you are just navigating this client's needs hopefully. You are also navigating the entire environment around where the art work is going to be.

Being aware of things like how is this art going to be used? Is it supposed to be healing, is it supposed to be celebration, is it supposed to be just decoration? These are all valid things that the art might be, but knowing and understanding the other party will help you to be able to create a situation where they are going to want to work with you. You are going to get that commission and that sort of stuff.

Also, something to keep in mind: when working with gatekeepers, generally in art world and specific to public art commissions, is that sometimes the people who are put in charge of art type stuff for companies are institutors, are people who wanted to be artists. Like they become arts administrators, they are people who work with artists because they wanted to be artists themselves. Sometimes this means that they love artists and they know how hard it is to be an artist because they've tried to do it and may have decided not to do it because it was too hard. Sometimes it means they are super bitter.

I have encountered many people, many gatekeepers in the art world who are bitter non artists or who want to be artists. This goes back again to what I was saying. I'm really hammering on this, knowing what the other person is thinking or at least trying to understand what they are thinking before you even get in touch with them. Being prepared is vital. Also, that's going to help you communicate with them better.

One more thing that I want to say specific to the advanced level is that you should be résumé writing on a regular basis. This is a term that I use for- I guess really everybody should be doing this. When you find an artist whose work you love or who has an opportunity that you are like, "I should be doing that. Why did they get that art commission, I think I should have it." Go through their resume, see what they are doing, see what it is that maybe the institution is seeing in their work as far as their resume, what it is about them that gives them the clout. See how you can make your résumé look better to people who are on these committees who are deciding for the public art commission.

Okay, that's a lot of information and I'm really wishing I did slides, I don't know why I didn't think that slides were a thing. I'm sorry Cory.

Cory Huff: Not at all.

Gwenn Seemel: I'm sorry the Association everybody.

Cory Huff: This is super useful. I think where we go from here maybe is start diving into people's individual questions, but- and I'm going to turn my own video back on. One of the, so Gwenn has given us a rundown of the basics of how to go from level to level in your career. The purpose of what we're doing here with these challenges is not only to learn the information, which is relatively straightforward, like Gwenn just conveyed it all in 20 minutes. It's not a big deal.

Gwenn Seemel: Maybe not all.

Cory Huff: It's really easy. The point of being a part of the association, of being a part of this challenge is to say, "Okay this is what I am specifically going to do in the next two weeks to move my commission work forward." What I want all of you to be thinking about is, okay, if you are a beginner and you haven't gotten a commission yet, or maybe you've only done a couple, what specifically from what Gwenn talked about do you need to do over the next two weeks. It might be as simple as "I just need to rewrite my About page and get my stuff up on my website and get a marketing channel going." Whether that's email or some social media challenge or something.

If you've done a few commissions and you want to start like generating real money from it, it might be doing what Gwenn talked about, figuring out who your- I don't remember exactly the word you used, but like your most important people. Yeah, your best people.

Gwenn Seemel: Yeah, best people.

Cory Huff: Figuring out who those people are.

Gwenn Seemel: Cory is one of my best people by the way y'all, just so you know.

Cory Huff: Figuring out who those people are and making a list and a schedule for yourself so that you can start reaching out to them, and then reach out to them. Make your goal to reach out to one of them in this week or every day.

Gwenn Seemel: Every day, yeah, that's what I try to do.

Cory Huff: Every day, that's awesome. I really want members of the Association, I want you to have a bias towards action. We're going to, I'm going to post a link, we are going to get to some questions and Gwenn can answer those questions. I'm going to post a link here in just a second over to the association where we'll have a discussion about all of this. I'd love to have all of you posting in the community over there what you are going to do in the next two weeks to make, to implement what Gwenn has taught here today.

Gwenn Seemel: I have suggestions for specific actions for the different levels, should I give that?

Cory Huff: Sure, go for it.

Gwenn Seemel: This is specific to social media; the beginner level, like Cory was saying adjust your profile, your bios whatever to reflect more specific language about what it is that you really want people to be commissioning you for. Also, maybe create memes or ads where you have an image that you've made, so something visual to get them thinking but then also put text on there like "Your cats face here" or something like that.

For the intermediate level social media; talk about previous commissions. Make memes or ads where you specifically tell a story, or a video where you tell a story about something. Don't just share like, "This person was amazing because they commissioned me," I mean I'm guilty of that too so I'm not really making fun of you if that's what you are doing.

