

## Strategies for Success:

### TAM© 2009 Barbara Waterman-Peters

For years I floated along on my talent and on a little ambition, acquiring an art degree (BFA, Washburn University) and working very hard on my art. While satisfying, it didn't get me anywhere. I was in a few shows, taught some painting classes for the YMCA and Recreation Commission, and wished and hoped and dreamed. I even took additional classes at the university to improve my skills. I kept an art journal, but despite my hard work nothing seemed to be fulfilling my goals of success which I defined as having shows, works in galleries, sales, and critical recognition.

One day it occurred to me that I was going to have to get serious if I wanted to be taken seriously. I shifted the paradigm of my approach: I entered juried shows, kept meticulous records, read contemporary art magazines, started to learn how to photograph my work, got a tax number, worked in series so that my works related to each other and grew in strength, and became active in the art world. I approached galleries. In short, I reached out. This was all in the late 1970's.

I continued on this same path, amassing a lengthy list of shows. By 1985 I was hired to teach as an adjunct instructor at Washburn University; by 1998 I had an MFA in painting from Kansas State University and had taught there as a graduate teaching assistant. In 1999 I was invited to be the visual artist for the Washburn University Theater.

As I strode along this busy road, I took advantage of opportunities, almost never saying "no" to projects, invitations, exhibits, and commissions. I donated my art to various fundraisers for over 25 years. I began to make public appearances before groups, on radio, TV, and the newspaper. I juried shows. I wrote about art and artists and my articles were published, one in a national magazine, and a number in a Kansas City publication as well as locally. I served on panels, committees and boards. And, my art attracted the attention of art critics: my first review was in the KANSAS CITY STAR in 1983.

Over the years I have been represented by about 20 different galleries in 5 states; currently 6 galleries show my work full time with another 2 featuring it occasionally. An interesting fact is that I haven't had to submit my work to a gallery since 1979: they have all come to me! I average about 10-15 invitational exhibits annually in galleries, museums and art centers and last year was my best ever for sales. I had a one woman show at the Mulvane Art Museum in 2007 and an invitation to the Florence Biennale in 2008. Now I have been invited to join the Heartland Visioning team.

Of course, I continue to produce work—new and interesting work is essential. My work ethic has not changed. And just what does **TAM** mean anyway?

- T = Talent
- A = Ambition
- M = Marketing

**Talent** is a given. Without it, you wouldn't be interested in these strategies, but it must constantly be nurtured so that it will grow.

**Ambition** is the driving force behind success. It is what propels the creative process and the hard work, self-discipline, and sheer determination.

**Marketing** is the final and equally important component of my principle. For many it is the most difficult to facilitate. When money enters the mix, discomfort and confusion seem to result. That is foolish. The ARTS are creative and idealistic and ephemeral and emotional and aesthetic and spiritual and the highest expression of humankind and, and—yes, they are. But they are also commodities and productions for which the artists deserve to be paid. Such thinking is heresy, I know, but it is the truth. Consider your good fortune in being compensated for what you love to do!

In order to achieve and maintain a level of success you can't rest on your laurels—you **MUST** keep up with the times!

## Tools

- High quality materials
- Good work space
- Good storage
- Business cards with contact information always with you
- Computer and requisite skills
- Email (check daily) [barbara.peters@att.net](mailto:barbara.peters@att.net)
- Website with links to others (such as galleries, etc.) [www.barbarawaterman-peters.com](http://www.barbarawaterman-peters.com)
- Power Point Presentation ready to go
- Brochure
- Digital camera (the best you can afford—ideally 300ppi capable)
- Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/barbara.watermanpeters>
- Blog <http://bwpart2.wordpress.com/>
- Business insurance
- Up-to-date resume/vita (keep track of everything you've done)

## Strategies

- Decide what is unique about your work; use as marketing strategy.
- Always do your best work. Second best can come back to haunt you.
- Look for opportunities and understand your market; do your homework! The internet makes that easier than ever. And the adage of it's not what you know, but who, is true!
- Be willing to accept small jobs/commissions/shows
- Good record-keeping
- Meet deadlines/read instructions and follow them.

- Build a support system and always treat them with respect and give them plenty of time. Such people might include suppliers, framers, printers, photographers, processors, website designer/managers, shippers, editors, etc.
- Treat your own work with respect in all ways!
- Community involvement is a must: networking, joining arts organizations, expanding to other cities, and mentoring are all good.
- The myth of the lonely, starving artist in an attic is just that. She/he is a productive citizen who votes and pays taxes and does what she/he can to make the world a better place.

*Most important is to be open to opportunities. You never know what might lead to something that is a turning point in your career!*