

Betty Krause Transcript

Cory: Hey there everybody, it's Cory with The Abundant Artist, and I'm here with Betty Krause who is an abstract artist and an absolutely phenomenal Instagram presence. So we were just talking about her philosophy on the art galleries that she's starting to work with, and I wanted to introduce Betty as an abstract artist and I want you to keep talking Betty- you mentioned that you had just started doing some work with some galleries, and you were listening to some little voices. So repeat that a little bit and tell us a little bit more about what you're doing there.

Betty: Okay, sure. So first of all, thank you so much for having me here Cory. I loved your book, read it many times, and follow your Facebook page, Instagram page, and have learned so much over the years. So thank you. What I was saying is, all these years I have really been focused on selling art on my own whether it was through Facebook, Instagram, local art fairs, art festivals, and just now I'm kind of listening to wanting to expand a bit and working with a local- I wouldn't quite say gallery, but in a sense they are, but they really work more out of a warehouse. And it's a very small warehouse, and I'll be joining them next month for what they call the Very Very Affordable Art Fair. And I'm looking forward to it, it's gonna be a little bit different for me, I'll have larger pieces there, I tend to sell a lot more of my smaller pieces online, so I'm excited to have this different venue to be able to sell art.

Cory: Nice, excellent. Well I'm so appreciative of you being here and I appreciate you being willing to take the time to tell your story. So if you don't know who I am, I'm Cory Huff, I'm the founder of The Abundant Artist, it's a company that I've had for 9 years where I help artists learn how to sell their art, and it's a lot of fun to work with artists who, they've been a part of our community for a couple years, sales are starting to pick up and starting to see significant results, and we just have artists like Betty on to talk about what they're doing that's working and what they're excited about. So I asked Betty to talk a little bit about what's working in her business. And Betty, you mentioned one of the first things is telling a story. So tell us a little bit about that.

And sorry, big shout out to everybody that's watching. There's a bunch of people that have already jumped on live on Facebook and CrowdCast. Hi Melissa, Jody, Beth, Debbie, Alison, so great to see all of you here. Okay, sorry! Go ahead Betty.

Betty: Yeah, no worries! Alright, so to prepare for this I kind of thought about a few different things that really helped me grow my Instagram account- not only that, but it's not all about followers, but it was about reaching out to more people, making more sales, and really being able to work as an artist full time. So one of the things that I was thinking about as I was preparing for this is telling a story. So a lot of times, when we post on Instagram or Facebook we tend to just put our art out there and expect it to speak for itself. And I don't believe that that is always true, and it doesn't always work that way. So one thing that I started to do last year, early this year, was to really spend a little bit more time talking about myself or talking about my art, talking about my inspiration. And it really wasn't until I would say earlier this year that I finally got to a point where I came to a style that I've been doing consistently. And really before that, I'd say a lot of people would recognize that it was my work, but I didn't have a true defined style, so I would tell stories, not necessarily about that specific artwork, or the inspiration, but a story about

something. And I think that really helped a lot, that helps to connect with other folks. And once I got to the point where I started telling my own story, which was really understanding a lot better that the artwork that I do, like the example behind me, is landscapes, but more specifically, having fields of flowers. And that's what really draws me in, that's what I really feel inside of me. And so once I got to that point, I started telling my story about that, and how I connect to that. And I think that has helped a lot of folks connect my work to them.

Cory: Excellent. I really appreciate that, and obviously you know, I'm a huge story fan, being a performer and a storyteller myself, and it's what we teach in our classes. One of the thing that I've noticed with you is you seem pretty comfortable talking about yourself and talking about your stories, and you've got selfies on Instagram and Facebook with your collectors and fans. You just seem really approachable, is this something that comes naturally to you?

Betty: Oh, wow. I would say that I think I think it's something that I really worked at. Growing up I was an extremely shy child, to the point where it was very difficult for me to get in front of people and I would turn like ten shades of red if I had to get up and talk, so I think I'm doing pretty well today. So I'd say I'd overcome a lot of that, and I think what really helped me is the last thirty years being in customer service management, I've had to get in front of people, I'd had to talk about my company or my department or the things that we do, so doing presentations and such, I think really helped me get to the point where I am today. And it also helped me overall in my business as well.

Cory: Nice. Okay, so basically what I hear you saying is just like with everything else, the more you practice being in front of people and talking, the better you'll get at it.

