

Selling at art shows with Owen Garratt Transcript

Cory: Good morning everybody! Hey there! This is Cory with The Abundant Artist, I'm excited to see everybody. We've got Jan and Anita from the UK, I see Marie, Jane from Jacksonville, Florida, Christine, again from the UK. We've got a strong UK presence this morning. UK artists are burning the evening oil to be here, so I'm glad you're here. Joe from North Carolina, Julie from San Jose, awesome. So glad that all of you are here. I am excited to introduce you to Owen Garratt, many of you are probably already familiar with Owen. We've had him on the podcast before, we've talked about him a lot over the last few years. He's been a good partner for The Abundant Artist, and I'm excited to have him again with us today to talk about how to sell at shows. How to sell your art at art shows. And as Owen will talk about, we'll cover a variety of different types of shows. I noticed in the comments people are talking about farmer's markets, talking about dog shows, talking about all kinds of different ways to sell at shows. Nina mentioned having business cards and a registration box and a form to fill out at the shows that she does, so all kinds of great advice flying around. I want to make sure that we try to touch on a lot of it. Obviously we have an hour- one other thing I wanted to mention- I posted this in the chat as well as I made it a question topic, its own question topic. When we are done here, my expectation is that you as a member of the Association are going to pop over to the Association community and you are going to post in the monthly challenge group what your primary takeaway is from today's session, and what you are going to do, what you're going to implement in the next two weeks to grow your art business from what you've learned here today. That's the whole point and reason that we do these monthly challenges and calls. So again, I'm excited that you're all here, I will stop talking and without further ado, let Owen take it away. I'm going to minimize my screen and make Owen the big screen here.

Owen: Oh! Okay.

Cory: I'm giving you the stage, Owen.

Owen: Ta da! Hello. My name is Owen Garratt, I'm in Western Canada, and if you hear just a little side- if you hear some noise in the background, I apologize for that. Our furnace went out last night and it's chilly in here! So we had to get that looked at. It was below freezing here last night and I would like to also take the opportunity to wish everyone a happy Thanksgiving- Canadian Thanksgiving. And there are many things for which we are grateful. So Cory asked me to come on and talk about art shows and my experience with it. If we've not met one way or another, I've been a full-time artist for coming up on twenty two years. I'm about three-quarters colorblind, so I work exclusively in pencil. And because I live in Alberta my focus has been the oil industry, of all things. And I have spent well over half my career selling to oil companies and oil service companies and the support industries. So instead of giving away golf shirts and jackets at their company barbecue, they use my framed limited edition prints. And I've been fortunate enough to, in addition to that, do a lot of celebrity work for- I've done portraits for Gene Simmons, George Foreman, Joan Rivers, Adam West, Kathy Ireland, John Rich, William Shatner, and several others. And that's kind of in a nutshell who I am. My site is pencilneck.com, don't go there now! But feel free to rummage around and have a look. And so art shows is really, I

contend, the single best way for most artists to really double or triple or launch or any of those hackneyed phrases, but to really sell something.

And there's a lot of, you know, you need, you still need a website, you need social media, you need all that stuff, but to be dirt honest, from a standing start, by next weekend will you have your website done? Will you have your social media presence tackled? Well, probably not. Those are ongoing organic things. I mean your site today, it better be different next year. And it better be different than it was last year. These things always change and evolve. But next weekend, you could be at a show somewhere selling something. And that's because there's- where else but at an art show can you meet with your fans in person, build your prospect and client list, and actually interact with people and sell stuff?

So that's kind of what we're going to discuss today. So I'm going to call Cory back in unless he's out having a donut or something. I'm joking. He's a donut guy, you probably know that. And it was- where did you want to start, do you have a specific question that you want me to-

Cory: Yeah, yeah, why don't you start with- so our goal with these challenges is always to have a beginning, something that beginners can do, something that, and something that more intermediate or advanced artists can do. So why don't you kind of give us an overview of, if I've never done a show before, cause we have a couple of people who said, you know, I've never done a show before. If I've never done a show before, what is the number one thing that I need to do in order to ensure that I'm going to start getting sales when I do shows?