Share specific stories like, something like, one of my favorite clients years ago said I was telling her about stuff that was going on in my life and she just said, "Well it wasn't your movie. You were playing a role in someone else's movie so you got sucked into this thing where you had crappy stuff happen to you." We do that for each other, we play roles in each other's movies. Sharing that story which is like the little piece of wisdom from a client makes the difference, it makes it a more interesting package.

Then social media specific for the advanced group; you should be networking like via social media with your targets, with people who are working at these institutions. You should at least be looking them up on LinkedIn, figuring out who you might try to contact, where they might be next. Are they likely to be involved in the arts council of your state, will they be at the public meeting? Things like that, you should constantly be looking at those things. Dedicate maybe even like a half hour every day to tracking down those things, that can be your outreach, is specifically looking at where those people are going to be.

Cory Huff: Perfect. I just posted a link to the challenge discussion over in Workplace and I would love for you to post over there what you are going to do in the next two weeks. If you don't know, if you are like, "I have no idea what I should do," post in the questions, and we've got half an hour left, we might be able to help you directly answer some of that and help figure out what to do if you are feeling overwhelmed. The link to the discussion is in the chat section of Crowdcast.

First question from Linda Young or Lindy Young; do you find the pressure of commission work stressful or invigorating? What do you do to cope if it becomes stressful?

Gwenn Seemel: All right, I think it becomes stressful when you, when I have not properly defined my boundaries with people. I think it's valuable as an artist even if you

are starting out and you are maybe not sure you can, you might still be able to do this. To think back to situations that you've had where you've done commissions where it's gone well, but also to think about like when you felt pushed by someone to do something that you didn't want to do.

For example I do not change my art after I have decided that is done and delivered it to the client. I have done it, sorry, I've done that once and that was- they were extenuating circumstances, I decided to do it after much conversation. It was really to save the, there was someone who was upset with the commission and she was married to someone else. This other person I felt bad for him because he was the one who had instigated the commission and I felt like she would never let him hear the end of it if I didn't make this change.

It was a very specific situation, but now I know and I make sure that people know straight up. I have it in my contract, I don't make changes after the work is done. You can have another artist make the change, I say that, but I'm not going to make it. I do this so that we are very clear from the beginning what's going on.

When things are tense it's because you haven't established yourself as the adventure leader. Some of those people don't necessarily have, do a commission piece all the time. They actually want you to take them on this adventure that is commission work and if you are not confident enough or at least projecting confidence enough, they are going to feel like they have to take control because, "Oh she doesn't know what she is doing so I better micromanage." It's really about projecting that confidence and also being very clear about your boundaries and communicating them.

Cory Huff:

Thank you and Lindy you also asked can you share a sample contract and if Gwenn wants to do that that's great. I also want to point out there is a book called Business and Legal Forms for Fine Artists. If you purchase this book, I think it's 20 bucks, then you will have all of the contracts that you need for your art business, because it has all of them in there. Once you become, once you sign million dollar pieces of art you could hire a lawyer to do it for you. In the meanwhile just having an example book like that is a great way to get started. There is also the one that I have has a CD so you can do a, have a digital copy of the forms. There is also- the newer edition has a downloadable set.

Gwenn Seemel:

If you are doing the more advanced stuff and you end up having the contract given to you, that's probably what's going to happen if you are doing public art commissions. Please do not sign that contract before reviewing it with at least one other person. They don't have to be a lawyer, even just having another pair of eyes; someone you trust, someone who is smart, someone who is going to look out for you. We are not always our own best advocates and our friends are usually more protective of us than we are of ourselves. They will be like, "Wait you need to ask about that before you sign it," so make sure you talk that ...

Cory Huff: One more time, the name of the book is Business and Legal Forms for Fine Artists. This is the fourth edition, I think the fifth edition is out now so you might want to look for the latest edition. Somebody asked; does that book work for Canadians? Generally speaking US and Canadian contract law are pretty similar but there are going to be some differences and I'm not a lawyer so I can't really speak to the differences. You might look for a Canadian edition, but yeah for the most part it should work.

Let's see, Tom says "how do I connect with a client base that can afford work starting at \$2,000? That seems to be the level at which people really appreciate my kinetic art. I find that most people want to work starting at that level, but the people I'm currently reaching cannot afford it."

Gwenn Seemel: Okay. I don't know about specifically if you've done shows of your work and what kind of venues you are showing in, but that can be a way to access that kind of client base, that higher level client base. Specifically if you don't just make a bunch of your sculptures that are unrelated, but if you make something that really works together as a series and gets people excited as a series.

