

RELIEF IS IN SIGHT.....
SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BUSINESS OF
LIVING AS A MEDALLIST

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INTRODUCTION

This manual has been written at the request of FIDEM to give some help to younger artists starting a career as medallists. Many art schools give little or no training in the business of living as an artist and many students leave art school to try to earn a living on their work with no idea about how to go about it.

I suggested that a manual like this might help. The response was, "Great idea, you write it." This is the result.

It must be understood that it is based largely on my own experience in Australia with some input from other experienced medallists from other countries. However, the reader must make necessary adjustments for local conditions, customs and facilities, economic conditions, local laws and production processes, as I do not pretend to be able to cover all situations.

Every artist has their own way of working. Everybody generates their own ideas in their own way and develops their own techniques. Everybody has their own perceptions, sensibilities and interests.

The matters discussed here may only serve as a reminder or check list of what ought to be considered. Some parts are less dependent on local conditions and are more related to the process of making art and dealing with people. These sections may have a more general application.

The manual does not deal with matters of style, taste, custom or convention. These are things that each artist must work out for themselves in their own situations and with their own inclinations. Each artist must make their own decisions about artistic purity, commercialism, commissioned and personal work, convention and breaking of convention.

The continuing debate of what constitutes a medal is no more resolved now than it ever was. My own definition is that it is a relief sculpture composed into an area of basically circular shape. I feel that a medal should have some relationship to the circle to be called a medal. Other works in other shapes may be great works, but they are then plaquettes, reliefs, sculptures etc., just as a 15 line poem may be a great work, but is not a sonnet - which by definition, has 14 lines.

Others will have other definitions and that is their right. Each artist must make up their own mind as to how they see the medal.

Many medallists will find that there is not enough medal work to make a living on it alone. They may need to take on other work - larger reliefs and small three dimensional sculpture. One of the keys to making a living as an artist is having a wide range of abilities and being flexible in one's approach to solving artistic problems.

This manual contains many elements which can be applied to these other areas of sculpture.

Each artist will use this manual in their own way, accepting or rejecting those parts, which do not suit them. However, I hope that some of it is useful to some medallists.

Michael Meszaros

COMMISSIONS

Commissions to produce a medal for a client for a particular purpose can come in many ways. Somebody may see your work in an exhibition or in somebody's home or office and may need a work himself for some reason. They may see your work in a book or catalogue. They may need a medal and ask various friends if they know of an artist who can do such things. You may belong to some artists' organisation, which gets inquiries from members of the public looking for a suitable artist, and you may be recommended. They may find you in the telephone book. You may meet somebody socially who asks what you do.

Whichever way they find you, some questions will be asked and you need to be able to answer them with confidence and on the spot.

As an artist, you may be more interested in the design and the artistic and technical processes, but often the first question asked by a prospective client is "How much would it cost to make a medal? You may have to put expressive considerations aside until the form of the work is established. To give an answer you will need to ask "What do you want the medal for?" The answer to this can indicate some essentials, such as:

1. What kind of purpose it is for, which may indicate whether it should be struck or cast.
2. How many are needed?
This leads to:
3. Whether it will be one or two sided and what kind of design is needed on each side.

For example the prospective client may say "We want to have a medal to give to eminent speakers giving an annual lecture in honour of..." From this you might suggest that a batch of 20 would be enough for 20 years, that a cast medal may be more economic, and that it may consist of a portrait on one side and a symbolic design with space for a name to be engraved on the other side.

If the client agrees with these assumptions you can draw on your experience to say that:

1. a portrait costs.....
2. a reverse design of this complexity costs.....

Assuming a diameter

3. moulds cost.....or dies cost.....

Assuming a metal type

4. castings cost... x 20 = strikings cost x 20
5. boxes or mounts cost.....

Total:

This can be done in your head or on a scrap of paper with the warning that there are other techniques which can be considered, size of order can affect costs, etc. However, the basic calculation will give the client a preliminary idea of what is involved and the response will quickly tell you whether this is a serious inquiry or just a passing fancy.

If your assumptions are wrong, the client may say that a portrait is not wanted, but a symbolic or depictive design is needed on one side and the reverse is to have permanent and occasional inscriptions only. You can then adjust the basis of your rough estimate.

You must always emphasise that such quick estimates are rough and will need refinement with more detailed information.

If striking is indicated by a larger number of medals, die costs and striking costs for a minimum or requested order size need to be calculated.

You may then reach a point where you may have to explain the differences between striking and casting with the advantages and disadvantages of each including:

- sizes and limitations of size
- costs for small and large orders, cast and struck
- lead times for cast and struck
- aesthetic qualities of cast and struck
- methods of display for both types
- one or two sided medals

If the work is serious then a fuller checklist needs to be worked through.

Is it cast or stuck?

What size is required?

What metal or other material?

Do they have a design already or do you have to produce the design?

Is it one or two sided?

Is there a portrait involved?

Is there a portrait on one side and an interpretative design on the other?

When is the finished work needed?

What is the subject matter and what information is available if an interpretative design is needed?

Who is commissioning the work - who makes the decisions - you must deal with that person/s if at all possible

What is the purpose of the work - award, commemorative, portrait, present?

What inscription is required - permanent and occasional?

How many pieces are needed?

- is it an annual award

- are a number given each year

- is it to be used only once ie a commemorative or for an occasion

How many to produce at once or in what batch sizes they should be produced?

What finish should be used ?

- patina type

- waxed

- lacquered

- as struck

How much hand finishing?

- loops soldered

- filing

- fitting pieces together

Presentation

- boxes, stands, mounts, leaflets

The answers to these questions should give you a good idea of what the work will consist of. Often the client will not be able to answer some of the questions and will have to refer to a committee, partner or superior in an organisation. Working through this list will educate your client about what is involved and this

understanding will help you in your work. If consultations with other people on the client's side are needed, try to be present at these meetings so that you can explain the questions more fully. You may then meet the people who will make the decisions and you can show samples of your previous work. This will give them an idea of what a finished work will look like and this will help when you present drawn designs since many people have difficulty imagining the transition from drawing to finished medal.

One of the most important elements in these discussions is your analysis of what you think the client ought to have to fulfil his purpose, rather than what the client thinks they want, which is usually based on some other work. It is most important for you to understand your function as a consultant as well as a designing artist. The client usually has not done this before and knows little about the processes - philosophically, artistically and technically and it is an important part of your job to guide them towards the best solution for their requirements.

Typically, the considerations of size, quantities and display requirements determine the physical characteristics of the work, running parallel with cost considerations. For example, a client wanting to present a piece as an award once a year is usually better off with a larger cast piece of one or two sides, than with a struck piece. A cast piece usually costs much more to produce per piece, but the outlay for dies, and the need to produce a certain minimum number when struck, usually makes striking less economic. If you cast your own work, then casting becomes increasingly favourable in cost terms.

A client who wants 1000 pieces as a once off, or wants to use more than 5 or 10 a year, will usually find striking is more economic in the long term. However, each artist will have to work out these figures according to their own circumstances, ie prices from local foundries and mints.

Design costs are usually the same regardless of production technique. To make a comparison:

Take casting \$x per piece, mounted or boxed

Take cost of striking - die costs x 1 or x 2 (sides)

- cost per striking x no in batch

- box, stand, mount

In some cases the inscription causes the most difficulty, either because there is too much of it, or because some position has to be found for a recipient's name and the year. Sometimes a long citation is required to explain why the recipient received the award.