Owen: Awesome. Okay. So yeah, one nice thing about art shows is that it doesn't matter whether you're a beginner or you're a grizzled old veteran such as my own self. This- there's room for everybody here. And the, of course, as I'm sure you'll recognize, the danger to a beginner is like a, getting overwhelmed, and then the grizzled old veterans, what are you going to teach me? I've done art shows for 25 years, right? Well stick around, dear viewer! So to the beginner, and for you, advanced people, don't tune out here, because I can almost promise that you're getting this wrong to some extent too. But the single biggest thing for a beginner is doing the right show. And that sounds like a really, like well of course, Owen, what are you talking about? Well here's the thing though- and ask me how I know this, because my career started the same way, I mean, when I was a cub of twenty seven and out here, what do you do? Well you go do shows. And I lost my shirt for years. I did a lot of shows without making any money. Cause I was willing to show anywhere. See, art shows is a blanket term. Right? And it doesn't- to me an art show is anywhere you're going to show your art and hopefully sell something. And that can be any number of things. So first, you gotta kind of watch your preconceptions, because not all art shows are actually art shows. Trade shows is kind of my secret weapon, but, so as a beginner, what happens is you begin showing indiscriminately. Right? So you want to get out there and you want to do it, and yep, we're gonna do a show. Well, it doesn't take too many dud shows to all of a sudden, and you start questioning yourself, well maybe nobody likes my stuff. It might have nothing to do with it, you're in the wrong place at the wrong time. And so an example of the wrong place at the wrong time, and I know somebody's gonna, you know, take umbrage with this, and it's not my intent to prick anybody, but a lot of artists will at some point or another get into that well I'm gonna hang my art in this restaurant, they've got a new restaurant

going in, and the owner is my sister's cousin's barber or something, and he can put my stuff in the restaurant.

Well, the problem is you're showing in a place that's not really set up in your favor. People are there for the spaghetti. Or whatever. Right? They're not there to look at and probably purchase artwork. If they even notice the stuff on the wall, it's accidental. And the whole thing is set up to not sell art. The guys just kind of get away from not having to buy stuff to put on the wall. Even if he thinks he's doing you a favor, you put the time and effort into putting that work somewhere that it's just, the odds of selling it are miniscule.

But the beginner especially will often think, well, I'm out there doing something! And, but usually it ends up being more discouraging than encouraging, let alone profitable. So to the beginner I say pick your shows carefully. Because, have you ever been at a show, either as a spectator or as a participant, where you know, it's at a gallery, everybody's in a great mood, there's a lot of encouragement, everyone has those little plastic glasses of wine and people are saying nice things and nobody's buying anything?

If you haven't had that yet, if you're not careful, it's coming. Because what happens is, you know, the proprietor, the promoter, the gallery owner, whomever is hosting this show is encouraging all the artists, you know, help us fill it out and bring your family and friends and customers. Well, so what you've got is a room full of friends and relatives. Not a room full of customers. There's a big difference there, see that? You want to be showing it to potential customers. And so having that discretionary filter on can be helpful. And the big way to do that is knowing to the greatest extent possible who your client is. Who are you selling to? What are you talking about? What are you offering? And even if you're not in the show thing, you have no intention to, you still kinda gotta know, you know, who you're trying to reach with this. Cause if you say your art's for everybody, it's for nobody. And I'm sorry, but that's just the way it is. And this is a hard question. It's easy to say it, it's hard to come up with this. I'm not making light of it. So for instance, if you do, oh boy. Pick something. Erotic male paintings. Or something. And you have an opportunity to show at a little old lady come and go tea for the humane society, that's probably not your target audience. I'm just guessing, here.

And people are going to a come and go tea to have tea and they want to buy- you know, they'll part with ten or twenty dollars, but if you show up with a \$1500 original painting of a naked man, you know. You might sell something, but your energies are probably better directed to someone to whom your art speaks directly.

Cory: Yeah.

Owen: Does that make sense, Cory?

Cory: Yeah, it absolutely does. Thank you for sort of laying that out. So Matt Towler says, "I've learned not to bring out my darker stuff to certain shows." Yeah, absolutely.

Owen: Yeah. Whatever the, whatever is you know, the furthest from the actual connection, right? So if you're at a humane society show and you happen to have you know, good pet portraits and puppies and kitties, well, that is your sweet spot, right? That's kind of like, pardon me- I'm gonna have a quick gargle here.

Cory: So as people are thinking about, okay, I should do the right show, if you are, you know, just getting started, how do you find the right show, like if you're, let's say you live in a decent-sized town, not a big city but a decent sized town, and maybe there's not a whole lot of shows. There's sort of two questions there. One is how do I find shows at all, period? And then number two is how do I discern the good ones from the bad ones if I'm early in my career?

Owen: And that's where the art and the voodoo come into it, because there's no, unfortunately, even if you Google it, you're gonna get ten year old websites that- there is no standard "here's a place where you can show your kind of art at your level of experience at your price range to meet your people," it's impossible.

Cory: Right. It doesn't work like that, because even experienced artists may not sell and a brand-new artist who doesn't have a lot of experience might hit the right market. And so it's really hard to say "all artists in this range should go here."