Because we really talked about and this is, again it's getting other people to talk about your art and it starts with you talking about your work but then it really is about getting press. Are you sending out press releases, are you finding out excuses to send out press releases even when you don't have a show coming up just so that you can stay in touch with people, press people who you are interested in?

Cory Huff: Yeah that's great. Definitely, I love the advice about if you are not finding the people who are a good fit for your work, then you need to be showing your work in a different place.

Gwenn Seemel: Yeah who are those people, also know your audience and where they hang out.

Cory Huff: Tom, I noticed that like, I just- you've been around for a long time so I know that he is, I know a little more about your situation. I know that you've been showing your work in places like public libraries which is awesome and was a great way for you to get started. I also know that you just landed what essentially amounts to a very large commission work, and I would say what are the attributes of the person who hired you for that piece, and figure out how you can duplicate that person and where does that person spend time? Where do they go in their off days, where do they go for fun and who are their friends and how can you get in front of those people?

Gwenn Seemel: Tom I'm sorry I just called you Herald it just revealed that I'm a little nervous.

Cory Huff: Tom Herald. His name is Tom Herald.

Gwenn Seemel: Yes I know I'm sorry.

Cory Huff: You are fine. All right let's see, Gwenn can you please ... Emerson says "Gwenn can you please share some specific verbiage for websites and emails in order to generate interesting commissions?" I think you did that a little bit at the beginning.

Gwenn Seemel: All right, yeah. I hesitate to share specific sentences, but what I always get as feedback from my sweetie who does a lot of the like, looking over making sure that my marketing stuff is interesting to someone besides me and possibly my mother, is that I start my sentences with "I" a lot, too much. Figure out a way to say "you" or "your" quite immediately in their world. Like I was saying like "your dream painted" and colorful, magical, I'm not sure, stuff like that. Also, just really the focus on the "you". Try to see it from their perspective, I guess, is the best. I'll look at your work on the challenge page and then maybe give you something specific.

Cory Huff: Yeah. Emerson, I would also encourage you to- if you haven't done it yet, go through in the How to Sell Your Art Online courses, which you should have access to as an associate. The How to Sell Your Art online courses, the 101 course, the first lesson is called Figure Out Your Uniquity and that's all about what makes you unique as an artist. What helps you, how are you different from other artists. In there you are also going to want to figure out who your ideal clients are, and we give you some exercises to figure that out. If you go through those two lessons and exercises, you should have a pretty good idea of how to talk about your work in a way that is collector focused rather than you focused. Awesome.

Tom Herald one more time says "my art work is perfect for waiting areas and all types of waiting areas, this is true. How does one go about connecting with public institutions; libraries, schools, hospitals or corporate clients to market my work to them?"

Gwenn Seemel: In that case I would say that yeah, the numbers do matter more; they are going to want to see you do have that clout. I don't want to undersell the importance of personal connection, so who do you know already who is connected to that world in some way? Do you even have a good relationship with your doctor? Any of that, those ...

People like to say it's who you know but it's really also how long you've known them. People who have been following your career for a while or just following you, like know you as a person for a while are going to be more likely to or they are just going to be more invested in what you are doing. Really look at your circle. Just- it's something as stupid as going through your phone contacts and seeing these are people I actually have phone numbers for, is there any way that they can connect me to this world that I'm interested in.

Cory Huff: Perfect, yeah. You can also do things like, I think you mentioned this earlier Gwenn, going through LinkedIn and finding the people that would potentially hire you. Who is the administrator at the hospital who is in charge of public

works projects or public art projects? A lot of times you can find that stuff on LinkedIn or you can find somebody who is connected on LinkedIn and reach out to that person and get started there.

J. C. says “wondering please what to prioritize. I’m just starting and I’m trying to do it all; build a website, create a business card, launch a social media presence, write a statement etcetera. How do I prioritize?”

Gwenn Seemel:

Okay, what do you enjoy I think is the first thing. Is there anything in there that you are most excited about? You and specific social media, like if you prefer Instagram, that’s your thing, really focus on that. Do the other things as well but focus on that, because what you enjoy will make you want to do it more and that’s what you need. You need to basically be consistent in whatever it is that you are doing. Find a thing or the way that you like.

