



SCAVA South Cape Association for the Visual Arts

LIFE GOES ON.....WITH THE GREATEST OF CARE

For most of us life is usually a treadmill of activities. Even those of us who are retired, in our retirement we all volunteer for local community duties or child minding.

This particularly nasty virus out from China, Covid-19, is bringing the world to the brink of collapse, the worst disaster ever experienced in peacetime, likely more disastrous than the 1919 flu pandemic. There are concerns that as this pandemic abates in the wealthy Northern hemisphere, it will take even greater hold in our much poorer and thickly populated African continent. This is the saddest event ever imagined.

Going into the 2020 year SCAVA was convinced that this would be an iconic year, a new decade of reawakening, jumpstarting our economy, cultural development, and enhancing our lives generally. We are now forcefully transported from the luxury of the hurly burly activity of normal everyday life and removed to a period of confinement to our homes. For us artists of the Southern Cape region this crisis gives us a respite from life's treadmill. We self isolate and concentrate on activities which are near to our heart. We paint, and paint and paint. It is an ideal opportunity to catch up. We can do a little house renovation, garden maintenance or pound the

laptop keys, keeping in touch via social media. This is our lifeline, and our opportunity to get creative.

This is the one way we can give a little to humanity which is indeed suffering much more than ourselves. Already there is food rationing in the U.K. Households are limited in their purchasing and deliveries are being made on a rotated schedule. It takes 3 weeks to get on the list.

For us, we will finish the paintings already started, particularly those being prepared for the Old Masters Exhibition in the Art Gallery of the George Museum. Naturally the collection of artworks will be postponed until the wisest amongst us gives us the 'all clear'. After our forced hibernation we will emerge not as majestic butterflies, more likely looking like Rip Van Winkle.

At the moment SCAVA hopes all of our members, all art lovers everywhere, especially those who are very vulnerable, will live through this crises with care and patience and come out at the other end, fit and healthy. We must keep in touch with colleagues and loved ones and assist each other where we can.

Keep safe.....Keep sane.....Keep healthy.

Commercial Art Galleries

Some of your questions answered

Many artists would give their eye teeth to be represented by a top of the market Art Gallery. They wonder why proprietors of such establishments do not welcome them with open arms. Artists are by nature people with creative skills and most have little experience of the big bad commercial world. Artists often bemoan the fact that the upmarket Art Gallery takes "so much of the retail price". Artists usually hate paying 'commission'. In other selling fields there is a saying "little commission means little service". Ask any Estate Agent about their fight to justify for their 6% commission. Artists should never regret paying a selling entity what it is worth.

Here's some of the inside story on retail:-

1. Galleries sell only expensive art created by a selected list of professional competent artists.
2. They promote artists who pledge all their work to galleries of similar high standing and can guarantee a continuous supply.
3. In return they build on the artists' reputation and ensure a profitable career.
4. Their artists must not compete with the Gallery in Markets or Art Fairs etc. Neither should they sell directly to the public.
5. They should have no desire to bridge the gap between high and low ends of the art market. If an artist is represented by a gallery at the high end, then that artist must not supply any other level of retail. It is unfair for all parties to see ones art retailed at R50,000 in one venue and also at R5,000 at another venue. It confuses buyers and debases the artist's market value and reputation.
6. The Art Gallery is usually sited in a popular expensive retail venue, with high traffic, paying at least R60,000 rental per month. They carry many other overheads: staff, phones, advertising & merchandising, accounting and many, many more.
7. Investment art is a limited market...galleries sell few items and with these few they must cover the massive overheads.
8. Therefore the mark-up has to be high to cover these vast expenses. Example: Clothing stores begin the mark up level at 300%. Many are much higher, some as much as 1000%. Furniture stores begin the mark up at 80% because the stock is usually more expensive and the turnover prolific. Motor vehicle industry usually begins at 40%. The base price of cars is much higher so the starting mark up point is naturally lower. Estate Agents begin at 6%, their base price is usually in excess of R1 million. All sectors of the retail market have high overheads.
9. A stall at the market selling art or crafts usually is priced at R150 per day with no other overheads. So do the math. If the big gallery is what you aspire to, then you should seriously bone up on the subject. Knowing is understanding.

One (unnamed) person on your Committee has had a lifetime experience in merchandising products through retail both overseas and in South Africa.