Owen: Yeah, it just doesn't work that way. So really, it comes down to you've got to keep your eyes and ears open and you've got to be engaged with some people. And some artists just don't like doing that. And you know, you don't have to go and be in their actual company, but you have to be aware of. And there is some experimentation. There have been shows that I thought I would do great at, and I laid an egg. There's been other things I was convinced was going to be a waste of time, and holy mackerel! So there is no magic beans here. You've got to develop these instincts and be willing to admit when you're wrong. Mitigate your risk, like don't be spending money you don't need to spend, for instance, so if you have two shows to pick from and one is like a thousand dollars and halfway across the country, and the other one is fifty miles away and you're still, you know, feeling your way, well what do you think is a more prudent move, right? The fifty dollar one. Even if- cause there's no guarantee at the thousand dollar one you'd sell anything either. So there is a little bit of a dance. You've got to feel it out. You know, you do have to talk to people, get other people's opinions, and then take them with a grain of salt. I know that's counterintuitive, but that's the way it has to be for your own wellbeing.

Cory: And even advanced artists, and this is, Sara O'Connor says "just because you get invited somewhere without applying doesn't mean you should accept."

Owen: Absolutely. That is so strong. So in my little piece of the universe that I infest, I get asked to do stuff all the time. All the time. And I bet, I haven't done the math, but I bet five out of seven places I get invited, I'm invited for one reason. Cause I got a great big list and they want to leech onto that and suck my clientele into their world, right? So they want me to come to a show and do that and fill it with my customers so all the other people can latch on. Well, I didn't have to do that too many times to realize what was happening- more than I'm going to admit, but eventually it's like, wait a minute! And yeah, just like, the restaurant too. Hey, you wanna put your stuff up in my restaurant or hotel or whatever? And look at that very, very carefully. Especially cause if you're putting out for framing and whatever else, well that's out of your pocket, not his! Right? So you can spend a thousand dollars and never get anything back. Or two or three thousand.

Cory: And for the advanced artists out there, the artists who have you know more than a few shows under their belts, my buddy Matt, I was just, I just had dinner with him last night, he does

sculptures. Matt Richards, who I've talked about a bunch. And they do a big trade show every year in New York- it's a retail trade show. And it's, this particular show that he does, the museum gallery buyers, sorry, the museum store buyers, so not the museum itself but the people who run the bookstores outside the museum. Or attached to the museum. He found out that those buyers go to this particular trade show and he knows that his pieces sell well at these museums, cause he got into a few of them. So he, that's the only trade show that he does every year, and he spends tens of thousands of dollars to go to it because he has to ship his stuff there and take his team there and the entry fee is like \$2,000, but he generates a lot of money. Many multiples of that off of what he sells through the museum stores. So I don't know the trade show name off the top of my head, Sara, I can find out later, but the point is, my point in bringing this up is he knows that this particular show generates a lot of money for him and he doesn't waste his time doing other shows. He does other marketing activity.

Owen: Yeah, that touches on what I said earlier about feeling your way out and not all art shows are actually art shows. So I haven't done an art show in ten years? What people would think of as an art show.

Cory: Four white walls and a gallery.

Owen: Yeah, no thanks! Get invited to lots. I'll go and participate, I'll go drink their wine or something and swan around, but the time and money to go there, no. Cause they're not filling the place with my customers. They want me to fill it with my customers, well I don't need them to do that. I could put on a private event. That's like a different thing. But trade shows, and so again, knowing who you are and knowing where you customers congregate, so the trade shows is a perfect example. So I've done trade shows where the booth fee, which you spend to have your booth, is \$45,000. Yeah. So now, disclosure, I didn't pay that, I was invited and it was a comp and I had a little arrangement and this and that, but you know what- if I would have had to pay it, I could have. Because it was profitable, because it was exactly where I needed to be. And I got a six-figure commission deal out of that one show. So. Pretty cool. But that's cause I know my stuff. I wouldn't risk that money willy-nilly. That's not what we're saying here. But that's also just to show what's possible as you get this dialed in.

Cory: Yeah. So Marie asks "as we head toward the holidays, is there a difference in what type of show or what types of pieces offered this time of year versus other times of year?" So talk to us about holiday shows or what you know about holiday shows. Should we be looking for holiday shows?

Owen: Well yes, if your art lends itself to that. Like if you're doing big installation pieces it's a little difficult, I mean I understand that. So no one answer we're giving today is going to answer it for everybody, right? Cause you have to factor in the individual. So in our world, so we have kind of two businesses here. My wife runs the framing shop and yes, my stuff gets run out of the till. But I mean they're related by separate. She's gotten into laser engraving little goo-gahs, I mean everything from buttons and earrings and all kinds of stuff. I'm not involved in that at all. But she goes out every weekend because she likes it. And then does farmer's markets. And she'll do anywhere from 14 or uh \$400-\$1400 on a Saturday afternoon selling stuff. And so that's kind of a, its own thing that farmer's market cause you do need to turn over, you do need- cause you tend to have the same regular clientele coming in. And they do want to see what's new. Well,

she in August she brought her old Christmas stock from last Christmas and she had Christmas in August. Sold everything.