I always talk about making videos, the reason why I do it is to market my work, that’s one of the reasons, but the real reason, my heart reason, is that after my grandmother passed away she was my last real link to real family in France. I realized that I wasn’t going to start writing in French on my blog all the time, I just really don’t like writing in French, I have a problem with it, but I can speak French. I’m like I’m going to make videos, because then on a regular basis I’m going to be speaking my grandmother’s language.

Find your heart reason, find the thing that will make you enjoy whatever it is; whether that’s Instagram or whatever, or building a website. Maybe you really like the idea of having a home on the web and it really connects you to something else in your life what you enjoy.

Cory Huff:

I like that. Let’s see Natalie, Natalie says “can you give some suggestions on how to approach commissions for very small businesses where the client would like to keep the original and is also planning using the art work on postcards and mugs to give to their clients. In this case I’m afraid a licensing deal might spook them, any thoughts?”

Gwenn Seemel:

Yeah. Okay, so maybe find a different for them to pay you. Maybe they are willing to pay some fee to you, but also find a different way like could you do a trade, is there service interesting to you in some way or someone you know. Is there some way that they can maybe give you, offer you space to show your work? Make the deal work for you.

Like you said, you don’t want to spook them necessarily, but I don’t think that it’s wrong to mention that this is like licensing. Again, this goes back to what I was saying about putting words in people’s minds, I know that sounds manipulative. Basically what I’m saying is that most people are verbal and if you plant this idea that this is a licensing deal that’s going on here they might think about it more, they might learn about it more. I guess- wait I’m not really clear;

are you saying that you want a contract with them but you can't get a contract or?

Cory Huff: What she is asking and if she is here we'll invite her to come on and talk or maybe clarify it a little bit because this is a specific situation. The client would like to keep the original piece and then use that piece basically as a licensing deal on post cards and mugs and other stuff.

Gwenn Seemel: I see.

Cory Huff: It's an original sale plus licensing deal which a tiny little business, my thinking is a tiny little business may not be able to pay for depending on where the artist is at.

Gwenn Seemel: Yeah, find a different way for them to pay you through trade of some kind. There is usually something so that they feel like they've gotten a deal, but also you feel like you've gotten value out of it more than just the exposure and that sort of thing. You are actually being taken seriously by this client.

Cory Huff: Yeah, and even something as simple as if they are going to do a licensing deal with you, maybe they include your website on the back of all of the materials that they create.

Gwenn Seemel: I want to be clear and I think this is cool that this is happening, because partnering with someone who is of a similar size to you may not seem like such a big deal, but they are probably scrappy and hustling too so they get where you are at and they want to grow with you. Cory and I met when we were both starting out basically, when were just a few years into what we were doing. Part of the reason why we like each other so much is that we've been doing this together for a long time, so being aware of it as you are starting out with people that this might be something that's a long term pay off. It might not be like you are immediately going to get that pay off. Does that make sense?

Cory Huff: Yeah, it makes sense to me.

Gwenn Seemel: Okay.

Cory Huff: Okay let's see; Gwenn says "do you have a link to the Creative Capital worksheet?" Yeah we'll find it, we'll share a link to that. Let's see; Jay says "very helpful principles here, thank you. Wondering if you can say a bit more about how to bridge the gap between getting commissions from people you know in real life and those who might have discovered you online. All of my little commissions, okay I'm just- yeah, all of my little commissions have come the first way from people in real life and usually by surprise out of the blue. I get the idea that the two have much in common, perhaps you can elaborate on that if it inspires you."

Gwenn Seemel: Yeah, it's about getting other people to talk about your work, and specifically the press, or someone that they are going to trust as being an authority on what is good or what is interesting. Going- writing on what we were talking about with working with a business, when I was first starting out, and I recently redid this, when I was starting out in Portland I did a bunch of portraits of local business owners, the idea being that they would show my work at their place of business if they were owner operators. They would show my portrait there, so you would see a person with their portrait and that would be- anyone who walked in their store would see that.

I guess that isn't so much about getting someone else to talk about your art, except the owner operator totally would. They would be excited, be like this artist and they have relationships. They have a network and can be like, "This artist just walked in and wanted to do this thing and isn't this amazing I got this portrait," so yeah. Whatever you can do to make other people excited about your art, excited enough to talk is key.

Cory Huff: That's where I go back to the idea of those early lessons, you know, How to Sell Your Art Online courses are all about understanding what makes you different from other artists and understanding who your collectors are. If you know what gets your collectors excited then it's a pretty short step to go from there to getting them to talk about your work because you can just align that.

