

Artists Get Rich: Try Flipping From One Side of the Brain To The Other!

By Suzi Elton

Artist clients often are working from a “starving artist” mentality. They think it’s required to suffer for their art. They consider it virtuous to struggle along, just scraping by, barely able to pay the bills. They find it challenging to get the resources to perfect their art and realize it fully. They live a Bohemian lifestyle in lofts and slum style buildings to satisfy the expression of their art. What could be the problem in this?

The main problem is the artist’s dread, fear, or hatred for the “grubby” nature of business. You, the artist (every kind of artist), must learn to love business. This is an heretical concept to most artists.

Think about this though—how many biographical sketches of artists have you read that ended in someone else making money from stealing the artist’s work? How frequently do you hear about an artist living in poverty and someone else getting rich off their work after they die? How many writers, musicians and performing artists have you known about who got screwed in business dealings because they chose not to educate themselves? How many creative people are you familiar with who spent their lives on their art and died virtually penniless? It’s a rare artist whose life is different from this.

So what is the difference between starving in a garret and thriving and profiting from your art? Learning to love business, reveling in mastery of business, enjoying the “game” of having your art support you is the difference.

“Yuck!” Are you saying, “Yuck”? Consider this then. Can you see the power in having full access to both sides of your brain, creative and logical, and being able to flip back and forth from one side to the other at will? This is really where life as an artist gets interesting. This is where you can start to command more than a pittance for your work. If you are not supporting yourself with your art, it’s just a “hobby”, something you do on the side when you finish your day job. Calling the artist’s work a hobby is the way that society trivializes those who create the culture. Every artist knows the sting of the “hobby” insult.

What’s the difference between a hobby and making a living? Mastering the business of your industry (whether it is fine art, commercial art, music, or performing arts) is the difference.

The artist needs to learn and study how to succeed in the business of their art. Note: Have you noticed how some artists with work inferior to yours are making lots of money? Again the difference is business mastery.

Think for a moment about being able to fully use both sides of your brain at will. You don’t give up any creativity. In fact, developing this skill enhances your creativity. Do not fear that developing business sense will lessen your creativity or hamper your creative skills. Do not worry that developing the “logical” side will “eat up” your ability to produce your art. Surprisingly, the ability to flip from one side of the brain to the other in an instant at will actually makes your creativity even more accessible. It’s almost as if you put your brain on an “exercise program” and it gets stronger.

No, learning business does not taint your soul—unless you choose that, but it surely will protect you from having your business naivete' being taken advantage of. Choose to be among the “non-starving” artists—master business and thrive.

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