Cory: Nice.

Owen: And even I was surprised, like really? Cause you think you'd sell one or two to those crazy people who are six months ahead of their shopping. But no, it was so unique and so new that yeah, that's a great idea! Now oddly, the Christmas stuff, compared to August, now it isn't doing as well. So it's gonna ramp back up. But she does a lot of Christmas ornaments and things that are laser engraving, picture of your dog or whatever. And is it high art? Well no, she's not pretending it is. But the psychology, the transactions, all that, I mean there are artists here for whom a \$20 something, that's their sweet spot. And some it's \$20,000, right? So the nice thing about shows is there is something to show. Even if you have to travel, you know. That's just the way it is. We can't make the shows for you, but yeah. So that's kind of like the advance thing as well. I need to excuse for one sec, I don't know if you can hear this, it's driving me crazy. The narcoleptic dog wants in. Not gonna work.

Cory: Narcoleptic dog!

Owen: He sleeps more than the cat- look he's out cold already. He's got his bed in my studio here. I'm sorry.

Cory: That's fine. So last question about how to figure out what type of show you should do. So Sierra says "when a new show opportunity arises that you're unfamiliar with, what are some things to look at to determine whether it's a good fit or not?" And before, and while you're thinking about how to answer that Owen, Sierra I noticed in the comments you said "please talk about putting on your own show," Sierra we're going to get to that in a second, can you put that in as a question, cause I want to be able to bookmark the answer on the video for that one as well. So please put that in as a question. Okay. So how do you evaluate a particular show opportunity, Owen?

Owen: Okay, so I have a rule that I never ever break. And when I do, I regret it. Every time. And it's almost counterintuitive and it seems odd, but here it is. I will never ever ever do a brand new show. Ever.

Cory: Why?

Owen: I need a track record. Even though it may mean nothing, because we don't know, it's hard to shill a show with customers. And quite often, my experience has been the people putting on the show are more interested in selling booth space than shilling it out with customers. Because customers, you know, they want to get that space sold. And they consider our sales to be our business. And of course, it is our business. But you can do everything right, but if you're at the wrong show and lay an egg, you know platitudes don't help you very much. So with a new show, it's never not bitten me, where- what's their expertise? And have they done this before, or are they doing it just cause they like the idea of doing it? It's kind of like the first time restaurateur who's never worked in the restaurant, but they just want to open a restaurant. That rarely ends well.

Cory: Yeah, so bunch of people in the comments agreeing with you, Owen. Sierra says “yes,” Christine says “I made the same mistake,” Matt Towler says “agree,” Sara O’Connor says “I did a first time show but it was in my hometown”. And they say do you mean show that is new to us or a show that is a first annual show, like the first time the show happens?

Owen: Yeah, the first time. Brand new Christmas show coming up, all new. And chances are it’s undercapitalized cause it costs more money than you think to put it on.

Cory: Okay, so assuming it’s not a first time show, what else should you look at to determine whether or not it’s a good fit?

Owen: How many repeat vendors, or how many people are coming back? Again, basing your decisions on other people’s business practices is, philosophically I’m wary of. However, if there are artists doing this for the fourth, eighth, tenth time, that’s reassuring. They’re not coming here cause they’re losing their shirt. However, if two-thirds drop out every year, that’s a warning to me. Why? And don’t be afraid to ask. People don’t, you know, I mean I’m what I call a gregarious introvert. I can sit here and talk and be sociable and have fun, but you know later today there’s going to be a hangover effect and I don’t want to talk to anybody. That’s just how it goes. Well when- if you are an introvert, you can talk to people. Nobody’s going to eat you. You’re not going to be cast to the outer darkness just cause you asked for a little advice on something. I don’t- I’m guessing from the comments we don’t have a lot of those folks in here, so that’s good. But yeah, just do some homework and a little detective work. Get on there and find out- is it good? What’s good about it? And again, take everything in and then take it with a grain of salt. I know that’s a contradiction.

Cory: So Tracy says, do you get that information from the host? How do you find out how many artists are returning?

Owen: Yeah, the host should be telling you that. And if they don’t tell you that, what does that tell you? You know, I mean a mentor of mine is Dan Kennedy and I don’t know if anyone knows who that is, but he’s got a rule. And he says if he can’t- he won’t do business with anybody that can’t provide him with three references that would do business with him again. And he’s right. It’s like surely somebody must, you know, you can’t find three customers that had a good experience? And in that light, I, if you’re dealing with a show, you should, he or she should be able to provide you with some repeat customers that you can just give a call just cause you got question about whatever, loading in, whatever. And I’ve never not had them be more than happy to. But if they don’t, I’m just like, why is that? Cause they’re hiding something, obviously.