The basic solutions to this are:

1. All inscriptions on the face of the medal both permanent and occasional.
2. Permanent inscription on one side, occasional on the other.
3. Permanent on one or both sides and occasional on the rim or thickness.
4. Permanent on one or both sides and a separate inscription plate (particularly for long inscriptions).
5. Medal mounted or cast integrally with a larger background plate to take a long inscription.

Again, the final decision will be dictated by a combination of many different factors. Each problem has the potential to be solved in a conventional or unconventional manner. Artists need to be flexible in their thinking to be able to find the best solution whether conventional or not.

All the preceding considerations are concerned with the physical form of the work, its production, cost and presentation. If you can handle these competently, your client will have a significant level of confidence in you.

However, the really crucial element in a commission is its design. Arriving at a design is often a difficult and delicate process and needs to be handled very carefully.

The first step is to put together a design brief i.e. you must find out from the client the answers to a number of important questions.

1. What is the subject matter?

It may not be enough to say simply 'medical research' or 'football'. You may well have to go deeper and ask what area of medical research or what aspect of football is involved. It may involve commemorating a particular person or development in research or a point in history with special significance of time, place and characters.

Most subjects have many aspects and so it is important to understand enough of the whole subject to be able to understand the particular aspect, which is the subject of the medal.

It will be necessary to get the client to tell you as much as possible and then you may need to visit an institution or factory and/or read material supplied by the client. You may need to research background or history at a library. Essentially, you need to become sufficiently well informed to be able to make some worthwhile comment (through your work) on the client's subject.

Getting the information out of the client is often the most difficult part of the briefing process. It is usually up to the artist to ask the right questions in the right way to get the necessary answers. Many clients think that they should not overload the artist with detail information. The opposite is the case - the more information, the better, and the artist can sort out what is useful.

2. Why do you want a medal?

It is important to understand the client's motivation in commissioning a medal. It may be because it is traditional to use a medal. It may be that it is the best way of producing large numbers of permanent mementoes of an occasion. It may be because the client saw your work elsewhere or was recommended to come to you as somebody who could provide a good solution. Asking the question may give a clue as to whether the client expects a traditional or radical solution, whether they come to you for what you do as an individual artist or because you produce medals generally.

3. What do you want the medal to achieve?

Answers to this can range from "I just want a medal" to a very detailed description of factual and emotional responses that are being sought. It may be a statement about a profession or business. It may be a personal opinion about a particular subject. It may be a particular aspect of a much larger subject. It could be a commemoration of a period of history of a state or of an occupation. Motives may be political, religious, occupational, research or invention, personal, birthday or anniversary or combinations of any of these.

Motives will have aspects, slants and biases that will give the work a particular standpoint. Try to get the client to express a personal motivation for seeking a medal. There may well be philosophical and emotional elements that the client wants expressed. Feelings such as enthusiasm, passion, sadness and anger may come out in the course of a briefing discussion. These feelings can give a distinct angle to the resolution of your design and need to be watched for carefully. If somebody goes to the trouble and expense of commissioning a medal it is likely that there is some level of emotion involved.

Ask if the client has any preconceptions about the design. Most will say 'no', but many will secretly harbour some image of the finished work. They are reluctant to admit it so that you are not influenced or so that they do not seem naive, but there is a serious danger in this for the artist. When you come to present a design, the client will comment on the basis of this hidden expectation and however good your design maybe, its weakness will be that it does not conform to this preconception. It is important to stress to the client that any ideas on the end result should be revealed so that:

1. You can perhaps incorporate something of this idea.
2. You can formulate arguments against it, why it is inappropriate.
3. You can take some philosophical element of it, but treat it differently in the design.
4. It is unfair to you for the client not to reveal their idea because it may waste a lot of your time on a design, which has no hope of success in the light of their preconception. It will also waste their time and may make the job difficult to complete within a tight timeframe.

Any preconception will become apparent when you present your design. When the client comments on it, they will say, "I thought it was going to be more like....", or similar. You know immediately that they have not been open with you.

You may have now reached a point where the type of medal is settled, size, numbers, production method and costs are known and you have a brief for the design. Now you have to produce the design.

The design is where the artist's individuality, personality, intelligence and perceptiveness are put to the test. Some designs come quickly, even during the briefing session. Others take weeks to materialise. For each artist the process is different. Some use well established symbols; others take a deeper philosophical approach. For others it will be more emotional and for some it will be analytical, with an infinite variety of combinations of all of these.

In my own experience, the first step is to reach a philosophical conclusion as to what is the central point of importance in the subject before any design is begun. Once that is decided, a design can be worked out to express this conclusion.

This process has the advantage of having a step by step logic, which can be used to sell the design to the client, and later the client can use it to present the work publicly. If the design is rejected, it forces the client to say why in terms which can lead you to appropriate modifications or a completely different design. It is not enough for the client to say, 'I don't like it'. They must say why or you cannot go further.

Often a client will seem to reject a design when there are only minor elements that need modification. If a design is received like that, I count it as a success and make the detailed changes happily, because getting the principle right is the most important aspect, and the client is often the best person to comment on details.

You must be willing to listen to criticism of your design and to make alterations if the criticism is valid. You must keep your mind open so that you can decide what is valid and how to argue against criticism which you consider invalid. If you have your design logic clearly in your mind, this usually comes fairly naturally.

It is important to follow a process of consultation and approval, so that the client is kept informed of progress, and can approve the work at all important stages.

After the briefing meeting, the next stage is to show a sketch. This is generally a drawing, but may be a modelling if you prefer. The client must approve this before you proceed further. If changes are needed you will need to get these approved either with a further drawing or by modifying your modelling. It is essential at this stage to get a letter from your client stating that:

1. You have been commissioned to produce the work
2. The design has been accepted (photocopy or photo of drawing attached)
3. The fee for design is so much
4. Production costs of dies, strikings, castings
5. Size, material and number of medals
6. Presentation details
7. Completion date
8. Progress payment schedule

You may need to write the letter yourself. In this case send the client two copies, signed by you, and ask the client to sign one and send it back to you. For very large or expensive projects it may be advisable to consult a lawyer to draw up a contract. However, a letter, such as the above, is a contract and is binding on both parties. Once the contract is signed, modelling work can begin.

Traditionally the next step is a modelling in plasticine, clay or other similar medium and when this is ready, it must be shown to the client for approval. It must be remembered that many people have difficulty imagining what a drawing will look like in relief modelling. Artists who are too familiar with this conversion often forget this important point. To minimise this problem it is good idea to show a drawing, modelling and/or finished piece of another work to demonstrate the changes that take place in the course of producing a finished work. You must get a statement, preferable written, that the client has seen and approved the modelling.

Often the client will ask for very minor adjustments to the modelling. These need to be discussed, but if they make no real difference to the overall result you should do them. If you feel they may make a difference, which will damage the work, you must say so and argue the point.

If the client wants major changes, you will have to point out the fact that they have already approved the design and a major reworking of it will mean new drawings, more modelling and an extra fee. This can happen if a client thinks the matter over after the design process is finished and changes their mind. If this causes problems you must emphasise the fact that you have followed a proper procedure, which has allowed the client full input and control, and that a major change at this point is quite unfair to you as the artist unless it is paid for. It may also cause problems if there is a tight schedule.

Once the modelling is approved you can go on to the plaster or final pattern stage. It is important to point out to the client that some elements of the design may be added at the plaster negative stage, i.e. lettering, hair texture, sharpening of detail, smoothing of surfaces; and that, if your modelling lacks some of these elements, this is the reason why.

Depending on the amount of work on stages after the modelling, the client may need to see the finished pattern with all its additions and adjustments before going to casting or striking. Sometimes the arrangement of an inscription or other element can be quite critical and it may be in your interest to be sure that the client is fully satisfied.

