

# Putting a price tag on your works of art

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Meisinger. He has taught for eight years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 18774 Midvale Rd., Livonia. Meisinger encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington MI 48024.



By David Meisinger  
special writer

When holidays, birthdays or special occasions approach, many artists are asked to draw pictures.

Being asked to draw or paint a picture is truly a compliment, but to many a commission brings anxiety-filled moments. The word anxiety is being fearful about the outcome.

For many artists the request for their abilities comes unexpected and usually they are unprepared mentally to handle the request. If we could hear the inner thoughts of many artists when asked to draw a picture, it might go something like this:

**INTERESTED PERSON:** Hi, I've seen some of your drawings and I was wondering if you would consider doing a pet portrait of my snazer-poo?

**FLUSTERED ARTIST (thinking):** Oh, not I mean, sure! Wait a minute, do I charge? Sure, I charge. What does he think I am? ... How much? \$10. No, \$15. ... No, \$10. ... I wonder if I'm blushing. ... Help!

**WITH A LITTLE mental preparation** you will be able to handle the situation with no anxiety and in a friendly, professional way.

First of all there are those who feel that asking you to draw their whatever is a compliment and they have no intention of payment. Imagine this type of person approaching you and saying, "I've noticed how well you wash your car and I thought I would let you wash my new one for free."

Well, you wouldn't consider that request too long, so why be upset by such a person's request for your talents? Remember, a laborer gets paid for what he will do and an artist gets paid for what he can do. You wouldn't wash his car for free simply because you can wash cars well and certainly you wouldn't do art work for free simply because you are asked.

Art requires time — a commodity that slips through our fingers like sand. Your time is precious to you, and if your time is coupled with your talent and both are directed towards the re-

quest of another person, than payment is certainly expected.

But what if it is for Aunt Peggy or sister Sue? How can you charge them?

Of course only you know who you can charge and from whom you would not consider payment. But relatives can't all be "freelancers" or you might be painting the rest of their lives and most of yours.

**THERE IS A WAY** to handle the request for your talents with strangers, friends and even some relatives.

Setting a minimum fee is what I recommend. What your minimum fee is, however, is up to you.

I recommend \$15 to \$25 to begin with. Believe me, there is nothing worse than begrudging the person you are drawing for. The flattery of being commissioned fades fast as the hours pass, everyone is in bed, and your eye bags are beginning to swell.

After several twilight hours that nice guy who commissioned you becomes a ripoff artist and you become the artist he ripped off. But who's fault is it?

Let's say you went into a store to buy a steam iron and when you asked the owner if the price was really \$25 he said, "Yes, but if you think that is too much, pay me \$15." Now what would you do? Insist on paying the other \$10?

Of course not. You would take his best offer. And your best offer is what your customers will take. Here is where a minimum fee becomes a good opener for negotiations.

Let's say you quote a minimum fee of \$25. To this quote there are usually three answers. The first is "OK, I'll think about it and get back with you." Better not count on it. They might be the type that would let you wash their new car for free.

The second response is, "\$25, well that's about what I figured." This person has given some thought to the commission and is probably prepared to go another \$15 or so.

The third response is, "Oh, of course I intended to pay much more than \$25." This response is not as odd as it sounds and is more frequent. This tells you that this person wants a work of art and not just a sketch.

So after that response you need only say, "Of course that quote is only a pencil sketch, but if you want full color it will be a little higher."

Many times I will ask a customer how much he or she intends on spending. This tells me what kind of a job they are looking for. I recently quoted a job and the customer raised the fee \$100 more than I quoted. I knew exactly what kind of a job he wanted and that extra \$100 was, needless to say, "inspiring."

**HOW PRECIOUS** is the moment when you receive your first check for art work commissioned by a complete stranger. How awesome is the moment

## Artifacts

when the check bounces.

So welcome to the commercial field of art. That is why cash is always best from customers you don't know personally.

Another problem is when the impulse buyer commissions you and changes their mind after you have already done the work. To remedy this you require sufficient amount down to cover your time before you even begin.

One other famous culprit customer is the one who wants you to make

changes. Changes in the finished piece are very difficult and often require half the time it took to draw the original.

What I would recommend is to do a pencil sketch and let the customer see this and ask them if there are any changes they would like made. If not, then you will be all set to finish.

Best or worst of all is the last-minute commission customer. There you are trying to organize your life and doing fine. Then out of the clear blue comes an "as soon as possible" commission

and when you receive a down payment. But for every corks, kook and problem customer there are 100 sincerely wonderful people who appreciate your abilities and show it by their conduct and payment.

**AS YOUR WORKS** increase in demand, you may find yourself looking for that 25th hour in the day and the eighth day of the week. So you either reserve a bed in emergency and keep up the "arlatron" life style, or raise your minimum fee.

I am pleased to find that once you increase your fee, your attitude changes. Instead of them telling you what they want you to charge, you are telling them what you must receive.

Remember, you set the mood. There

are some pushy people out there, so just let them push right on past you. Stay busy with the clientele. Bend over backwards for those you like doing art for and give them your best price per job.

Those you do not like to do work for are easy to lose: simply increase or even double your fee. If they continue to return, then you may be more content to deal with them since they are paying you well.

Before receiving any commission, be sure of what the customer wants. Clearly discuss amounts desired for the work and when the work is to be completed. Also be sure to secure a sufficient down payment. Then with your mind off business you'll be amazed how expressive you can be.

## exhibitions

### • DETROIT FOCUS

Clay/10 presents the first invitational group show of the season. Reception to meet the 10 members of the group 6-8:30 p.m. Saturday. Open to the public free of charge. The artists all teach at area universities or centers for ceramics. Continues through the year. Regular hours are noon to 6 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, 743 Beaubien, Detroit.