Betty: Absolutely.

Cory: Nice. Okay, so you've created this defined style of painting, and you would define that style of painting as mixed media, or is there more to the definition?

Betty: You know, it is mixed media because I use a lot of pencils in my work along with acrylic paints, but I really don't talk about mixed media when I post my work, I really refer to it more as acrylic painting with mark making.

Cory: Interesting. So why do you choose to say acrylic painting with mark making instead of mixed-media?

Betty: I guess because my own view of mixed media, when I first started painting about five years ago, to me that felt more like mixed media because I was using collage, I was using stamps, and stencils and a variety of different tools. And I've really narrowed that down to be just acrylics and different types of mark making tools.

Cory: Okay. Interesting. Interesting. And so when your collectors- so you feel like your own view of your work is that it is acrylic painting, and that you don't think your work fits in to the definition of mixed media? Or do you say it that way for your audience?

Betty: I guess I just, to me I guess my view of it is that it's more acrylic painting than it is mixed media, but that could be just my- because of my understanding of what I've done so far.

Cory: Okay, that's totally fair. And the reason I ask is because you mentioned to me that understanding your customer was one of these important things that's helped your art career along. Maybe you can tell us a little bit more about what you mean by that.

Betty: Absolutely. So I guess earlier this year, I was trying- a lot of stuff happened this year, so I'm going to refer to that, but I was, I guess I was at the point where I was trying to better understand my audience. And I do a lot of research, on Instagram and Facebook I'll drill down and I'll look at who's been following me, who comments, and what I found was I kind of had two different types of audiences. I had an audience of collectors who don't do art but would like some art in their home, so those that really appreciate art, and then I also, because I'm an artist, I have a lot of people who follow me who are artists. And those artists are also collectors. So I didn't really put those two together until probably about four or five months ago, because I was trying to figure out- how do I cater to that crowd? So I've got these folks that are following me who are artists and are very creative, and they want to learn from me, but I'm not at the point where I want to teach. So I figured out- like me, I like having art in my home from other artists that I follow.

So I created art on paper, 9x12" at \$100, a special price, and it worked because these are creatives that are getting going, and they don't have a lot of money to spend, and they want a little bit of art from me. And this worked out really well. So I love creating art, smaller on paper, cause that's how I started five years ago, and I also love creating large pieces. So I'm kind of catering to both types of audiences.

Cory: Nice. Interesting. So why did you choose to cater to both audiences rather than growing just your high end collector base?

Betty: That's a good question. So I think, Cory, you've always got the good questions, right? Alright, so I love new artists because I'm still fairly a new artist. And I totally relate to where they're at, because I was there not very long ago. And through a lot of practice and research and taking workshops and reading good books, I got to where I am today. And I like to give back. And so part of my way of giving back is not only by creating art that they can afford and they can enjoy in their home, but also, I'm always available to answer questions. So when folks ask me questions, I answer them to the best of my ability based on my experience. So I'm happy to always give back. At the same time, you know, if I can continue to grow my audience of folks who love art and are not necessarily artists, then I'll continue in that you know, focusing in that area as well.

Cory: Nice, nice. I appreciate you sharing that. Okay, so let's say that you're talking to an artist who is like I hate social media, I don't like people looking at me, but I still want to have an art career. What would you say to that artist?

Betty: Yeah, so I do meet with local artists and we chat about this all the time, so there's a few things that you can do, but honestly if you want to sell your art and you want people to connect to your art, they need to connect to you first. They need to understand who you are and they need to not only like you, but trust you and relate to you. When you skip those steps, I believe that it's harder to have people connect to your art. And therefore, making it harder to sell your art so that other people can enjoy it in their homes. So to kind of step into it slowly, I would suggest

things like taking your picture with your artwork, but crop your head out. You'll notice that I do that in some of my work. And on some of those days, I didn't do my hair or makeup, so I cropped my head out. But you can still- you know it's me, okay, you can see my body, you know it's there. And you kind of get an idea the proportion of the artwork too. So I would start with something simple like that. Show your hand, show your hand and your paintbrush. Show the back of you. So get someone to take a picture from the back or set up your camera behind you and take a picture of you working on your art and we can relate to- now we know, hey, there's a person there, and there's their artwork and I'm putting those two together. So when people see my artwork, they see my art and I think because they've seen my face enough times, then in their mind they know it's me. And now they've put those two together. So there's a few little things that you can do if you're not ready to put your face out there. And if you're not ready to do the short videos and stories which I highly recommend, and you know, getting out there and just finding a way to just be in front of your audience on a regular basis and talk about what you love in addition to your artwork.