Occasionally, you may get a job where all this has to be done by phone, post, fax and photos. The same philosophy applies. Take good quality photos, post or fax them with good explanations of the preceding points. Ask for comments and act as if they were present. Be wary of faxing drawings. Faxes lose shading and cause drawings to look unattractive. Loss of shading means that relative heights of relief may not be understood.

Underlying all this is the need for the client to feel informed, involved, in control and that their opinion is valued. It does not mean that the artist loses control. Rather it means that the work is a co-operative venture with input from both parties.

Once the final pattern is ready it can be given to the foundry or mint. If it is cast, the client may not see it again until it is finished. If it is cast, but with a large number of pieces, it is best to show a finished patinated sample to the client before finishing the whole order, so that adjustments to the patina, wax or lacquer, or darkness of the finish can be made.

If it is struck and it is a large order, show a sample to the client for the same reasons. Some mints will do a trial striking in lead or a 'lead splash' (a lead casting) from the unhardened die, which allows for small adjustments to be made to the die. Once hardened and tempered the die should not be adjusted. The lead strike gives an extra level of control. Another method is to make a copper galvanic copy from the master hob. This is nearer the appearance of the final product, can be patinated and is lighter to post.

When the actual works are ready, you may still have to mount them or put them in boxes. You may need to have names and dates engraved on them. You may need to re-lacquer over the engraving to repair the lacquer seal.

While the medal is being cast or struck you may need to have boxes, stands or mountings produced. If there is a tight schedule, you will need to have these elements produced in parallel with the medals, so that they are all ready together. Finally you have to deliver the finished work and write an account.

Depending on where the client is located you may have to pack and send the work, the client may come and pick it up, or you may deliver it in person.

Packing needs to be done very carefully. Good packing is a dying art - because it takes time. However, there is no percentage in spending much time and effort producing good work, and having it arrive scratched and dented. Bubble plastic is a great help and having a roll means it is always available. Make sure each item is separated from each other. A common mistake is to have a strong box, the works well wrapped, but little between the works, which soon begin grinding each other to destruction. Insurance or registration is wise as parcels do go missing. Private courier services are often safer and cheaper than the post.

In the end analysis you should provide as complete a service as possible so that your work arrives in perfect condition and it fulfils all your client requirements.

Your account should detail the basic elements in the production of the work, i.e. design, modelling, pattern; casting/striking costs; presentation costs ie boxes, mounts; packing and delivery. This serves to remind the client of what is involved in making the work so that they understand what they are paying for.

You may be asked to write a short explanation of your design for use on a pamphlet, publication or in a speech. Do this carefully, as it can be an important element in the public exposure of your work.

Finally, if the commission fails, if agreement on a design cannot be reached, or if the client changes his mind and decides not to proceed, a sketch fee should be agreed on at the outset of the job so that you get some payment for your unused work. This fee should be about 10% of the total design and modelling fee, but may be more or less depending on what stage the work has reached when terminated.

PROFESSIONALISM

Being professional means fully understanding ones' job and doing it to specification, on time, within the financial budget and to the satisfaction of yourself and the client. It means knowing how to put together a brief and how to solve the problem posed by the brief. It means being able to deal with clients, sub-contractors and other occupations which may be connected with your work. It means being able to deal with a gallery, produce an exhibition, deliver sold works, handle the media and able to explain what you do and why you do it. It means doing all the above and remaining a sympathetic and perceptive human being.

The development of a fully professional approach to your work takes time and experience, but as your professionalism increases you will find that your work goes more smoothly, you will head off problems before they occur, your relationships with your clients will be happier and you will feel much more in control of your work.

In the case of personal work, it means producing work which is as true as possible to your own conception, and technically as good as you can make it according to your own criteria. It means understanding yourself and your own feelings and mental processes. You can then feel that you have truly expressed what you set out to express, and that you feel satisfied that this expression is worth somebody's while to spend time looking at it and spending money to buy it.

If it is a commissioned work it means producing a work which satisfies a client's requirements and your own conception of the client's subject and needs as well as being technically up to your best standard, within the budget and finished on time.

If it is a technical production job of, for example, a coat of arms, it should be as good technically as you can make it in terms of modelling, casting/striking, finish and other technical specifications.

A medallist's (or any artist's) business is to perceive and understand what he experiences and observes, and to reach some sort of conclusion about it, and to express that conclusion in the form of a medal, ie a small relief work composed into a circle, rectangle or free form.

A medallists' work will fall into two basic categories - personal and commissioned. In the case of personal work, the process of observation leading to a finished piece is to a greater degree subconscious. In the commissioned case, it has to be far more conscious and systematic, to ensure that the result is relevant to the problem. The process remains much the same - the level of conscious analysis is different.

Some artists do only commissioned work, while others do only personal work. Many do both, and some find that the two streams of work overlap, and compliment each other in different ways. One is often forced to find a solution for a commission, which can be re-used in other forms in personal work. An idea first used in a personal work can sometimes be re-interpreted in a commission.

One of the key elements of the professional is the maintenance of the standard of work. A true professional will have a level below which he never goes. The difference between the amateur and the professional is that the amateur can produce great work and poor work and often does not realise the difference. The professional has a high level of self-criticism, which eliminates sub-standard work before it leaves the studio.

A professional is reliable, not only in the standard of work, but also in meeting deadlines, in keeping to a quote, in communicating with the client, dealing with problems, in keeping to the brief and to the agreed design, and providing a completed work. As far as possible, the client has nothing to do, but pay the bill.

Providing a finished work, engraved, mounted, boxed etc means not only giving a full service, but also ensuring that the work is shown to the world in the manner that the artist intends. It is not only service, but also control of reputation.

SUB-CONTRACTORS

Most medallists are dependent on foundries, mints and other trades and crafts to produce their finished work. In the course of a career, close relationships can develop between artist and craftspeople and it is of great importance to nurture and maintain these relationships. Rather than adopting a superior or master/servant attitude to a foundry, it is much better to maintain a sense of co-operation and a degree of equality as partners in the creation of an end product.

To do this it is advisable to consult the foundry, for example, to make sure it has time to do a batch of medals by a particular date. If possible tell them how many pieces and when they will get your originals or moulds, and how long they will have to do the job. Ask if that schedule is all right for them. Tell them what you need, but do not demand. The more notice you can give, the better they will like it, and the better job you are likely to get.

Consult with them about the best way to do a job, especially if the job has unusual features. Ask their advice, make your own suggestions and reach a conclusion through discussion. Everybody likes to be asked his opinion and nobody likes to be taken for granted. If you have a problem during a job, which affects the production, consult again to check that they can handle the change.

Get quotations as early as possible and specially for work which falls outside your normal type of work in terms of size, numbers, thickness, height of relief, shape, degree of hand finishing, patina etc. This allows the foundry to understand what you are proposing, gives you an early idea of production costs and allows the foundry to allocate time for when the job has to be done. It also allows the foundry to make suggestions that could improve, cheapen and speed production. The way a pattern is mounted, or rubber moulds are made, can affect production significantly. Always be open to suggestions and be ready to make suggestions. Never be afraid to ask questions even if you think you might make a fool of yourself.

Acknowledge your sub-contractors in catalogues, publications, at exhibition openings and at presentations. Acknowledgement costs nothing and makes the craftspeople feel appreciated. Better quality work and better service are the likely benefits. Everybody likes to be appreciated for their efforts.

