Visual Arts - Where To Now?

“I have always intended to continue working on my art business, but didn’t expect that to pay the bills, so knew I would have to split my time between working part time and my art.”

SANDRA’S STORY

After completing her final year of school, Sandra chose to follow her passion at university and enrol in a three year Bachelor of Visual Arts degree at Monash University, Caulfield Campus, followed by a one year Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours).

Sandra knew she wanted to do something creative when she finished her course and become an artist, but was not sure how to go about this. At the beginning of her course, career information was available but with the uncertainty of what she would do at the conclusion of her course, the information was vague. It did highlight possible career paths such as curating, galleries, art critic, or in education.

Professional Preparation

In preparing Sandra to become a professional artist her course provided information on running a business, such as applying for grants and exhibitions, through one of the units in her final semester.

The most appropriate time to offer this information may have been the middle of the course to enable students to develop further knowledge under the guidance of lecturers. The lecturers were a valuable source of career information as they were practicing artists.

Through volunteering, Sandra has also been made aware of what life as a professional artist may look like. One such project was an outdoor wall piece commissioned by the government. Working outdoors provided different challenges that working in a studio did not encounter.

“The project management involved was something I was not aware of. Traffic management was required as we were painting a wall, and cars and pedestrians were to be considered. Then to complicate matters it began raining. The artist was being paid for a specific time frame. Juggling these aspects is stressful for the artist.”

Sandra won a prize during her third year of study which was to exhibit her artwork in a hotel for twelve months. As part of the prize the hotel were able to offer Sandra an amount to purchase her paintings and keep them on display permanently. Hopefully this is the first of many!

Balancing Employment And Art Practice

During her honours year Sandra began working casually at an assessment education company. This is now a part-time position, and working there enables her to support herself financially and also provides a break from drawing and running her art business. This work appeals more to her logical side rather than her creative side, and is also different to self directed art activities.

In order to improve her profile Sandra believes she needs to add variety to her work and keep challenging and experimenting with her style. Continuing to apply for grants and painting between working part-time is necessary. In order to achieve this she knows she must be self-motivated and continue to look for inspiration in order to have her artwork available to share with the public.

“I feel artists divide their time in two: firstly apply for grants and exhibitions, and then painting time.”