Cory: Yeah.

Betty: So when you're out, for example, for me, if I'm out hiking, I'm gonna be showing you pictures of hiking, or if I'm going for a walk, I often take pictures of flowers in the neighborhood, because I love flowers, so I share that. So those are other things that you can do where your face isn't necessarily in there, but there's starting to connect your art to what you love to who you are.

Cory: Yeah, I like it. That's so much great advice there. So one of the things that artists will often say to me is "well, how often do I have to post on social media?" And you're not on there all the time, but you know, once a day, maybe several times a day, I see you posting on social media. Is that just part of your lifestyle, and you enjoy it? Or are you pushing yourself to do that?

Betty: Probably a little bit of both. I do love it, and I've posted recently that sometimes I can spend way too much time in there, I go into that black hole and it takes a while for me to come back out. But I enjoy every minute in there, right? So I do both. When I'm on there and I tell my husband this, I'm not just on there. I'm working! I'm working! So I am posting, but I'm trying to post smart instead of post constantly. And what I mean by that is, I've got a business account on Instagram and on Facebook, and I look at my analytics and I try to figure out when is the best time for me to be posting? Being on Pacific Time with the type of audience I have, most days my best time is anywhere from the nine to noon time. So you'll find that I'm pretty much posting during that time. On occasion I might throw something in a little bit later, just so I can catch some folks that don't catch me all the time during that time period. Stories, I try to post stories on Instagram on a daily basis, whether that's something live or just like I said, flowers, or something that I'm working on. Folks who following me don't always see what I post, so I try to take what I post and put it into my stories, so you're gonna catch me in one place or another. And then I share those things on Facebook, both on my personal and on my Facebook business page.

Cory: Yeah.

Betty So again, posting is important, but don't go crazy, don't go overboard, I saw one artist say they're starting to unfollow people because they're posting too often. So you know, there's a

fine balance in there. I would say one to two well-timed posts are better than 8-10 scattered all over the place.

Cory: Nice. So Christina Otta asks if you do any licensing. Do you license your art?

Betty: I do not. No, I haven't entered that realm yet, so I haven't done any research in that area.

Cory: Okay, if somebody approached you and said I want to license your art would you be open to it?

Betty: I would definitely do some research and figure out if that's going to be a good place for me.

Cory: Cool, excellent. One of the questions that I have about all of your social media interaction is how does that translate into sales? Is it people messaging you and buying from you directly online, or are they showing up at your shows?

Betty: Yeah, so mostly when I post on social media, I haven't had time to put it on my website yet. So most people will just send me a message, or they'll comment letting me know that they're interested, and I'll message them directly. People who come to my shows, some of them followed me before the show, or after. So they will come to a show and often with shows, people need to see your art several times before they buy from you. Especially larger pieces. So I don't always expect every show to be really high volume. But I do find that on almost every show that people saw me at a different show and showed up. So kind of a variety of those. And then I have some folks that buy from me on my website. One of the reasons I don't push people to my website immediately, so really I could create art, post on my website, and just say go there to buy. But what happens when I do that is it takes away that interaction. So they go to my website and they go through this checkout cart, where I like to connect with people. So when they message me, we chat back and forth, I get to know them a little bit, I get to understand, if they're an artist, where are they in their artist journey, if they're a collector, what kind of art they collect or where are they gonna put the art, so I love learning a little bit about the collector and not just making this kind of a cold transaction on my website.

Cor: Yeah. I think this is a good place- Tanya Linn on Facebook asks how you get followers. Do you worry about getting new followers, or do you just like interact and have fun with people, and the followers naturally come?

Betty: You know, when I started out on Instagram a couple of years ago, it's been two and a half years now- like a lot of new folks I'm trying to get followers, I want people to see my work, so I think back then I was more concerned about who my you know, who's following me? As you gain followers and once you hit that 10,000 magic mark you get to have more access to information on Instagram, the analytics and such. And other, what would I call that, like in stories you get to do extra things in there.

Cory: Right.