Be fair and prompt with payments. For large jobs, arrange progress payments at agreed stages of the project. Pay monthly accounts regularly or pay on delivery if you can afford to. Do not give the feeling that you are using them to finance your work. If you get a reputation as a bad or slow payer, you may find that they will not work for you at all. Since they are essential to you to produce your work, you cannot afford to let this happen. There may be other foundries or mints, but a bad reputation travels fast, and the others will hear of it soon enough. In the long term you must ensure that it is worthwhile for any sub-contractor to do your work. If you beat their prices down too far, and it becomes uneconomic for them to do your work, they may not do it at all. With time, a level of mutual trust can be built up and an artist who supplies frequent work and is liked, will often generate cheaper prices than a customer with only occasional work or one who is mean and disliked. In the long term the 'good businessperson' that beats down prices tends to end up with the worse deal.

A good relationship has other benefits. If you need an occasional rush job, they will do it. If a job needs extra care, they will be extra careful. If there are financial complications, they will negotiate sympathetically. If you need advice or help, they will give it. In short, treat them as you like to be treated, and your work will run much more smoothly.

Make sub-contractors aware of which work is urgent and which has more time. Don't say that everything is urgent all the time. Book jobs in advance where possible. Understand that they have other work for other customers and that they cannot drop everything for your few urgent medals. If you say a job is urgent and is needed by a certain date, pick it up as soon as it is ready. Nothing upsets a person more than rushing to meet a deadline and the client not picking up for another week.

Explain special details carefully and with diagrams where necessary. Hanging loops and rings, fixing lugs on the backs of one-sided pieces, screw holes, diameters and threads, edge grinding and filing, sand or other blasting, patinas and waxes or lacquers, metal type and casting process.

If you do not do your own patination, specify as precisely as possible what patina you require, and how much you want it rubbed back. You can specify the chemical recipe or you can specify the look of the end result. If you can supply a sample of what you want, so much the better. If there is a large number of pieces

in an order, make sure you see a sample before the whole order is patinated. This can save a lot of wasted time and money and gives the person doing the patination a model to work towards. If necessary be there when the sample is done, so that you can control the result. Work with the person rather than directing them. Make the situation co-operative, so that the craftspeople feel that they are making a contribution. Similarly, if there is a large casting or striking order, make sure you see and approve a sample before full production begins, so that the end result will be what you require. Check production quality during production if possible.

Learn about the processes involved in producing your work. Too many artists leave their work at a foundry or mint and pick up the finished product without knowing anything about how it happens. Having an intimate knowledge of production processes can save a lot of money and time, by designing patterns and moulds in the most efficient manner. Understanding when and why you need to control the height of relief or distribution of relief masses can make a huge difference to the ease of striking. Knowledge of different metals, blank thicknesses, annealing processes, moulding methods, casting methods, finishing and patination, etc. will allow you to discuss production with your sub-contractors knowledgeably. This will not only save time, money and trouble, but will earn you the respect of these craftspeople, who often regard with scorn those artists who know little about the craftspeople's work.

Often a knowledgeable artist can suggest a way of solving a problem for the craftsperson, if the artist really understands the process and the problem.

If you need special mounting boards, bases, boxes or presentation cases you will need the services of a joiner, cabinetmaker, wood turner, plastic injection moulder or other craftsperson. You will need to know how to make drawings, which allow your design to be properly made. Alternatively, you will go to a draftsman with the problem of how to mount, encase or support a medal, and you will ask for a design. You will have to be able to understand drawings and to be able to accept or reject a proposal. You will need to know about finishes - lacquers, waxes, stains, lining materials, or if you do not know about these you will need to ask the right people.

Do not be afraid to ask specialists about the best way to do something, the best place to buy something, or the best person to do something for you. Explain the sort of work that you do and what the problem is. People are mostly interested and happy to help if you make their opinion and advice valued. It is amazing

where the 'telephone trail' takes you when seeking some obscure piece of information.

Above all, try to be friendly, co-operative and constructive with all the people with whom you have dealings. Your work will be much easier and problems will be more easily solved. If a problem occurs, do not try to allocate blame unless a major loss is imminent. Rather, accept that things have gone wrong and look for the best way out of it. Most people will know what is their fault without having it rammed down their throats.

A sense of humour is a valuable asset in dealing with anybody. Don't take yourself too seriously. Yours is not the first medal ever made, neither are you the only person ever to have made a medal. Craftspeople have seen a lot of different customers, and not only have experience in their crafts but also have experience of clients. If you present yourself as a self-consumed egotist, you will be treated as a fool. If you are a shrinking violet, you may not be taken seriously enough. The more knowledge, confidence and humanity you bring into your dealings, the more successful they will be. Confidence comes with knowledge, and knowledge comes through thought, effort, learning and experience. See your craftspeople as sources of knowledge and you will learn a great deal.

Sometimes a mint or foundry may work in partnership with an artist. This will usually occur when mint and artist know each other well and trust each other artistically, technically and financially. In such cases arrangements need to be very carefully discussed so that risks and workloads are fairly distributed and financial rewards are also fairly distributed. Such arrangements may involve doing work with the risk of getting no payment if the venture is unsuccessful, whether it is a tender for a client's project or it is a commercial venture by the mint and artist as partners. A mint may offer the artist a part of his normal fee and royalties on sales to make up the remainder and to share part of the risk.

DEALING WITH YOUR PEERS

Fellow artists can be great value or great nuisances. Some see every client as the opportunity for the great success, the making of a huge impression and the source of a huge fee. Others are scared of a commission, hesitant to charge enough for the job, undervalue their work and sell it for too little.

While it is impossible to set standard prices for all artists for a certain type of work, it is also possible to work out reasonable prices for each category of work, for each individual artist - see 'Commissions' and 'Quoting and Estimating'

When challenged by fellow artists as to why you don't charge more, why you charge so much, why you work or don't work in a certain way, you will need to have your answers ready. It is hoped that this manual will help with some of these answers by setting out logical processes to underlie your work.

Justifying your manner of work requires a degree of confidence, and that confidence comes with the knowledge that there is a logic behind what you do. The artistic process is entirely personal, and cannot be dictated by anybody, but the business part and the client relation's area are elements, which can be learnt and applied systematically.

Those peers who set out to be 'arty' or 'artistic' in dress, manner, sloppy business practice and a poor approach to clients, are doing all artists (and themselves) a disservice. Artists everywhere suffer from a reputation of being temperamental, unreliable, and incompetent in business, so anybody beginning a career has to work against this general public attitude. You will find that clients will be pleasantly surprised if you demonstrate good business practices. You will also find that some of your fellow artists will deride you as being too much of a businessperson, and not enough of an artist, because they think that to be an artist means by definition that you are not a businessperson.

This popular notion seems to stem from the example of the French Impressionists, Vincent van Gogh and others. These artists seem to have captured the imagination of the Western world and exemplify, in the public mind, the typical artist. One answer to this is to cite examples from art history - Michelangelo, Rembrandt,

Rubens, Henry Moore, etc. who all knew a ducat, guilder, or pound when they saw one.

Good business practice does not make you a good artist, but if you are a good artist, it will help you live on your art. No matter how good an artist you are, without some business knowledge, you may still starve.

There is nothing very romantic about starving in a freezing garret with a syphilitic model except in the public's imagination. It is not going to help an artist produce better work. The fact that a few artists have managed to produce masterpieces under such conditions does not validate the conditions. It means that the artist was tough and determined, as well as talented, but one must ask the question 'How much more and better work would the artist have produced under better conditions - warmer, cleaner, better fed and better paid.'