Cory: So here’s a question from Marie, and it’s similar to another question from Captain Barg, the dog painter. So Marini says do you think it’s a good idea to do smaller shows that are maybe not 100% audience appropriate just so you can have practice getting comfortable talking to people about your work? And Captain Barg’s question is essentially the same- she’s saying, you know, I live in an area where there’s not a lot of shows, could I go to a local dog and agricultural show to practice talking about my work?

Owen: If you’re doing dog portraits that’s exactly where you should be. There’s no farmer who doesn’t have a dog. It’s like a rule, I think. Yeah, no, that’s exactly where you should be, of course. Yeah,

on the surface, yes, you should be doing that. The only danger is, don't get down if it doesn't work. And you have to, it's going to feel like a rejection of you, it's going to feel like a rejection of the art. I don't know that anybody can be completely immune to that. That's the danger. Having said that, if you go in like, I'm just here to practice my sales pitch and sales talk and that kind of thing, yeah, it's invaluable. Cause no matter how much you think about it, until you're actually belly to belly with somebody, that's invaluable. You need to have that experience. And so yeah, if there's a smaller show and you can not get all hung up on oh I didn't sell anything, it may not be your fault, you're just not talking to the right people. But no, I do recommend that. Having said all the warnings, yeah if you can get out there and just practice that, even for an hour, you will learn a lot. Now one of the things you will learn, not to derail it, is you're going to learn is that really there's only four or five questions that everybody asks you anyway. Well if you come up with the answers to those questions and bring them into the sales pitch ahead of being asked it, that's the sweet spot.

Cory: What are those four or five questions?

Owen: Well it's gonna vary, it'll be specific to you, but after you've done this a while and you've talked to enough people, you realize- so it's probably variations on what does this mean, what were you doing, what was happening in your life when you made this, what's your creative process, those kinds of questions. You're going to find that, cause your four or five will probably be different from mine. But you're gonna find it's like, and it's funny cause artists get mad at that. Why does everybody ask me how long it takes to do this? Right? Well guess what- that must be important to your people. So work that into it. And you know, they all want us to suffer. They don't want us to whip this out two quick, they want us to bleed, bone sticking out, trauma.

Cory: They want a story about how you created this work.

Owen: Oh yeah, absolutely. So there. You'll figure it out. Just come up with it in advance, that's a pretty advanced tip that everyone can take advantage of.

Cory: So Sierra says- and she said, she's asking about putting on your own show here, but I think this applies to whatever kind of show you're doing whether it's a farmer's market or a gallery show or putting on your own show- "what are some things that you should be doing, once- so you have a show booked, what are things you can do to make sure that show is successful?"

Owen: Well there's a handful of things you should do and more importantly, are the things you shouldn't do. So this isn't any particular order, this is extemporaneous speaking about. Number one, if you're putting on your own show, I don't think it's ever a good idea to partner with a bunch of other artists. I know, I know! What about artist community and all that stuff? It's more pragmatic than that, because we're all human beings. There's going to be one or two that isn't pulling their weight, that you know, doesn't, their check bounces when it's time to pay for something. They don't do any of the heavy lifting. They don't invite anybody there, and they are just leeches on the process. So I've done that enough times where it's like- I don't want to do this anymore, cause now feelings are hurt. And that could have all been avoided if you just didn't include them. I think it's a false economy to try and share costs, you know. Now- does that mean it can never ever work and I'm sure that there are people, maybe even in our group here who are like well no, I do this with so and so, and so and so and it worked well! If that's the

case- awesome. You're definitely the exception in my experience. You know, there's all kinds of little things just popping into my head. So if you have music, don't make it too loud, right? So a lot of artists had musician friends. Right? So come on out, so you gotta flute player and whatever you know in the corner playing. I guarantee you, they're going to play too loud or want to. And there is a creative see-saw here, right? They- the musicians have to understand that it's your gig, not their gig. And if they're doing it for nothing, it's a little hard, you know! If you're paying them to be there then you can say hey, shush! We have to be able to talk. I'm not a big fan of having music at a show. A lot of artists seem to have the- you know, that's the book that second. They put some musicians in it for the ambience.

The next thing is you have to be careful if you're supplying food and booze. And you know, I mean there's- never mind the allergies and stuff, but I'm a big fan of doing punches. Old school punches, like you have a citrus one and a real heavy British port and stout mess you can hardly lift the thing, and then a non-alcoholic version, cause you can keep topping that up, and it's kitschy. For food we always do finger foods that are never that expensive. Because the problem is you don't want strangers coming in gobbling up your stuff and then splitting. You're trying to make your customers feel relaxed and at home, and an event for them.

