

Consistency - Is it Key?



Oscar Wilde is famously quoted as saying “Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative.” I get sucked into reading these daily quotes, and I rarely question them. Who am I to disagree with Oscar Wilde?

Yet, I can’t imagine an art career that does not benefit from consistency. By its very definition, consistency means repetition of the behaviors that line up with a longterm vision. That has to be good for artists, right? Think of all the great results we creatives get if we are consistently practicing our craft, promoting our art, networking with other artists and collectors and agents, recording our journeys, etc. Every part of my art marketing plan that will suffer if I am not consistent.

So what was Oscar talking about?

Scholars say he meant that if you are not creative, you will take comfort in being consistent, following routines, and doing the same thing all the time. You will have no reason to do anything original. Well, duh! Give me the formula, the recipe for a successful art career. I want to follow it and be comfortable. Originality often comes with a lot of discomfort.

Unfortunately, there is no single formula for creating the next Mona Lisa. If there was, we’d all be in the Louvre. But, since we are all imaginative BECAUSE we are artists, I hope you will humor me and entertain this rebellious thought. MAYbe, just maybe, there is value in creating original artwork, but consistently working a set strategy to market and sell that artwork. Maybe the time to get inventive is when that strategy stops working for you.

Clint Watson recently wrote a Fine Art Views article about the mere exposure effect. People are hard wired to remember what they see and experience repeatedly. Artists and paintings that are famous have consistently been in the public eye.

I have a friend who has a career that spans decades, painting commissioned portraits. He has never had an agent, never been in a gallery. He painted realistic portraits in shopping malls through the 1970’s and 1980’s when the gallery model was the preferred way of doing business for most of his peers. He consistently painted and promoted and taught workshops, tweaking the things that he needed to over the years. Today, he is one of the most successful portrait artists I know. He was nothing if not consistent, but he did things his own way.

One marketing plan many artists follow is to create a consistent body of work, be it for a show or their portfolio. I know someone who paints beautiful florals, but they only post their portraits because they want to be known first and foremost as a portrait artist. Consistency is part of their marketing strategy.

I would argue that having a to-do list of consistent tasks has served me well in my art career. The list has changed over time, as my skills and the venues I show at have grown. The changes are mostly small ones however. I imagine that most of you would create a list similar to mine, so I thought I would share it here today.

Forgive me Oscar Wilde, for I have been consistently doing these things since I first thought to create an art business plan:

1. Work a set schedule each day
2. Create work in series
3. Post on social media regularly
4. Publish newsletter monthly
5. Enter gallery and society shows
6. Attend networking conferences, art openings and zoom calls
7. Teach each week
8. Do something each day to work toward more sales
9. Advertise at least one artwork each day
10. Connect with at least one other artist each day
11. Connect with at least one collector each week
12. Connect with one of my venues each month
13. Work each day to improve my skill set
14. Reflect on and enjoy EACH and EVERY day on this art journey

Some days I do the things on my list better than others. And, I always keep my personal goals in mind. A list without an end goal isn't very useful. When it's not helping me achieve my goals, I need to adjust the list. In my little corner of the art world, consistency is more important than perfection. It just is.

What have you consistently done that has helped you in your art career? What have you consistently done that has hindered you in your art career? (I have one of those lists too, but I will not be sharing it here!)

If you know of ways to succeed without consciously being consistent, I would sure love to hear them.