Betty: But what I concentrated on was- I don't care for this "like for like". If you like my artwork, awesome. Follow me. It doesn't mean that I'm gonna like yours. And I don't mean that in a bad way at all. It's just- we all have different tastes. So I follow folks whose artwork I love. And I don't expect them to follow me back. I expect- I would hope that everybody feels that way. What's key if you want to increase your followers is connect with those people through your

messages, your comments, using the right hashtags, so we can use up to thirty hashtag. I take full advantage of that. I use all thirty on pretty much every post. And then, I'm trying to think of the third thing I wanted to say there about that- consistency in posting. So showing up every day. That way people are seeing you show up in their feed on a daily basis.

Cory: Nice.

Betty: I hope that answered the question.

Cory: No, I think that's really good. I think it's easy to focus on who my followers are, and how to get more followers at the very beginning, and then as you get further in to running your business and as your art grows and stuff, you start to learn that it actually works better if you just focus on what is interesting to you, and focus on the people that you enjoy interacting with. And it kind of grows from there, and it grows, the organic growth is better when you do that.

Betty: Right, right. And I think one thing that I've learned over the years also is, and this is a hard one when you're starting out, because you're trying to figure out- what do people like? But that's going about it the wrong way. And every time I thought that way, I knew I was going the wrong way, but I did it anyway. What it really comes down to is what I love. And sharing what I love, and those who connect to that and who love that are gonna follow me. But I know that it's really hard to do that in the beginning, because you're thinking what can I create that people love? But it's the wrong to go about it. And I'm telling you this even though I did it myself.

Cory: Yeah.

Betty: So, it's just a hard one and you've got to work through that yourself.

Cory: Yeah. One of the things I've noticed is that you have several collaborations with other artists. You've either done art together, or just like, I don't know if you were doing shows together, but how did these collaborations come about?

Betty: I think I've only done a couple of them. One of them recently, I tried to do a live Instagram feed with an artist up in Canada, Darlene Watson. And that didn't go over so well. So we're trying to do two screens, and hers was great, and I was having issues on my side. So it didn't go well in that regard. Other than that, I can't think of too many others where I know I've talked to some folks about doing things, but haven't done too much in terms of collaborating on art specifically.

Cory: Okay. Couple little things- as I was sort of digging around again this week on looking at what you're doing and how you're marketing yourself and stuff, I noticed that you have these little animations on some of your- and it says "Yummy Details."

Betty: Yes.

Cory: These are- they're so cute. And where I saw it was on Facebook, there's a little, it looks like a little water park, but it's actually animates. Where did you get that from?

Betty: So, okay. If it's showing up on Facebook it's because I created it on Instagram in stories, that gets saved, and then I share it on to- what is it called on Facebook? I think it's called Stories in Facebook as well? I do it through Messenger, so I go to my Messenger and I add my story, which

is pretty much the one that I did on Instagram, and then sometimes I'll actually use it as a post on Facebook.

Cory: Okay, so on Instagram when you create your story, you're using one of the store tools to add a little animation?

Betty: That's correct, yep. I try to take advantage of all the different features that they have.

Cory: Yeah. Excellent. Cool, cool. So you really are like just exploring all of the tools that Instagram gives you and playing around with all the things that are there.

Betty: I do. And I want to do a quick little shout out to Sue B. Zimmerman who is @TheInstagramExpert and that's her handle on Instagram, and just like Cory you've helped me a lot on overall selling my art, I really have taken a lot of great advice from @TheInstagramExpert. So she teaches a lot of great stuff.

Cory:; Yeah, she's awesome. Cool! Well I think we're about wrapped up, but I wanted to give you an opportunity, if you had any other words of wisdom for artists who are maybe just a year or two behind you, what would you say to them?

Betty: I would say that you know, if you are looking to increase your followers, increase your audience, to be true to yourself. Just put out there what makes you feel good, the art that you're creating, whether it's completed artwork or work in progress, talk about it. Connect with folks by sharing with them what you are feeling about your artwork, whether you're frustrated, whether you're excited, all of that. We're all feeling those things, and it's okay to share all of those things so that you can connect more with folks. And really it comes down to connecting, has been my experience.

Cory: Excellent. Alright, well again thank you so much Betty for being here, and thanks everybody for watching and listening, just like usual we'll have a transcript of this conversation and an audio version up on the podcast and the blog later on in a couple weeks. So thanks so much for taking the time to be with me here today, and I hope you have a great rest of your day!

Betty: Thank you Cory!