Some artists believe that they must suffer for their work. Indeed, that they must suffer in order to produce any work of quality. This presupposes that good art must grow out of suffering. The answer to this is that suffering comes to most people in many ways without seeking it. Trying to create an agonised lifestyle for the sake of producing deep and meaningful art is artificial nonsense. There is plenty of inspirational material all around us on every subject imaginable, without purposely going out looking for trouble.

If you develop a reputation for being able to cope with business, you will find that your more bohemian friends will ask your advice on prices, procedures, contracts, progress payments, what to say to clients, and how to solve various problems. This can be regarded as a compliment to you, even though they may regard themselves as more 'artistic'.

Take pride in your ability to provide a full and thoughtful service to commissioning clients and in producing rich and expressive personal works for sale. What other artists do is irrelevant, if you have confidence in your own work. Don't be swayed by fashions in art. Unless you start a fashion, you will be copying to some degree. The danger in any fashion is that it soon goes out of fashion and your work will quickly look tired and dated. Work that is derived from your own sensibilities and observations and is treated in your own style, has a much better chance of enduring beyond a current fad. Artists often feel pressured by peers, strive to adopt a fashionable style and end up trapped in a stylistic dead end.

Good art is much less dependent on style than on idea and expression. Your ideas and your expression are what separate you from your peers. By following another's style you are abandoning your individuality, which in the final analysis, is all you have to sell. Following a style reduces your work to the fickle level of women's fashion and most artists would like their work to endure longer than that.

QUOTING AND ESTIMATING (see also 'Commissions')

Perhaps the most difficult and critical single factor in the business part of an artists' life, is the process of quoting prices for commissioned or sold work. Some artists have difficulty discussing any aspect of money in relation to their work. Many have difficulty with the process of putting a financial value on their work.

Arriving at a price is not an emotional or instinctive matter. It is a logical and analytical process, which can be done with a high level of accuracy.

In the case of a medal the main elements are:

1. The artist's time
2. The value of the idea
3. Production expenses

1. Most medallists will have a fair idea of how long it takes to produce a medal in technical terms, i.e. to model, cast and finish a piece. If this takes, for example, five days work, an artist must decide what a week's work is worth. In making this decision, the artist must take into account the fact that they probably won't have such work every week, and that they have arrived at a level of expertise that allows them to take on such work. Also, the fact that the artist is there and available at that time with the necessary equipment and skill must be accounted for. During the previous week they may not have earned anything, and this loss must be made up somehow.

Overheads must be considered - rent, heating, car, telephone, rates, taxes, holidays, sick pay, electricity, gas, superannuation, postage, equipment, consumables, i.e. nuts, bolts, sandpaper, plaster, plasticine, tools, etc. These must all be added up to contribute to the cost of running a studio for a week. It is an interesting exercise to add up all these overheads for the year, divide by 52 and realise how much it costs to maintain a studio for a week, apart from normal house expenses and normal living costs.

Then there are the production costs - bronze casting, reduction, die production, striking, finishing castings, patination, packing and transport, engraving, mountings, presentation cases or boxes, printing leaflets to go with medals, soldering on loops, rings, chains etc.

The most difficult area is the cost of the design - getting a brief together, research, drawing sketches, meetings with clients, re-drawing. One can never tell whether a design will happen quickly, or with great difficulty. To arrive at a cost in advance, experience will tell how long, on average, a work will take to design.

If you think that it will take two weeks overall working time to produce a medal you must add together:

2 weeks wages

2 weeks overheads

production costs as quoted by foundry or Mint or time and costs to cast it yourself

You may feel that you should charge extra for the design idea itself and you may put in a further factor for non-earning time between paying jobs.

You will arrive at a figure by adding all these up and you must then decide whether this seems a fair price, or whether the client will accept the price. You are now moving from an objective analytical price to a subjective and instinctive response. This will vary according to the situation, but the price needs to be varied only with great care and consideration, so that each work makes some profit.

In working out a standard fee you will have to ask yourself - "Is that a reasonable fee for this work?" "Can I justify this to my client?" When varying your standard fee ask, "Can this client afford it even if it is reasonable?" "How badly do I want this job and am I willing to lower my price to get it and by how much?" "Will this work lead to other works, but if I lower my price am I committed to that price for all these other works, and can I do a number of works at this lower price?"

It is important to realise that once you quote a price, you must keep to that price unless the job changes, so you need to be careful.

Experience and the above analysis will tell you the minimum you need to charge to keep the business going, and this should become the basis for your fee. In some cases there will be more work involved - difficult committees to deal with, very precise technical requirements, work to be done very quickly. In other cases the work may be for a charity organisation or it may be very simple. It may have relatively little real design work if it means modelling a standard crest or logo with some inscription or decoration. In these types of situations you may vary the price up or down as you assess the circumstances.

Once you have worked out a standard fee, it is best to keep to it as far as possible. Some jobs will take more work and some less, but they will tend to average out fairly evenly. It is dangerous from the point of view of your reputation to vary your fee without genuine reason, since clients can meet and talk about your work and your fees and they can be unhappy if they pay different amounts for similar types of work.

For those artists who are not dependent on their work for a living and who may only do paying work occasionally, the price should be worked out on a time, costs and overhead basis as described. What these artists need to remember is that this analysis gives a good indication what a work is really worth. Going significantly below this figure will give an advantage over full-time professionals, but will tend to devalue the worth of medals generally. While there is no set fee for a medal, logic should indicate a reasonable range for fees. Talking to fellow medallists may help with setting fees, if they are willing to talk about it.

In setting prices for work you do for sale, the problems are similar, but with some important differences. You will still need to estimate the design and modelling time and production costs. Overheads also need to be added. But now you must make an estimate of how many pieces you are likely to sell and divide the cost by that number. Medals to sell are usually faster to produce than commissioned works. If, for example, it takes one week to make a medal and \$50 to cast it and you value your time and overheads at \$1200 per week and you expect to sell 10 pieces within the next year, you will need to charge:

i.e. \$1200 design and model
 + 50 x 10 casting
 + 30 x 10 finishing, patination
 all divided by 10

You will have to charge \$200 each piece, plus any special boxes, mounts, transport, packing and postage.

Obviously, some medals will sell many, and some few or none at all, and some average must be reached to allow for this. In addition, medals will go on selling slowly over many years, so that as your stock of saleable work grows, so does the range you can offer, and so does your chance of selling a piece to a given client.

An allowance in your prices may need to be made to cover the cost and time of unsuccessful and experimental pieces, which do not sell. These pieces are nevertheless important to your development as an artist and their value is reflected in your successful pieces.

In general, you should keep your prices as low as possible when starting your career and raise them gradually as you develop your skills and reputation. Always strive to give value for money. People mostly have a keen instinct for value and you should not price your work at a level, which offends this instinct.

CLIENT PSYCHOLOGY

The handling of negotiations with buyers or commissioning clients is a delicate and critical part of living as an artist. Some artists find such dealings very hard to manage and they are happier leaving them to galleries to do on their behalf. This may work well enough for sales, but is not so good for commissions.

In negotiating sales, there are some basics, which should be remembered.

Buyers will usually only buy a work they like, i.e., which moves them emotionally or appeals to their aesthetic taste. It is pointless trying to push potential buyers into buying something they don't like. Such insistence usually antagonises buyers who feel they are being put under pressure to buy something - anything. An artist's best advertisement is happy buyers who show off their new acquisition to their friends and connections. The worst advert is the clients who tell people they were pushed into a purchase they regret.

