

Chapter 1

The Nature of the Business

***“Stay humble, stay hungry”
—Hakeem Olajuwon***

Independently...Well, independent, anyway!

I was nearly set up for an indoor festival when the Fire Marshall came around and spoke to me about some extension cord I had tucked neatly under my carpet, insisting that the cord should be flat instead of round. His argument was that a customer with a high heel could pierce the insulation creating a short circuit which in turn would create a fire which would burn the entire convention center down...potentially. My neighbor also got the inspection lecture. Her offense was hanging frilly things placed near her lamp cords. After arguing with the gentleman for a few minutes, he left and she turned to me and said:

“What, does he think I’m going to let a million-dollar a year business burn down?”

I had to suppress a laugh (a very loud laugh), but the point is, there is money to be made in art festivals if you have talent and perseverance—how much money is entirely up to you. There is no standard because some painters are selling ten thousand dollar paintings and some craftspeople are selling six dollar ceiling-fan pulls. It follows that it is very likely that those two incomes from any and all festivals will differ greatly. Some folk do 45 shows a year and make a fine living, some do 20 and make a fine living; yet others do 10 and make a fine living. All depends on how big an investment in each show, both in terms of show type, time, experience, preparation...and, of course, the nature of the product. But we will talk product and numbers soon enough.

Incidentally, if the word “product” offends any artists out there, close this book and start rubbing elbows with gallery owners because art festivals are not for you. This book is about selling art, and art, by necessity, becomes your product. I don’t mean you

shouldn't continue to put your soul into your art, but know that you are trying to reach an audience as an ultimate goal. Academic artists have their audience, as do the artists that become famous in the real art world. In art festivals, the audience for art is one of extreme heterogeneity. This eclectic audience has a much wider variety of art knowledge and income than the gallery crowd or the museum crowd, for one thing, but the important thing is that your audience, your very own particular audience, will eventually find you. Take care of them.

There are two people involved in this business of art festivals, the artist and the salesperson; since there is only one of you, you have to become both at times. Let the artist create art and let the salesperson sell the art and both of you will be immensely happy. This book is written for the salesperson in you, let your artist-side get back in the studio and make something beautiful.

Moving right along, you soon discover: You are your own boss! What a curse that can be... I found out I'm a real dictator, I don't leave myself alone for a minute and when I do have a rare respite in this hectic life, I make myself write a book. Being your own boss means many things, most of them good. For one, you can choose which 100 hours per week you want to work, no more silly schedules for sure. Okay, there are some late nights, even some completely sleepless nights...and long drives. There are some early mornings too, I recently received the "convenient" set up time of 3:00 AM. But really other than that and the festival times you can choose your own schedule.

You can choose your income too, just like doing piecemeal. No more getting paid for doing nothing; if you work you get paid, if you stay home, your art collects dust. You can do 2 festivals a year or 50 festivals a year (how these folk do that many is beyond my comprehension). And none of that silly weekly paycheck either, you can be sure to make anywhere from \$0 to an unknown amount that could be in the thousands in a single weekend. Ahhh, the thrill of the unknown...

Point is, you are in charge. You can work on your art or work in the yard. I like to do festivals during prime season and then take a couple of months off (except those summer festivals are soooo tempting sometimes). I need the *thinking* time, the time when my right brain is in charge and creates new ideas while my left brain decides in the background whether I should book the second weekend of November, between Sacramento and San Francisco. I absolutely need time to dedicate to my home and my neglected husband and animals. Absolutely in charge! Sort of. But the good news is that you could, if you weren't totally addicted to this life, stop and smell the roses—really!

Attitude: Haz bien y no mires a quien

Loosely translated that expression means: "Do well and don't look at what anyone else is doing." This is a fine credo to remember for all artists and craftspeople in the business. If there is a single key to success to this business, it is Attitude with a capital