

Charitable Donations and the Arts

Making a living as an artist can be a tremendous struggle.

Finding funding for a community service or a worthy cause can be daunting.

Artists wish to help good causes. Charitable organizations wish to be respectful of artists.

Here are some strategies that may help us all work together.

Strategies for Charities

1. Know your audience/market. Solicit donations of things that they are interested in and in a price range that is comfortable for them. Consider asking for donations of smaller inexpensive items if the patrons at your event are not likely to be interested in purchasing large, expensive works of art.
2. For auctions, set the minimum bid at wholesale price – 50% of the retail value and offer to return the item to the artist if it is not sold for the minimum price.
3. Consider purchasing the art work at the whole sale price with the amount of funding raised above that going to the charity, or consider paying the artist a percentage of what the art work sells for.
4. Art tends to sell better at events that are just for art. Combining art with things like appliances and trips encourages attendance by people who are not necessarily interested in art.
5. Consider selling raffle tickets for expensive artwork, rather than auctioning it. It may be possible to raise more funds through raffle ticket sales than by an auction.
6. Understand copyrights and that the donation of a piece of art does not include the right to use an image of the artwork. Specific permission must be granted by the artist if photos of the work are to be used by the charity.
7. A tax receipt does not benefit most artists. In order for a tax receipt to have tax benefits, the artist must declare and pay tax on their full inventory, including unsold work still in their studios, something artists are exempt from doing and would be costly for them.
8. Auctions should be run by people who are familiar with art and can speak to the skills required to produce the work and the value of the artwork. Please ask the artist for a written text outlining information about their work to assist those running the auction.
9. Be aware that if you ask an artist for a piece of work that is specific to a cause or event, such as a piece of a specific size or on a certain theme, the extra work to create the custom artwork can be stressful for the artist.

Strategies for Artists

1. Rather than donating a work of art, consider donating a gift certificate for a specific amount. That places a clear dollar value on your donation, it will encourage people to come to your studio, and it may encourage people to supplement the gift certificate with their own money to purchase a more expensive piece.
2. At the beginning of each year, decide what percentage of your income or what dollar amount you can afford to donate, and when that amount has been reached do not entertain any more requests for donations.

3. Set your own business's policy on donations, such as a maximum amount per donation, restricting it to causes that are in line with your own values, and requiring public acknowledgement of your donation in order to promote your business. Then stick to your policy.
4. Do not feel compelled to respond to requests immediately. Take some time to consider. Remember that art is a business and that what you do has value.