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AUTHENTIC WOMAN PROFILE: CATLIN WISE, FINE ARTIST – PART II

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CINDY CRAWFORD APRIL 19, 2013 1



OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Before Cat opened her business, read [Part I](#) to see how it all began.

Cat's office is a second floor apartment in a huge Victorian mansion on the bank of the Grand River in Painesville, Ohio in Lake County. The multifaceted house functions as a studio, reception hall, art gallery, and home - all in one. The nearly 200 year old Victorian home structure affords Cat the look of elegance and presence without the expense. "It is the perfect backdrop for my work and my lifestyle. It is impressive enough to entertain clients who may have much more expensive homes, though most often I am traveling to their homes."



To promote her business offerings, Cat tried many advertising methods and tracked the ones that yielded the greatest return on her investments. She wondered where her customers came from and was curious to know what prompted them to call. The most successful promotion had been a personal presentation before an office of realtors; an industry Cat was very familiar with and comfortable in. When customers were interested in her work, the orders were immediate. "Typically, my business card which features an actual portrait is saved, tucked away, and the calls come in when they have a need for me. The work that is done for them brings its own repeat business, both through them and through the clients they buy for. The artwork is hung proudly in new homes and is seen by family and friends who can reach me through the contact

information on the back. Each painting is a splash in a new pond and the ripples continue to return." To diversify her offerings, Cat began drawing portraits of people, horses, pets, classic cars, motorcycles, anything to fill in the gaps when she was in between projects.

Cat's ability to draw and paint is inborn. She is asked on many occasions to finish artwork others artists began, a true testament to her raw talent, creativity, and ability, and the confidence her clients have in her work. Like any other profession, having friends in Fine Arts has its advantages. Not one to take on a project just because she is asked to, she happily

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refers customers to artist friends who possess the skill sets that are beyond her purview. "The need of the customer comes first. Referrals to talented people will pay off for us both in the long run. A network of professionals who respect each other's skills can trade clients easily, or refer each other when the need comes up."



A typical workday for Cat begins with a To Do list, but of course, "then there is life," as she says. When working against tight deadlines, she literally disconnects from the outside world. "Doors close, the phone is left in the other room, and hours do not matter. I have been up for 72 hours straight, no sleep, to complete seven paintings for submission to print. I took breaks to eat and to shower, melding one day right into the next, but the project was mine to complete, and I reminded myself that this was not neurosurgery. If I made a mistake, nobody died. At the successful end, I was so physically drained that my teeth ached and my hair hurt. That is NOT good."

No boss to ask permission of and no clock to punch."

On the flip side, when rare occasions allow for a typical day's work, she allows for total flexibility in her schedule. She wakes to walk the dog, meets a friend for coffee, and writes a game plan for the day. When there is more work to do, she spends more time working. When there is less work to do, she does whatever comes up. "No boss to ask permission of and no clock to punch. My friends can and do rely on me for help, advice, and pure friendship. In turn, if I truly cannot connect at that time, they do understand. Each thinks that I need to learn to say no to the others. Even that makes me laugh."

GIVING BACK

Always happiest when she feels needed and appreciated, one thing Cat is most proud of is mentoring a dear friend who decided to return to the art world after leaving the corporate world. She explained how art *isn't in the hand, it's in the heart*. "Oddly enough, time away from artwork does not set you back, you actually mature artistically. Things like patience, enjoying the process, attention to detail are all part of the grown mind and soul. Art reflects what's inside. That's why they use it for therapy."

After much long distance coaching over the phone, Cat's friend visited her in Ohio and brought the painting she had been working on. Cat was stunned when she saw the painting of the Matterhorn, an incredible mountain in the Swiss Alps. "It was majestic, so real, and so dimensional it felt as though you were standing on the edge of the snowfield and could walk right into the painting. I had no idea that sharing what I'd learned could feel so rewarding."

Cat's ultimate creative project is to do a series of outdoor events that encourage creativity. No professional experience is required by the participants, just the thrill of connecting with their own artistic creativity. "We all used to draw and color as kids before someone measured our skill and told us we were good or not. I'd love to help guide them, see how a few of the tricks I've learned over the years will take their confidence and boost it."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Artists create because something within stirs them to express themselves or interpret others' visions in a way that is clear to the rest of the world. At the heart of creation is listening. Cat believes that consulting is creative listening with intention. "I like to please people and use my skills to make what they want become real, become visual."

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One of Cat's specialties is conceptual design. In order to produce artwork that clients want, she needs to understand how they think. In other words, she needs to *get inside their heads*. How does she do this? She simply asks what their needs and wants are and pays close attention to what gets them excited when they describe them. "To get inside their heads, or just as important, inside their hearts – simply ask more questions. When people are truly heard, they talk more freely...the more they describe, the more they visualize." Thinking in pictures is Cat's preferred language she uses to decipher her clients' needs. "Once those images are in their hands, they can take their concept with them to anyone else and that person can now see what they are saying. A picture is worth a thousand words."

On the most basic level, being an artist is about being authentic. For Cat that means, "being honest with myself and expressing that in my relationships and seeing that reality creates change. It is personal growth; how can people relate to you unless they actually know you? How can you know yourself unless you see how your choices work in the real world and what you need to be aware of in your own faults to relate better with others. It's not easy, this looking at ourselves truthfully... but with kindness, it will all turn out best in the long run."



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Cindy is a writer and an advocate of personal growth and development who delights in self-discovery and helping others realize their personal power. She is a member of Homewood Writers Group and Toastmasters International. Cindy resides in Chicago.

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