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### **If it's Easy, Should it Cost Less?**



Here is a concept I struggle with all the time. I bet many of you do too.

The value of our art has very little direct correlation to the amount of time spent creating it.

Stop and read that again please. Do you believe it? Intellectually I do. But my heart says it's not right. In a just world, the art I spend more time creating should absolutely be worth more than the art that takes me little effort.

I didn't write this article to discuss pricing strategies. This is more about resisting the urge to assign lower values to less labor intensive works. I've continued to do so, and it has not served me well. It's something I am going to be more vigilant about.

Consider this. I can paint WAY faster now than I could in 1980. Yet my art sells for much more.

If you create things in series like I do, it takes much longer to give birth to the first pieces in the series. As you experiment and learn more efficient ways to breathe life into your ideas, you find you can accomplish them quicker. So does that mean the later pieces are worth less? For me, they are usually noticeably better than the first ones, but they took half the time.

These things make your mind spin when you think too hard on them.

Even when aware of this, the majority of artists I know, myself included, prioritize time spent in our pricing rubric. After all, time is a currency - in the end some would say our MOST valuable resource.

"Nothing worthwhile ever comes easy" often translates in my head to "If it didn't take a long time to manifest, it's not really worth much." Can you relate to this?

But how well is this working for us?

And, with AI tools entering the art scene, some may feel that AI generated or assisted art reduces the time the artist has to spend creating, making the outcome less valuable. Some of us remember that we had the same discussions when we stopped using 35mm slides as references and entered the world of digital photography.

It's so hard to talk about how collectors value the time it takes for us to make art, because often they do not. Many famous artworks took the artist very little time to produce. Yet they have sold for tens of

thousands and even millions. Do a google search on “sale of blank canvas makes history” and you’ll see this happens all the time. How can we reconcile this?

We can’t.

We can’t control perceived value of our artwork. The value of an artwork is subjective and dependent on the tastes and preferences of individual collectors. Some may place a high value on works that are technically impressive and demonstrate a high level of skill and craftsmanship, while others may be more interested in works that are experimental, innovative, or provocative, regardless of the time spent creating them.

So, as all things do for artists, it circles back to what do we, the creators, assign value to? Do we price an amazing painting we made in two hours lower than a piece we have struggled for days with and it still isn’t coming together right? Or do we charge by the square inch? Or do we have a formula based on the cost of our shipping and framing and supplies? These are all viable options. In reality, our art is worth what someone will pay for it, no matter how many hours we put into it.

I’ve come to a place where I price my works of similar size comparable to the last piece I sold. Every few years, I raise those price points by 10 percent. I compare my prices to peers who I feel are at the same place in their art journey as I am, just to be sure I am not pricing too high or too low.

If you have not sold work, or are trying a new category, I find it’s best to compare your art to the prices of sold pieces by your peers. Sometimes we are too close to our own work to be objective. I will often ask friends or gallery owners what they think my work is worth, before I decide to set a price.

Whatever you decide to do, please think before you discount that artwork that feels like it created itself. I’ve heard from many artists that pieces we put the least effort into are the ones that often sell first, and at full price.

It’s something to think about.