

Winnings

Last year, I won a little art contest at an event with several super accomplished realist painters who I admire greatly. My first response was to shout "I never win anything!" Just as soon as it was out of my mouth, someone shot back "Yes you do!"

Often, I forget all the stuff I accomplish, because I'm striving so hard to do more. In that moment, I realized that I really do win quite often. But for me, that's not the important thing. The important thing is to keep trying to win bigger. I grew up in Detroit, and it's like the muscle cars in the 1950's. I am always striving for the the next cooler, faster, more popular model. Sure, I win things. But I'm not winning the chance to be in the Prix de West exhibition... yet.

If I settle for the winnings and accolades I have so far, I feel like that will be the end of my learning and growing. I'm not ready to stop learning and growing. For some people, it might be that they don't want or need to devote resources to improving their skills. Maybe they want spend all their energy to get better at marketing and sales. That is a workable strategy too. It's not mine though.

I believe it's important to know yourself, and to know what it is you want to focus on being a winner at. I suppose it could be several things. We all want to be great at everything. But if you had to create a list and prioritize them, what would yours look like?

Here's mine. The items at the top of my list are the ones I am currently investing in with the most time, energy, money and emotion.

1. Improving my drawing skills
2. Improving my painting skills
3. Developing relationships with sales and show venues
4. Deepening my relationships with existing collectors
5. Seeking rewarding experiences with small groups of fellow artists
6. Entering art shows and contests
7. Painting for my existing venues
8. Seeking commissions
9. Teaching workshops and mentoring students
10. Volunteering and networking
11. Updating marketing and sales goals

Notice that every single item on my list has a marketing element associated with it. When I'm improving my skills, I can certainly use the activities I am doing as marketing bits. When I am pitching museums and art centers for shows, there is a lot of co-marketing involved. When I am teaching or volunteering, marketing and sales is part of that too. Pretty much everything we do as artists is part of our business plan.

Sometimes we feel like we have to do an overwhelming number of tasks. It's true. This art career is often too big a job for one person. But a lot of what I personally do is multitasking. My lists overlap.

It's in the overlap that it's easy to lose sight of the winnings. Just because we are reaching for best of show, isn't it important to NOT forget about the honorable mentions?

I almost forgot - I won THREE FAV 15% selections in the January 2023 Bold Brush Contests. Do you enter?

Editor's Note:

Speaking of winning, Debra won the Presidents' Award as well as the Western Art Collector's Award for her amazing, "Hungry" in WAOW's 53rd National Show at the Carriage Factory in Newton, Kansas.