When somebody approaches you to see your work it is generally best to ask if they have any idea of what they are looking for, if there is any particular subject matter that interests them, what they have seen of your work which caused them to seek you out. If there is any particular style, size or material they have in mind (if you work in a variety of styles, sizes or media). With these questions you may be able to pick out pieces that you think are more relevant and not waste time on obviously unsuitable pieces. You can also ask if they are looking for work in a particular price range.

Once you have some idea of what may be suitable, choose a selection of work accordingly and briefly explain what it is - title, story behind it or how you came to do it - what was your inspiration, something to give a little depth and background in a couple of sentences. Long explanations tend to be boring and give the feeling that the work is not doing its job of expression.

As you go through the works, put aside those pieces, which generate interest and put the rest away. Sometimes a client will know exactly which is the right piece, but often you will get down to two, three or four pieces and he is unable to make up his mind. I use a process of elimination - take any two pieces and ask, "Out of these two, which do you like better?" They will choose one. Take that one and another and ask the same again. They will choose one. Keep doing this

until one is left. Sometimes they are unable to decide and you are still left with two or three. Suggest that you make them a cup of tea, coffee or whatever, take their mind off the problem for ten minutes and then try again. Usually they can then choose. Otherwise they can buy both, which sometimes happens, or go away and think about it.

Patience is most important. People often need time to arrive at a conclusion. They need to be reassured that they are making a good choice. Most people don't do this very often and are nervous or hesitant. Some people are afraid of the 'temperamental artist' and worry that you will become impatient with an indecisive client. I always tell people to buy only if they are really happy with a piece and not to buy if they are not. Put the buyer at ease, keep it all relaxed, don't appear desperate to sell. However, don't be off-hand or disinterested. The atmosphere should be a balance between showing your best with enthusiasm and giving the buyer room to move and not buy anything at all.

If the client has not bought medals before, or is not familiar with your prices, it is advisable to talk about prices at the beginning. This can be done by asking what price range they are thinking of, or you can show a few pieces, explain them and mention the price of each. The client's response will soon show you what his expectations are. Sometimes that expectation is greater than the cost of one medal. In such a case complementary pieces can be shown together, i.e. pieces on the same or related subjects, or pieces in sequence. Suggest ways of displaying or mounting, so that the relationship can be accentuated. Generally, look for the most positive ways that the client can utilise your work, without appearing to push too hard.

Sometimes clients who are unsure will want to come back with a friend, partner or the person to whom they intend to give the work. Sometimes they will ask if they buy a piece to give and the recipient wants to change it, can they do this. Depending on whether you are casting a piece specially for them, or if the pieces come from stock, or if you are happy to have an extra piece in stock, you should agree as far as is reasonable.

Sometimes people will come wanting to see your work, but not wanting to buy. You must then decide if you have time to spend with them bearing in mind the fact that anybody who is interested to come and see your work may well be a good advertisement for you in unexpected ways.

Buyers and commissioners come in many unexpected ways, through the most unlikely connections and from people who may have seen your work in the most unlikely places. The most unexpected people will fall in love with your work. The great lesson to be learned, is that everybody is a potential help to your career-buyer, client, admirer, apparently disinterested passerby. Nobody knows when they will need your work or services and a career is partly built on these accidental connections. What is important is that people see your work and are moved by it.

Commissions are as unpredictable as purchases. People will see a work you have done for one organisation and are connected to another, which needs a medal. This second medal can be the trigger for another work in another organisation. Most commissioned pieces are presented or launched at a function with people from many areas being present. Newspapers announce winners of awards and the distribution of commemoratives. If you are lucky, the papers will mention your name as artist. If a newspaper, radio station or T.V. channel wants to interview you, do it. If a local organisation asks you to talk about your work, do it. Show slides, explain your techniques, and tell the stories of how various works came into existence. People are interested in all these things, because most people do not know much about medals, or how they come into being.

Signatures on medals can cause problems. Some clients are keen to have the artist's signature on the work, while others feel it intrudes on the design and want the medal unsigned. If you run into this problem, it may be viewed, in some cases, as a design problem – how to include your signature in the design as part of the composition. A printed card to go with the medal may solve the problem as long as there is a proper place in the box or display for it to be kept with the medal. However, every artist has the right to sign his/her work and any agreement to leave a work unsigned should be negotiated with care.

Many people are fascinated by the artistic process, while at the same time being quite ignorant of how it works, because they have not, and often cannot, experience it. The mental jump from subject matter to expressive design is a moment of mystery for everybody, artist and non-artist. Often artists cannot fully explain how an idea came to them, but it is the capacity to make this jump which, to my mind, is the essential characteristic of the artist. If you know you have this ability it should give you confidence in your capacity as an artist. This confidence is vital to the process of convincing a client of the value and relevance of a design.

Confidence is a vital component of how you present yourself to a client or buyer. If you are confident that your work is good, or that your design for a commission is good, that confidence influences the client's response to your work. If you are hesitant, unsure, or apologetic a client will have less confidence in you.

If you are selling work, any explanation, which informs the client about your work, will help them to understand and empathise with the work. If you show that you had a genuine feeling for the subject, this honesty helps the sale.

If you are negotiating a commission your explanation to the client is usually crucial to getting the design accepted. In working out a design there needs to be a direct relationship to the subject nominated by the client. To achieve this a proper brief must be obtained from the client and often research made to understand the subject. From this information a philosophical conclusion can be reached as to what is of central importance and therefore what needs to be expressed. A design can then be worked out to express this conclusion.

If your process of briefing, research, philosophical conclusion and final design is done carefully and logically, you can then use this same process to lead the clients to your conclusion, so that they can say 'I've never thought about it quite like that before but you know, you are right.'

It is comments like this, that have led me to the conclusion, that in the early stages of a commission, the artist is what I call a 'contract philosopher'. It is important to realise that clients are often too preoccupied with the daily problems of their lives, businesses or professions, to have the time and calm needed to think about them in philosophic or symbolic terms, let alone conceive a design, which expresses something relevant. This is why they approach an artist who has the mind and the experience to think in these terms.

Since the client comes with a lack of experience in design, it is important to give him the feeling that you are confident of your ability to reach a satisfactory conclusion. To achieve this it is important to set out your process of design and execution - sketches, inspections, stages of approval, contract - to confirm all this. Explain the copyright status, how further castings or strikings will be arranged and of course a full explanation of costs, progress payments, payments to the mint doing striking etc.

When you are presenting a design proposal for a commissioned work it is vital that you lead the client through it and so demonstrate the validity of your design. A defensible logic is an important tool in the presentation of a design.

Naturally every artist thinks, reacts and designs in different ways, and some artists find such a process too analytical. It is often much harder to convince a client if you can only say "I just felt it was the right thing' and such artists often end up not taking on commissioned work because of their inability to explain their designs. The problem for clients is that they must feel that there is some proper connection between the work and their purpose in commissioning the work. If they cannot see that connection, they cannot present the work to the public with confidence. The value of a proper explainable logic is that it gives clients the means to present the work to the world and to defend it against criticism.

This gives them greater confidence in the work. It also gives the person announcing or presenting the work publicly a proper basis for explaining it and for relating it to an occasion or a recipient's achievement.

A confident approach will generate confidence in the client, which creates a situation where the client allows you to run the job your way.

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibitions are a most important avenue for developing a career. They are one of the primary means of showing your work to a wide range of interested people. While selling work is major motivation for exhibiting work the fact of showing your work can be just as important.

An artist's name and work become fixed in people's minds if they see it on a number of occasions. They may then actively seek out a particular artist at some later date when they want to buy or commission a piece.