Beyond, that's, you know, a few of the don'ts, then the do's of course is don't be squeamish about the invitations. Build it and they will come is, pardon my language, horseshit. You all know that. Even if you don't want to admit it, you know in your heart of hearts that's true, cause we all built stuff that nobody cared about. And you have to be okay with sending one or too many like a couple too many emails. And you've got to invite people that you would never- you gotta invite like local politicians and media people. Ugh, really? Yep. Yep. And you gotta be nice. Because the press you get builds. Like remember, we're in this for the long game. There's more than just this show. You should also be doing everything with an eye to what the next thing is, whatever that is. The space is- choosing the space can be probably the biggest hiccup in putting on your own show. So there's the thing about well, an art gallery is, I mean that's a logical place to have it, right? Well then you've gotta have the discussions, so whose customers are these, then? Cause the art gallery might be of the opinion these are my customers, this is my gallery. And one understands their point. Is the art gallery that's hosting your show expecting you to fill it with customers? Or do they have a stable of clientele that comes to all these things as a social thing but they don't really buy anything, they just drink the booze and stumble off?

There's more wrong places to hold a show than right. And again, the type- and I know that sounds like a non-answer, right? And I'm running for city council so I'm getting used to the non-answers. But it really is the context is specific- what kind of art do you do and whom are you speaking to? So if you're doing something that you know, so we talk about the little old ladies, kitties and puppies art. And I don't mean to- I'm not, I don't mean it in any derogatory way. But I mean, you probably don't want to have a show of that in a gritty run-down loft environment that you have to bring your own generators cause there's no power to the building. I mean, there's a disconnect there, right? I mean you gotta be able to connect the dots. And your customers have to feel safe, obviously. So it's, there's a lot of moving pieces to doing your own show. But they are my favorite, cause I can control the environment, and I know to an extent I know whom I've invited and I'm making sure that we're there and attention is where it should

be- on the art and on me. I'm not sharing it, it's not divisive, it's not anything else. And I've- my experience has been the clientele are happier that way. They know exactly what's going on.

Cory: Alright, so about fifteen minutes left to talk and I want to sort of break- we've talked a lot about, you've given a lot of good advice. So within the association my goal is to get everybody to take action. So if you're listening, you probably taken you know like a half page to a couple of pages of notes depending on where you're at in your career. So how do we take all of this information and break it down and actually go and do something with it? So those of you who are just getting started, you know, if you haven't done a show before, what's the next step that you would suggest they take? Something they could do in the next two weeks?

Owen: Pardon me, excuse me. First thing is please understand- I just alluded to it- you have to understand that this is a long game. And virtually every artist doing this without a little guidance focuses entirely on the show, selling at the show, and then after the show, nothing. Well that's what keeps the money rolling in between shows! And that thing is your list. And how you choose to talk to that list is, you know, I mean you can use emails, you can use postcards, you can use address letters. Ideally one uses as many different medias as you can. I contend that the real money at every show is in the contacts that you collect. And selling the merchandise, as it were, is kind of secondary, in a way. I look at it- if I can break even at a show, I'm golden. Because I'll have collected hundreds, maybe even in some big international shows, thousands, of people on my list. And that is the single biggest, most important thing, I contend, that doing shows should be about. Is building that list. And so how do you do that?

Beg your pardon. And I use a couple of different ones, but the big one is a draw box. Win something! And you've seen versions of this- the cards in the goldfish bowl. Well you gotta sexy it up a little bit. You have to give them a reason to hand over their information without being weird, without being creepy. And so what we do is we do a free something. Preferably not something that's for sale in the booth. That was a distinction that took me years to figure out. Cause people are funny. You know, most people don't plan for their retirement, for instance. They honestly kind of think they're gonna with the lottery. That's like, I'm planning for my retirement, have some money! And so people will see something in the booth, like it, want to buy it, and then realize that they might win it. So they just enter it and leave. It's like arrgh! Right? Cause they honestly think, there's a psychological term for this, and it escapes me right now, but so I've found it's important to make whatever it is you're giving away something that you're not- don't have for sale. Because you want both. You want them to buy something and enter the draw. So depending on the show, I'll do something like I'll do a free portrait. An 8x10 portrait, and I get \$4400 bucks for that, because I don't like doing portraits, so I jack the price way sky high and then all of a sudden the celebrities have gotten involved. But, and I like it cause it's not a lot, you know I mean I can do an 8x10 portrait pretty quick. It's not a big commitment of my time. And then there's no, I mean I'm paper and ink, right? There's no material cost, really. And so, and I can demonstrate that yes, this is what I get for this stuff. And so we do a big, the most prominent thing in the booth is not my biggest artwork, it's this sign that says WIN. And then there's, you know, the rules, and people enter, and that's how I build my list. So hopefully there's some of you going, you let everybody in? Well then how do you know who's good for your list and who's not? Good question, grasshopper!

