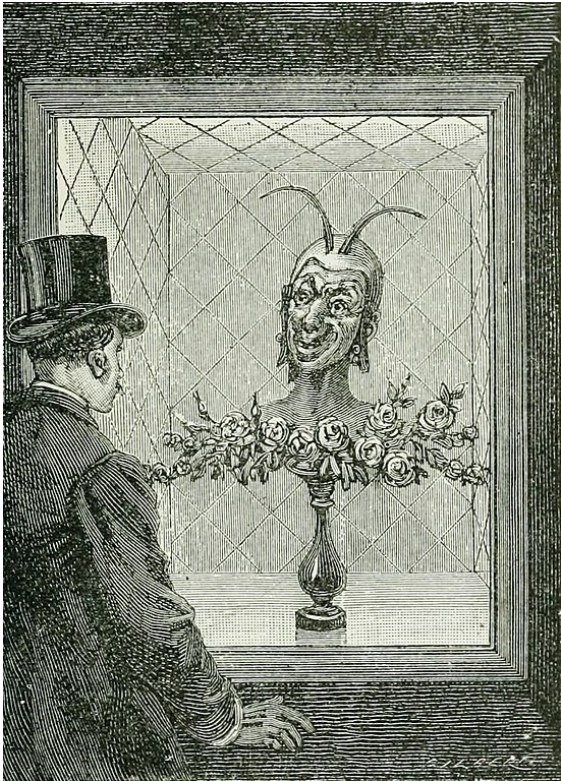


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Studio Craft: 5 Mistakes that can Hurt Your Career



It takes a long time to learn to be a professional artist, and everyone makes mistakes along the way. Most are easily forgiven, but there are a few blunders that can seriously impact your path to success. Avoid these mistakes to improve your prospects for a long, successful career.

Undermining your dealer

Showing at a gallery represents a significant investment in time, effort and money for the artist, but the gallery hosting the work is also a major stakeholder. Maintaining the exhibition space, publicizing a show, and cultivating collectors are expensive for a dealer. Be mindful of this when a collector asks to purchase directly from the studio works that are on display in a gallery. Consider the long-term consequences of circumventing the gallery, including prospects for future shows, your reputation among other

dealers, and the impact on the value of your work. A gallery owner who discovers that an artist has cut them out of a commission will probably not consider working with that artist in the future, and will not hesitate to let other dealers know about what happened.

Too liberal with discounts

Another consideration relating to sale out of studio is the impact that discounts could have on the perceived value of your work, and whether clients are willing to pay “full price” after getting a bargain. It can be tempting to cut a deal when finances are lean, but closing that sale with a discount will create expectations for future sales. That might be mutually beneficial, especially if the discount is for volume or repeat purchases, but it’s important to remember that the amount you can charge has a lot to do with how much clients have paid in the past.

Bad-mouthing other artists

Art can be a competitive business. Every artist feels both pride and self-doubt about their work, but being part of a supportive peer community is also one of the best things about being an artist. There’s a big difference between supportive criticism and petty complaining. Whatever opinion you might privately hold about another artist, stay professional when discussing the work of others with artists and dealers. You never know who might be the proud owner of a piece by the artist you secretly dislike, so be very careful about making negative remarks that might hurt someone’s feelings. This is particularly true in the exhibition space, where careless remarks might kill a sale. Being supportive of your fellow artists is always a good look, and a great way to keep your name on the list for potential opportunities.

Not selective enough about exhibitions

Emerging artists can’t be too picky about where they show their work- restaurants, coffee houses and offices are great places to launch a career, especially if they lead

to better opportunities. Once a professional gallery agrees to show your work, however, it's usually time to retire from the coffee house exhibits. Many galleries will restrict where you can show your work locally anyway, and spreading your art too thinly can undermine your dealer's efforts to promote your work and build a record of achieving progressively better prices. If there is a significant reason why you want to continue showing at a specific venue, discuss it with the dealer and see if you can work something out- some will agree, as long as sales are handled through the gallery, or if the affiliation is publicized along with the artwork.

Too many freebies

Carefully placed donations of artwork can be a great way to support a cause, promote your work and help the community, but it's important to choose carefully where and when to donate. It's possible to fit one or two high profile auctions per year into the studio calendar, but be careful establishing a pattern with any one venue. If collectors expect to see major works in the same auction every year, they might stay home on opening night of your show if they think they can score at the charity event. If it's a cause you care deeply about supporting, consider giving a modest financial gift rather than artwork, at least on alternating years.

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