As medals are usually in editions, there is a good chance that they can obtain one years later. If you show examples of commissioned pieces and portraits, on a 'not for sale' basis, as examples of what you can do, there is always the chance of a commission. Because people are often ignorant of what medals can do, exhibiting your medals has an overall educative function, which can lead to sales and commissions. In places where medals are not common, this function is even more important.

If you exhibit your work you must be careful of many factors.

1. Venue

Where is the exhibition. What kind of a place is it. Is it a recognised gallery, or is it some other type of venue. Does it have a recognised clientele or is the clientele unknown. Is it worth showing your work there at all. Are people there likely to have any interest in medals. Are other medallists showing or are you alone amongst other art forms. Is this a place you would like to be connected with. If it is a place which is not a normally a gallery, what are the benefits of showing there ie bank foyer, display associated with a dinner or other function, coin sale, school, university, a business that has commissioned work etc. There are many possible places that work can be shown and each one needs to be assessed on its own merits. However, never forget that the more you can show work to interested people, the greater chance you have of attracting potential clients. It is impossible to predict who will see your work and what will motivate somebody to buy or commission it.

2. Exhibiting Conditions

Is it well presented - lighting, display cases, labels, stands. Are they provided, or do you have to provide your own.

Is the work insured while on show. What are the security provisions - are there attendants on duty. Who takes responsibility for theft, damage and loss.

3. Dates, duration, setting up and dismantling

Make sure all dates are clear and who takes responsibility for delivery, unpacking, setting-up, repacking, return delivery.

4. Gallery Commission & Prices

Most selling venues charge a commission on sales. This can vary from as little as 5% and up to 50% or 60%. Make sure you understand this and take it into account when you set your prices. Be quite clear as to whether your price is the amount you want to receive after the commission has been deducted, or does your price include the commission, and is therefore the public sale price.

Remember that a commission of 33 1/3% requires you to add 50% on to your basic price, for you to obtain your basic price after the commission has been deducted.

Some galleries charge a flat rent and no commission, some charge commission only, and others charge a lower rent, plus a lower percentage commission. This last version is often the best arrangement, as it can be the fairest means of spreading the risk associated with almost every selling exhibition. The rates are critical and the combined effect of rent and commission must be calculated against expected or hoped for sales.

A separate percentage fee arrangement must be agreed on in case a gallery arranges a commissioned work. If the gallery charges 33 1/3% for selling, a charge of 10-15% on commissions is more reasonable. Some galleries will try to insist on the selling rate applying to commissioned work as well, but this should be resisted if possible. The reasons for the difference are that a commission involves a much larger fee than a sale and therefore a smaller percentage gives a good fee for a work, which cannot be sold to others. Usually the artist has very much more work to do in producing a commissioned work, compared to the work done by the gallery in securing the commission. The artist generally has to do most of the process described in the 'commissions' chapter. Some galleries will have a greater involvement in the commissioning process and will therefore deserve a higher fee.

Each artist and gallery must come to an arrangement, which suits their individual relationship.

It is important to separate the artist's fee from production costs when negotiating gallery fees on commissions. It is not fair for a client to pay a percentage mark up on production costs as well as on the artist's fee, although galleries will argue the opposite.

3. Sales & Editions

When submitting your works' details for an exhibition make sure you give full information:

Artist's name

Title of work

Size(s), material, technique

Edition size and how many are left. If works are numbered give edition number ie 13/25 (number 13 of an edition of 25)

Insurance value if required.

Sale price including commission or artists price to which commission must be added.

It may be useful to mention how long it will take to supply further examples of each medal in case of multiple sales, if you have them ready in stock or need to get further castings.

If there is an arrangement for securing commissioned work, you should state your basic fees for that. Be quite clear whether your figures include gallery fee or not.

Costs

Work out very carefully who pays for each item of expenditure associated with an exhibition.

Printing, postage, secretarial fees, advertising, opening expenses (food, drink, waiters, security etc.) Internet, transport, packing and unpacking, hire or manufacture of stands, displays, lighting, public address system, music (live or recorded systems), electricity, heating, wages for attendants minding the show, critics fees, travel expenses, accommodation, repairs to gallery in case of damage, insurance of work in gallery and in transit, signs, delivery of works to buyers and any other item of expenditure need to be considered before reaching an agreement on holding an exhibition. Failure to do so is likely to result in disputes later on, poor relations with the gallery and general ill-feeling. Write down a schedule of who pays for what, both parties sign it and you will have much less trouble.

Contracts

Some galleries will have a standard agreement or contract and some will put nothing in writing. If there is a standard agreement, check that it covers all the necessary points before signing. Do not be afraid to ask how points not mentioned in the contract will be handled. While a gallery owner may seem offended by your insistence on a written agreement or additions to their standard one, you will mostly gain their respect by showing that you know what is involved and that you will stand up for your rights. Some galleries will be reluctant to sign any agreement at all, relying on verbal discussions and memory. This is very dangerous, as memories and interpretations vary considerably, and this often leads to disputes.

Other matters that should be considered in a contract are:

What other works will be on show together with yours. Do you want to have other artists work on display at all.

4. Payment for Sales

Any agreement should set out when an artist will be paid for sales at an exhibition. Anything between 14 and 30 days after the close of the exhibition is normal.

The gallery should be responsible for collecting all money owing on sales, and if it delivers a work which is not fully paid for, it must take responsibility for paying the artist in full, regardless of whether the gallery has been paid in full or not.

The gallery should provide the artist with a written statement of all sales, percentage fees deducted and all agreed expenses payable by the artist deducted.

Some galleries will not reveal the names and addresses of buyers, but artists should try to get these details if possible as part of the financial statement, to build up a personal mailing list.

Other points to consider:

If the gallery changes its layout, colours, decoration, display stands or other major element which affects an exhibition, it should inform the artist who should consider if such changes are of concern to the artist.

If the artist nominates a number and type of work in an agreement, any changes to those characteristics need to be conveyed to the gallery as early as possible, so that it can consider them.

A gallery will usually have its own mailing list and an artist will usually have a list of people to invite. The cost of sending out invitations to these two lists needs to be decided and also whether the artist agrees to adding his list to the gallery's list for their future use for other exhibitions. If the artist does not want this to happen he may have to send out and pay for these invitations himself.

You may find it worthwhile to draw up your own standard agreement for exhibitions. Better still an artists' organisation can draw up a standard form for use by all its members, possibly in co-operation with local galleries. In this way a mutually acceptable standard is set and disputes largely eliminated. Standard contracts already exist in many places and can be either used as they are or adapted to local conditions and laws.

Advertising

Every gallery will have its own avenues for advertising and an artist should discuss carefully how an exhibition will be publicised. Each town or city has its own possibilities. Whether an artist is a visitor or a local can have a major bearing on how an exhibition is advertised.

The main avenues are:

(a) Newspapers

(i) paid advertisements - local tradition will indicate the best newspapers and the position within them for an ad.

(ii) articles - if you can interest a reporter or editor that your exhibition is worth an article and/or photo, this is very good exposure.

(b) T.V.

(i) paid ads are usually far too expensive to consider

(ii) news or special arts programs - you may be able to interest a T.V. program in your work.

(c) Magazines - General and Arts

Paid ads or an article about your work.

(d) Radio

Try to get an interview.

Generally, you will have to write to the media or ring them and explain what you do and why it is interesting, topical, unique, controversial or whatever other characteristic is outstanding. Sometimes a hand-written letter explaining your work and yourself can get an editor or producer interested. Put in a sheet of photos, which can be reproduced well with a good quality photocopier. List significant works you have done in the past, or well known clients - anything, which sets you apart from the average and the ordinary.