### • PEWABIC POTTERY

Annual Invitational Christmas show and sale continues through Jan. 10. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, Thursdays until 9 p.m. and Sundays noon to 5 p.m., 10125 E. Jefferson, Detroit.

### • DETROIT ARTISTS MARKET

Annual holiday show continues through Dec. 27. Included are fashion accessories for both men and women, Christmas ornaments, leaded and etched boxes and panels and many other gift ideas. There's a show by Douglas Semlman, professor at Wayne State University, and well-known printmaker in the Upper Gallery. Gallery manager Mary Grimes will present a talk "Highlights of the Holiday Show" at noon Friday, Nov. 25. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 1454 Randolph, Detroit.

### • IRVING GELDMAN GALLERIES

New works by Charles Hinman include shaped canvases and cast paper pieces in lucite boxes. The artist will be present for the 4-7 p.m. reception Friday. Continues through Jan. 7. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, Thursday and 8 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The gallery has a new address, 6317 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

### • BIRMINGHAM BLOOMFIELD ART ASSOCIATION

Sunday, Nov. 27 — Holiday Sales

### • TOWN CENTER GALLERY

Original acrylics in grid patterns by Grace Gardner are shown for the first time in this area. Gardner was the subject of a feature article in October Better Homes and Gardens. Show continues through Dec. 10. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, 3000 Town Center, Suite 45, Southfield.

### • CANTOR/LEMBERG GALLERY

Books and Objects by nine artists illustrate the transformation of books into art objects that has taken place in the last 15 years. Among those represented is Lynne Avadenka of Birmingham, Nat Dean, Myra Herr, Allan Saar, Jill Sebastian, Keith Smith, Buzz Spector, Stephen Spira and Erica Van Horn. Continues through Dec. 10. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 11 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

### • MEADOW BROOK ART GALLERY

Sunday, Nov. 27 — Gary Bandy, originally from Ortonville and Tom Hale, another local artist, known for landscapes and watercolors of automobiles, are the guests at this third part of Meadow Brook II Invitational. Reception to meet the artists and open to the public is 2-5 p.m. Sunday. Continues through Dec. 25. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 2-6:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and evenings when there is a Meadow Brook Theatre performance, Oakland University campus, Rochester.

### • ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS

Works by Sylvia Majewski are on display at the Galeria on the campus through November. Hours are 12:30-1:30 weekdays, Sunday afternoons and by appointment. This well-known area artist has taught, published and shown extensively in Michigan. The campus of Orchard Lake Schools is at Commerce and Orchard Lake roads, Orchard Lake.

### • GALLERY ART CENTER

Contemporary works by Mac Jamison, Dell, Appal, Calder, Chagall, Miro, Maxwell, Yamagata, Agam, Das and Moss are on display. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 18331 12 Mile, Lathrup Village.

### • NANCY CARMAN

Continues through Dec. 18. Regular hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 550 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

### • HILL GALLERY

Sculpture and drawings by Jay Whaley continue through Dec. 3. This, the artist's third one-man show with Hill Gallery, is marketed by strength and a kind of sculptural minimalism that is both intriguing and at times awe-inspiring, 163 Townsend, Birmingham.

### • SHELTON ROSS GALLERY

Gallery regulars are being shown through the month including Beckmann, Gross, Kollwitz, Jerry and Mordis. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 250 Martin, Birmingham.

### • ART EXCHANGE

Pottery by Christopher Anthony of Pontiac is front and center through November — beer steins with cast pewter lids, plates, salt-glaze jugs, wine urns and redware plates. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and Saturday until 9 p.m., 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday, 415 S. Washington, Royal Oak.

### • CENTER FOR CREATIVE STUDIES

Alumni selections continue in the Sarkis Galleries through Jan. 19. Included are works by some of the school's illustrious graduates, Yamasaki Building, 245 E. Kirby, Detroit.

### • PIERCE STREET GALLERY

"Explorations" is an exhibit of works by Linda Reskin, Allan Janus, Ruth Thorne-Thomson and Maria Martinez-Canas. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, 217 Pierce, Birmingham.

### • YAW GALLERY

"Figures in Clay" by Lizbeth Stewart, Mark Burns, Judy Moonells and

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**PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP**  
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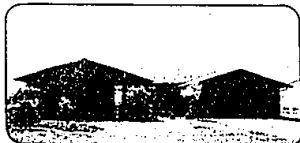
**CUL-DE-SAC LOCATION**  
LOVELY 4 bedroom colonial backs to Commons. Fireplaces warm the family room and the master bedroom. Decking off the back for those cool summer evenings. A must see at this price. \$105,000. 851-1900.



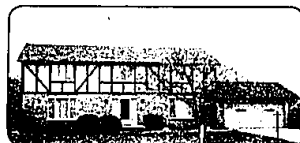
**EXCELLENT LOCATION**  
LARGE 4 BEDROOM RANCH, custom built for entertaining. Large den has private entrance and adapts to home office. \$124,900. 851-1900.



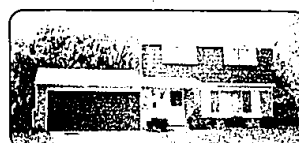
**LAFAYETTE MODEL**  
GRACIOUS HOME. Fieldstone fireplace accents the large family room. Beautiful inground pool with all the accessories including diving board and slide - approximately 3500 square feet. \$129,900. 851-1900.



**CONTEMPORARY RANCH**  
FOUR BEDROOMS, 2 1/2 bath in sub which has swimming pool and tennis courts. Large kitchen with built-in double oven and smooth top range, 3 doorways, large deck off corner. \$122,000. 477-1111.



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IT'S HARD TO FIND a feel like this, 4 bedroom colonial with finished basement, formal dining room and attached 2 car garage. \$83,500. 477-1111.



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