Gwenn Seemel: You could invite a bunch of your friend clients over and have an evening where they talk about your work and you ask them questions about the work. Maybe you feed them, give them some alcohol, make it a fun thing so it's not like a pressure, "Oh the artist is listening to us talk about their work." It can be a way to get feedback about your work that will help you to then market it to other people.

Cory Huff: Yeah for sure.

Gwenn Seemel: Maybe it can become a thing and then everyone will want to be invited over to your studio for like food and talking about that, so there is that.

Cory Huff: That would be, that's a great position to be in. Okay, Anita Nowinska, this is such a great question. "I've done 15 commissions over the past nine years ranging from £1,500 to £3,500 which is like a million dollars US. I struggle with finding the demographic with the big money to spend, how do I identify and target the big spenders? How do I find the £10,000 buyers?"

Gwenn Seemel: Okay your full disclosure, I don't know a lot of those buyers either. My audience tends to be more middle class and, or recently since I've moved to a place that's very healthy, but people think of themselves as salt of the earth. They are people with money but who don't necessarily want to spend the big money or think they shouldn't on art. That is the full disclosure.

I think, and essentially the answer to this question is going to be the same as before, you need to figure out where those people hang out. Is there a place locally where wealthy people vacation, for example? I feel like when you crack into that world, that world opens up to you, but full disclosure it's not, that's not really my audience necessarily.

Cory Huff: Anita, I will say I know that you recently had an opportunity like where somebody wanted to, you wanted to show your work in her- in the wealthy neighborhood where she lived, and I know that that experience didn't work out. In that same neighborhood there is a bunch of other people who are equally wealthy, other ways that you can connect with other people in that same neighborhood. I would encourage you to think about that a little bit. Leslie says "can you give specific examples of commission packages that can get us thinking?" This is- yeah, push it forward.

Gwenn Seemel: On my website I offer, I think it's four separate things that you might commission plus add-ons. I'm known for doing commissioned portraits so that's the single portraits, is what I call it. Then you can do group portraits versus group portraits. Also I paint on different supports, so sometimes it's supposed to be hang on the wall but I also paint on bags that people can carry around. It's a great way to have your work out there in the world at all times. It's also a great way to have your art work destroyed, so you have to be okay with that.

The add-ons are also, do you want something going on in the portrait besides the face. I think it's important when you are doing commission work to do what we are talking about, which is make modules out of it. There is the face and then there is the background or there is the, this is something that I did when I get back to you. There is the package where you have one conversation with the artist about what it is that you want and then they make the piece. There is the package where you have one conversation with the artist then they make a sketch and then you talk again and then they make the final piece. Maybe that is something you charge more for.

Really figure out how to break up your work into these modules and figure out how to charge more or less for them and encourage them as like add-ons and that sort of a thing. I hope that answers the question.

Cory Huff: Yeah, that's really great. Don't be intimidated by the fact that Gwenn has so many different options, Gwenn has been at this for 14 years. You can start with a single commission package where you ...

Gwenn Seemel: In fact, it's probably better if you do.

Cory Huff: You can have the Leslie Ortega portrait commission package and it's \$2,000, and you get a portrait of this person. Then you lay out the four steps that they need to take in order to hire you for the commission. If you just have a simple one option package like that on your website, that will get you further down the

steps than where you are now and you can add more stuff later. You don't have to have a dozen different options right away.

Gwenn Seemel: You will add more stuff as people start asking you about more stuff, so you can figure out what the interest is like. I like this package, but I would like this, and it will help you realize what you need to advertise, in the sense that if you don't people will be like, "Well you don't have that listed so how about you give this to me for this much money." Then like, "Well I'm going to list it now so that I don't have to negotiate with people about the prices and that sort of thing."

Cory Huff: Totally. Let's see; Marini says "It is the same situation as far as following up on people that have commissioned, if your only commission have been from friends. Also, do you want to look at what type of person they are or is it different because they are my friend?"

Gwenn Seemel: Yeah.

Cory Huff: If somebody is a friend should you be following up with them just like you would with other people?

Gwenn Seemel: I don't know about you, but not all of my friends care about my art. Some of them are like, they connect with different parts of me, so the ones who do connect with my art and are like, "I want to support you, I want to talk about you to everybody," those are the people that I want to really keep close. I want to keep in touch with them. I want to call them whenever I have a new idea for a new project. Make sure that they are like, they feel really included in my process so that they are even more excited to talk about me to others. This whole idea if your commissions come from your friends it's not cool, like no. It is way cool. That's pretty special actually, it's a good thing.

