

Selling Out
By James Patino
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During a recent radio interview, I was asked about “selling out”. As I understand it, “selling out” is this notion that in order for artists to make money in the art business, they have to compromise their artistic integrity. Create some form of “popularly accepted” art, in order to make enough money to live.

From what I’ve been able to understand about the “business” of art, I disagree completely. On the contrary, what I consult to artists is the exact opposite. I believe the most important thing an artist can do is remain true to his/her art. To create, without fear, and produce work that is channeled from your highest self.

You see, this brings us back to my understanding that art is about energy (as is everything else in life). It’s about the energy that an artist is able to infuse into a work of art when he reaches into his and soul, and channels what he feels onto the canvas. It’s about the energy that is worked into a piece of art and the feeling that is emitted to anyone who is fortunate enough to experience the completed vision.

Energy is what sells art!!!! When someone sees and feels a wonderful piece of art, they fall in love with it. It makes them feel good and it makes them want to own the energy of it, all of the time.

Therefore, “selling out” or “compromising” your artistic integrity, is contrary to my whole philosophy. To me, “selling out” would mean that the energy that you place into a piece of art is less than what you are capable of. It would be less than what you can produce when you are at your highest state of creativity.

Now, this doesn’t mean we can’t be practical about life and realistic about having to make ends meet and there might be opportunities where you can create some cash flow, by creating art, outside of your “specialty.” You might get a chance to do some graphic design, t-shirts or whatever. This is perfectly fine, and in fact, it’s wonderful. Cash Flow is key to starting and sustaining a business, and if you can do it by creating art, then go for it. Creating cash flow is not “selling out” as long as you keep your dream alive and you keep focused on your goals of doing your “primary” art.

For example, Sinclair worked in the mortgage industry for a dozen years, while cultivating her passion for watercolor in the evenings. If she could have substituted the mortgage job, with a more artistic job, I know for a fact that she would have in a heartbeat! So what if, instead of doing mortgage stuff for 12 years, Sinclair created t-shirt designs or another form of commercial art. Would that have been selling out? I don’t think so. In fact, one of my business

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philosophies is specifically about “Doing More of What You Love.” Generating streams of income with your artistic talent is not selling out, as long as you remain true to your passion. Sinclair remained true to her passion and became a full time artist in 2003. Hypothetically, if Sinclair would have decided that the t-shirt money was good enough, and she would have stopped her dream of being a full time artist, then you could say that she “sold out.”

“Selling out” doesn’t occur until you give up on your dreams, and you settle into something less desirable, for the sake of making money. There are so many ways of looking at this, and it’s up to you to feel comfortable with yourself and what you are doing.

I believe that if you remain true to yourself and true to your art, your highest energy will be emitted from your art. Art is subjective and just like you love your art; there is a percentage of the community who will love your art too. It’s all a matter of getting your art out there, and finding that “subset” of art buyers, who enjoy your work.

Remaining true to your style of art will keep you consistent. It will help you improve and it will allow your fans to find you. If you are changing your art, in order to find what will sell or in attempt to please people’s tastes, then you’re a moving target, chasing after a moving target.

I believe an artist’s highest level of energy and talents arises when you can completely eliminate your mind from your work. When you can focus on the art and only the art. Not on the sales, not on the reaction of the customer, etc. To be in a quiet place where your conscious mind is quiet (or distracted) and all that remains is your brush and your soul. To compromise your art, would mean to interject your conscious thoughts into the equation. It would mean having to “think” about what you are creating, and having to “think” about whether it’s what your customer is looking for, or whether or not it would sell.

Artists are leaders! You are the leaders of the spirits of humanity! You inspire!
You provide vision and beauty!

“Selling out” means following the marketplace, following your minds idea of what would sell better.

I believe “selling out” means giving up on your dreams. Your dream of being a full time artist and your dream of creating the art that has always made your heart soar. Never give up on those dreams, because they are the essence of you as an artist.

Now, here is the critical element, TIME.

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Time is the great illusion and we all have to endure the insistence that we feel to have it all, NOW! Time is what makes you want to settle or “sell out”. Patience and vision is what will keep your dreams alive and keep you moving towards your goal.

What if Sinclair would have quite watercolors, say after 10 years? I’m sure it sounds reasonable for many than after 10 years, you might as well throw in the towel. Wrong! Not for someone with a dream and the patience and persistence to make it happen.

What’s the bottom line? Never give up and never sell out! Understand that attaining cash flow to operate and capitalize your business is important, but always stay focused on your dreams. If your dream is your highest priority, does it really matter when it gets here?