

## Art Ethics 101 by Armand Cabrera

We have noticed a marked increase in unethical behavior among many artists, collectors and galleries. In our effort to educate and uphold the highest standards of professionalism, Outdoor Painting wishes to provide our readers with a guideline for ethics in the art business. While some people appear to succeed, even though acting in an unethical manner, be assured that at some point in their career, their actions will come back to haunt them.

Here are some examples of unethical behavior that we've been observing in the art world:

- Participating in a paint-out or any exhibition and selling to collectors---without giving the art venue or gallery a percentage!  
When you are invited to sell your work through any art venue, you are morally obligated to honor the terms of your agreement and give the venue their negotiated commission.
- Attending a gallery show for a fellow artist and attempting to sell your own work. We call it "poaching" and it is the moral equivalent of hitting on someone else's spouse.
- Collectors that attend a gallery show and try to negotiate a private deal with the artist.  
The gallery represents and promotes the artist, displays his or her work, and is entitled to a commission. If the artist is unhappy with the representation by a particular gallery, he should leave and find another gallery.
- Galleries that encourage an artist to paint like another artist. They definitely don't have the artist's best interests in mind. If a gallery asks you to paint like someone else because they think it will help sales, they are asking you to commit career suicide. An artist's style should be the outcome of what they believe about art---not what they think will make them the most money. Unfortunately, we often see this bizarre dance between artist and gallery all too often...artists switching from abstract to realism...and everything in between---chasing whatever is the hype of the moment. Be true to yourself. Have integrity.
- Using a photo or image of a piece of artwork as the basis for your own work that you did not create yourself and have not been given express permission to use. Not only is this unethical, it is illegal. There are no exceptions! There is no "percentage" rule. If you plagiarize, you are a thief. There are many well-known artists (that I won't mention here) that are currently copying other artists' works. Some are even copying their signature styles! Do your research. You might be surprised. Good artists should spend time learning to paint and draw, rather than degrading themselves and the art world by stealing.
- Claiming a work is painted outdoors when it is not.  
Do you really think the discerning eye will not know the difference?? Painting outdoors is painting from life---not painting from photos while you're standing outside or painting from sketches while outdoors. It doesn't matter whether you finish your painting in one day or many days--outdoor painting is the process of painting subjects from life while out of doors. Artists and galleries, who intentionally represent studio paintings as outdoor paintings, are perpetrating a fraud on paintings as outdoor paintings, are perpetrating a fraud on collectors who seek outdoor paintings. There is nothing wrong with painting in the studio---just don't claim it is painted outdoors.

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