Cory Huff: Yeah it's a really good thing. Companies, organizations grow by activating their core group of people. I started The Abundant Artist eight years ago, we grew because we had a very small enthusiastic group of artists who were on board with the vision of what we were doing. The same thing happens for every artist; Picasso got where he was because he spent Saturday nights hanging out at Gertrude Stein's place and that tiny little group of people at her salons supported and pushed each other.

Gwenn Seemel: Yeah.

Cory Huff: Let's see; Jay says "I was also wondering if you've ever done illustration for books and if you have any suggestions for how to land those?"

Gwenn Seemel: Okay let me think. I've done cover art for two books and those came to me, it was not like a specific thing. I don't know if I have advice about landing those, but I do have a caution which is something that I referred to you earlier and I didn't get back to. The difference between a graphic designer and an artist; you

may view yourself as a graphic designer in that situation and that's fine and I'm not saying there is anything wrong with that. If you want to see yourself as an artist in that situation you need to understand the difference between them and you need to communicate that difference to the client.

I think the difference between a graphic designer and an artist is that an artist is someone that you hire because you love their vision and you want to see them do their thing in this context of whatever it is that you need done. A graphic designer is someone that you hire to tease out of your brain something that you can't quite make. They are basically a hired skilled hand. That's not to denigrate them in any way, it's just a different kind of a role.

What I do when I'm working on stuff that is like borderline graphic design stuff is I make sure that people understand that they are going to get one conversation with me via phone or video. One follow up with questions, one sketch and one feedback for the sketch and then they are getting out the final work. That's all that they get and they know they sign on that and they know that, because otherwise it can be an endless process. This is probably true for graphic designers as well.

Cory Huff: Graphic designers do the same thing.

Gwenn Seemel: Just communicate that very clearly with people. Maybe go to book fairs, maybe go meet artist, find artists or authors whose work you like online and start chatting with them. It's not going to work in every situation, like I know and you probably have the situation too, where people come at you and they are excited about your work and you are not as excited about them or you are, your pants are on fire I don't know. Whatever it is sometimes people don't have time but it doesn't mean that you shouldn't be reaching out.

I like, to use the two for one rule; so any time I am rejected by an opportunity, I use that as a bell that goes off in my head- I need reach out to two more opportunities. I count as opportunities even things like calling my friend and talking about my art, so that every time I'm rejected the rejection becomes a spur for more action. Like Cory was saying, you need to have this predisposition towards action. It should always be not feeling sorry for yourself in your studio, but what's next.

Cory Huff: Yeah. I love the programming yourself to do stuff when you ...

Gwenn Seemel: Think about it.

Cory Huff: Jay the other thing I'll say is I've worked with a handful. So I published a book, and the artist that illustrated my book was just somebody that I knew whose work that I liked and I asked her to illustrate my book. Having connections with authors and being friends with authors will land you opportunities.

The other thing if you are really serious, if you have something you really want to pursue and you want to do a lot of illustrating books and children's books and stuff, the other thing I would say is have a portfolio on your website. Then if you are looking to get hired for, there is only actually a handful of people in the world who hire people to do books on a regular basis and those are editors for publishers.

If you go down the list of editors at Random House, Penguin, HarperCollins and the other big publishing company that I can't remember the name of. Go down the list of all the editors there, email those editors to a link to your portfolio and say, "Hey I'm interested in doing illustration work." It's really going to, it's like 100 people. It's not a lot of people. Then there is more for some of the more niche publishers, but at the most it's four, 500 people who hire illustrators ever. It's not a huge group of people that you reach out to.

All right, let's see five minutes left. Thank you very much everybody for taking the time to be here. Thank you Gwenn for joining us again.

Gwenn Seemel: This is fun, I love this stuff and I hope you learn to love it or love it more whatever. I want to make this fun in the next two weeks, it will be.

Cory Huff: Hopefully with the challenges you start to see the idea that it's about falling in love with the process, not necessarily the result. You need to love doing the things that grow your career.

Gwenn Seemel: Also as individuals, as individual art entrepreneurs we are playing the long game. Companies need that immediate response, they need that quantity of people to purchase their product. We need that quality of people who are interested in our work and who are developing relationships with us. It's a long game that we're playing.

Cory Huff: Cool. Thank you so much everybody. Be sure to pop over to the monthly challenge group and let us know what you are up to for the next two weeks, what you are going to accomplish in the next two weeks and let us know if you have questions.

Gwenn Seemel: Bye.