This is how we do it. We have two types of paper. One this color and one that color. And so we don't just leave a pad or whatever of entries at the box. People have to be handed this. So if there is somebody who is obviously underemployed, you know, doesn't have, you know hasn't bathed in a week and isn't wearing this year's clothes, you know what I mean? Is obviously not at the socio-economic strata that we're trying to reach with our art, if that's your client then forgive me. But I'm trying to paint a picture here, okay? So this isn't somebody who is statistically likely to be wanting to take advantage of our art. And you will always- there's always that one outlier. But. For instance, maybe a better example. In the city I live in, they have a big chamber of commerce trade show, and we go there mostly to the gallery. But what they do is they wheel out all the folks out of the old folks' home. They come out and they have tea and they see the things, and it's, you know, it's an outing for them and that's great. But they are not really in this case the type of people that are probably going to want to spend large on custom picture framing. They tend to be shrinking their possessions, not filling wall space. Well we want them to feel good, so they get this entry form. And they fill it out, and if they win we give them the prize of course. But then let's say there's right behind them another, you know, a young professional couple, they've got a couple of kids and they're dressed obviously doing well, well they get this color. And if they win, great. But what happens- this one doesn't go in our database. This one does. And that's how we keep track. Which, we're not excluding anybody, everybody can enter, but for our purposes, we want to market to this person, and spend our money trying to get their business, as opposed to somebody that's just not a fit for us. Great people, love to see ya, nice chatting with ya. But they're not-

Cory: They're not people you're gonna follow up with, yeah.

Owen: Yeah. They don't even want to be hassled by it. And so that there alone, if you're willing to implement that figuring out a draw box, and there's more than just a draw box, but that tends to be where you can start with. Way to attract interested people. And then you can dribble on them. Right? So you send the, you should have a show special, because people being what people are, and we all do this, oh I'll get that next time! There has to be a sense of urgency. And the best way to do it without being cheesy about it is it's a show special during this show. Here's the special, and whatever that is. You can contact them and now that you've got their information you can contact them and say good news! We're extending the show special for 48 hours! It was nice to meet you! There's all kinds of things, and then they go into your email sequence, that this is who I am, right, there's a whole- if you're not doing that, you are losing two thirds of the value of every show you do.

Cory: Two-thirds! I just want to reiterate, like, two thirds of your sales happen after the show is over. And this is true-

Owen: Depends on the show, yes, some shows are bigger, but- be conservative and say you can double your sales in between shows from what you did at the show. Like that's, I can't think of a time that didn't happen. That where I didn't do more after the show with those people I met at the show than I did at the show.

Cory: Yeah. And I've talked to gallery owners here in Portland at the First Thursday, where they do First Thursday and they've got thousands of people wandering in and out of the galleries. And they always tell me we don't sell very much at first Thursday, but what happens is so and so

from the suburbs came into town for an evening, and they wandered into First Thursday, they had a glass of wine, they looked at the art, they really loved it, so then when they came to work the next day or the next week, on their lunch break they came over to the gallery and looked at it again. And decided to make a purchase, right? And then they followed up with them. Like all these follow up stuff is where so much of the money gets made. And that's true in lots of businesses, not just in the art businesses.

Owen: I can't think of a business that wouldn't benefit from a little bit of following up. You know? When, you know, and it doesn't have to be a whole big convoluted thing, I mean, you know, like a realtor. Blows my mind. Like I do a lot of business with realtors over the years. Where they will give my art as a housewarming gift instead of like flowers or a bucket of chicken or whatever that's gone in a few days. This art will be there until next time. And so it's a very successful program, it's almost like an annuity. I know I've got this couple dozen realtors who are good for 10-12 pieces every 3-4 months, and they just keep phoning. And I have to keep up in touch with them. And these are like not necessarily even like the top performers, but they're consistent. And it boggles my mind how a realtor will give someone a couple hundred dollar something. Now they made \$20,000 on this, so they're giving away 1%, right, but they won't even send a Christmas card! That blows my mind! Or they won't, you know, you've got all their information, you know when their birthday is, cause it's all in the paperwork, right? Cause it's credit checks and assuming that there's some financing. You know when the birthdays are, they can find out very conversationally, you know when did you guys get married? They just- and they don't. And they have lots of money coming in to do it with, but it's just no they would rather buy big newspaper ads that nobody reads. There's my rant.

Cory: Alright. So we're getting close to time, I just want to wrap up. There are a couple of questions that have popped up that are related to what we've already talked about, but I think they're interesting and I want to address them. So [unintelligible] says- so she lives in Silicon Valley, and there's a trend in Silicon Valley with like, there's shows there are themed, and they're in like a store or a warehouse or something, or even you know even a store on Main street and there'll just be like a one or two day show and it'll be something like "Pancakes and Booze" or "Art and Chocolate", that kind of stuff. Where it's a kitschy themed show, and you have to pay to show your work in the show. You pay per piece. And should you do those kind of shows, what do you think about that?

Owen: Well, as a musician, that pay-to-play thing really bothers me, philosophically. That doesn't mean it's necessarily bad, but I wouldn't do it. More, I guess, cause I don't do like, pancakes and booze? I mean it doesn't fit with my thing. So, but if that happened say in Calgary, downtown where all the oil towers are, it might make perfect sense. Yeah. Hard to say, I don't know. It's very easy in a situation like that to have lots of money going out, and nothing coming back in. And the only thing that concerns me about things like that is you're now relying on the person who's putting on the show, their ability to attract clients. And that's always the unknown. I can't answer that question without knowing that kind of stuff. But that's my suggestion would be, is who's doing the show, what's your success rate, what other artists are doing it, did they do the last one, are they doing the next one? You know, I mean-

Cory: The same criteria,

Owen: Not dissimilar, no. Just be nice and ask innocent questions, and keep your eyes open, that's all.

Cory: Nice. Just as a counterpoint to what you're saying, Sara O'Connor says she sold a \$1600 piece at a "Pancakes and Booze" show. They work for her and her audience. So you know, these vanity shows, vanity galleries, I think Jason over at Xanadu Art Gallery told me a couple years ago that he thinks we're going to see more and more of those. And I think he's probably right.

Owen: That's possible. It could be. But that doesn't mean that the warning signs- cause there's gonna be good ones and there's gonna be bad ones. And Sara, if you sold \$1600 at one of these, kudos to you. That's awesome. That's awesome.

Cory: Yeah. Cool. So my question, or as we're wrapping up, Owen, I think you have, we have a bonus that we wanted to offer to everybody- tell us a little bit about your, you have a whole course on this topic, right? This is an hour-long Q&A and challenge, but you have a whole course. Tell us a little bit about your course before we wrap up.

Owen: So through my group Marketing Tools for Artists, yeah, we publish courses and things. And so I've created the ultimate guide to profitable art shows. And it's 34 videos? I went blank there. There's a lot of content here. But they're all very concise. And so there's like the big overall shows, there's a special sub-course specifically for putting on your own event, there's also another course specifically dealing with farmer's markets and smaller everyday art shows. Because as we've discussed, there's a pretty big range of price points that an artist can be involved in. And obviously, if you're selling \$20,000 things, there's different psychology at work than for the \$20 impulse things. But then there's the main course, which talks about setting up thoughts about setting up your booth, lighting, materials, on and on and on, salesmanship, pricing, security at the show, it's everything that I've learned in you know coming up 22 years of putting on shows. And as I said before, I mean, it's kind of, I'll make it quick. I remember there was one show that I was in in a city called Saskatoon, which none of you have probably heard of. And it was the largest wildlife show in Western Canada. And I won a lot of ribbons. Lot of first place ribbons. But I hardly sold a thing. And you know, sort of the local, you know the brand-name artist that everybody knows in that community was there, and so I went to say hello, and she says "Well hello! You can finally say you've met the artist!" And I'm like "Wow, what?!" And the bile's rising in my throat, her art was terrible, her bedside manner, salesmanship was terrible, she had a bunch of staff running around wearing football jackets with their job and one of them said Print Comptroller, I mean the whole thing was, you know the bile was rising in my throat. And you know what, if this Gorgon can sell art at a show, then I can too. And there's gotta be a way to do it without being an asshole or flimflaming people or resorting to any kind of tricks. And for the next few years, spending tons of dough, keeping my eyes open, conversing, I finally figured out what the artists that do well at shows do. And it's not, it's not you know, fast-talking. It's none of that. It's about engagement, it's about education, it's about actually, comfort. Yours and the client's. And so this course, is everything that I've learned. And so what we're doing for you good folks with Cory's group, it's regularly \$297, and we've never done this before, we're doing it half price you good folks for \$149.

Cory: Cool. Owen thank you so much, I just posted a link to the course with that discount. It's \$150 discount, or like a half-off discount for Owen's course, so that link is only for members of the association, so please don't share it.

Owen: Yeah, please. And the question that I just have to ask one quick question to ask yourselves- how many pieces of art do you have to sell to pay for the course?

Cory: One. Yeah.

Owen: One. Can you sell one more piece in like a year? I would hope so. I would hope so.

Cory: Awesome. Thank you so much, Owen. I want to encourage everybody to hop over to mighty networks over to our group over there, and share in the monthly challenge group what you're going to work on in the next two weeks what you're going to accomplish in the next two weeks. Owen is going to do a follow-up Q&A next week. So we will send you an email with that info, but I want to see you go work on what we talked about today, get to work on it and then next week we will do a follow-up to discuss what you've done so far, and keep you accountable. So thanks so much everybody, thanks so much Owen, and-

Owen: My pleasure, thanks everybody!

Cory: Have a great day, everybody.