(e) Handbills can be useful. If you can place them at local art galleries, libraries, foundries, art material shops, art schools, community noticeboards, bookshops and if legal, paste them up in public places. Each town will have its own special places for handbills.

(f) Internet

If you have access to a website you can include information there.

In any publicity make sure you put in all necessary information:

1. That it is an exhibition - selling or not selling
2. Your name
3. What you are exhibiting ie medals - any particular type - portraits, commemoratives, commissions, etc.
4. Name and address and phone no/fax no of gallery
5. Dates - preview
 - opening
 - closing
6. Times of viewing
 - weekday
 - weekends
 - public holidays
7. Opening - date, time, opening speaker etc.
8. Any information which makes it interesting or attractive to potential visitors
9. Cost of entering if any is charged
10. How you or the gallery can be contacted for more information

COPYRIGHT

Laws of copyright vary from country to country and artists need to be aware of them.

In Australia and in many other countries, copyright remains with the artist in all works unless a specific agreement, separate from a sale or commission contract, is signed. It is common for a separate fee to be paid for the transfer (or assignment) of copyright.

In the case of a sale of a work, the client must be made aware that they have not bought copyright, only the actual object.

In the case of a commission, the artist also retains copyright, unless the contract specifies that copyright transfers.

If a client wants to acquire copyright to be sure that their design is not used by the artist for any other purpose, the agreement can state that the artist retains copyright, but agrees not to use the design for any purpose other than agreed by the client. The advantage of this is that the artist retains control over the future use or misuse of the work. The work is effectively frozen in its original state. A further agreement is needed for variations from the original form of the work.

If the client insists on transfer of copyright then the agreement must include a clause which states that the client must not alter or re-use the design in a different form without the agreement in writing of the artist. The client must be made aware that they owe the artist a continuing obligation to maintain the integrity of the work, and hence the reputation of the artist.

If you agree to further use of the work in other forms, make sure you retain the right to approve or veto any proposal, i.e. reduction or enlargement, graphic adaptations for logos, letterheads, posters, T shirts, signs etc. reproduction of the original work in other materials eg injected plastic, other metals, ceramic, plaster, carved stone or wood, repousee etc, change of colours, patina, polish. In fact anything, which clearly changes the work or affects its integrity in some way. Try to make sure that your name is acknowledged on any other use of your design, if this is appropriate.

Often artists are invited to submit designs in competition with or without a fee and often it is a condition that copyright in the design transfers to the client. This is a very dangerous situation since, once agreed to, the client can take any design, get somebody else to model it and produce it, for no further fee to the artist. Also they can combine elements of different designs, which can produce a result worse than any of the original designs. In such cases there will be no clear-cut designer, and nobody will get the credit for the design. Such conditions should be rejected and the projects boycotted with protests from artists and arts organisations. They take advantage of the fact that there are many artists desperate for work who will take a chance, do the work for nothing, and hope that they win and become successful. However, any organisation which makes such conditions is suspect because either:

1. They are ignorant of the right way to do things
2. They are deliberately setting out to take advantage of artists
3. They are mean and do not want to pay a reasonable fee or any combination of these. Any one of these reasons makes them a poor risk.

Associated with copyright are artists' moral rights, which include:

1. The right to have the artist's name associated with the work in all situations.
2. The right to have the work maintained in its original form - not changed, mutilated, repainted, reproduced in different forms.
3. The artist's right to withdraw a work.
4. The right to have one's work properly displayed.

These can be complicated matters and vary with each country. They are mentioned here so that they can be considered when drawing up agreements or contracts. It is most important that artists understand their local laws on these matters.

It is equally important to understand that where there are no laws, agreements can be made which include contractual protection of artists moral rights and copyright, so that a fair and reasonable arrangement can be made.

Artists can combine to draw up their own standard agreements and in this way share legal costs. Once standard agreements exist they can be re-used as often as needed. They should be reviewed occasionally in the light of new experience, since new situations can arise which were not covered in the original documents.

PERSONAL OR NON-COMMISSIONED WORK

The issues that confront an artist doing work for sale are different from those doing commissioned work. They are far more concerned with the artist's own feelings, impressions, likes, dislikes, fears, politics, etc. For each artist these matters are different and individual and they must make their own decisions.

However, if an artist wants to sell work as part or all of his living, certain practical matters need to be considered.

The work must be attractive in some way - people must like it for some reason. The problem for an artist who needs to sell can be how to make attractive work without compromising artistic integrity.

Choice of subject matter is important. It may be easier to sell work, which does not deal with gloomy or threatening subjects. Political subjects may attract some people and repel others, but the subject may be of short-lived interest. Religious subjects may appeal to some and not to others. Natural objects such as flowers, insects, animals, trees, scenes, etc. may be more saleable, but may not generate much passion in the artist and hence in the work. Another artist may have a great interest in the environment and may do the same subjects with great enthusiasm. Sporting themes are often quite saleable but it has been observed that getting the poses and movements correct can be a problem. There may be less room for artistic interpretation and more need for factual accuracy with these subjects.

Artists may choose to work in the same style for all works while another may vary the style as the mood and subject affects them. The danger of a signature style is that people may look too much at the style and much less at the subject and its expression. Artists who vary the style will tend to focus more attention on the subject and its treatment and style will be a less important element.

A signature style may become a restriction on creativity and originality after a period. Many artists have fallen into this trap and in their later years have found themselves locked into a style to the point that they cannot do anything else. Often this is done for commercial reasons on the basis that they want their work to be easily recognisable. It may be more important to make the work good, i.e. expressive and original, than to stick to a style for its own sake.

Size is an important element and is bound up with how artists want their work to function. Larger medals may work mounted and hung on a wall or stand. Hand sized medals may be left on coffee tables to be handled. Small medals may end up in drawers and be rarely seen. Suggesting ways of displaying medals to go with their size and format may be a good way to encourage medals to be bought since displaying medals effectively is a continuing problem.

Whether medals are one- or two-sided is significant. If one-sided, display is easier, but the attraction of a two-sided work where the sides interact, is lost. Conversely, two-sided medals are harder to display and really need to be picked up to be seen properly.

Elements of finish, i.e. patina, polish, wax or lacquer, will affect a medal's attractiveness and saleability. Carefully finished and presented work is easier to sell. Similarly, choice of material and the way the material's characteristics are used can be a significant element. A good idea and design well modelled, can be spoiled by a bad choice of material and poor finish.

In the end, however, much of it comes down to good ideas and good expression. A medal is like any other work of art. It needs a good idea, which comes from a combination of the artist's perception of experience and an effective expression of that perception. This will happen differently for every artist and there are no rules to govern it. The public will ultimately make the final decision when it comes to sales.

What work sells and what does not are hard to predict. Works artists like best may not sell and others they think are of less quality may sell well. At the same time it is important not to sell works which you know are below your professional standard. Ideally your latest work should be your best, but that cannot always be maintained. You should always be proud of anything you sell and scrap those pieces which you know are not up to standard.

The pressures of making a living and selling whatever you can are a constant threat to artistic integrity. It can be very hard to resist the temptation to produce commercial rubbish just to make money. If this is necessary for survival, you should make a clear philosophical division between this commercial work and your real artistic work. In this way you can treat the commercial work as a part-time job, and your real artistic work as the ideal that you pursue. Some artists made this separation successfully, but the temptation is to do more and more of the commercial work and less and less of the artistic work.

The pressures of rent, mortgage, school fees, car expenses etc. are hard to cope with and when paying work comes, it can be hard to refuse if the money is vital, even if the artistic quality is low.

For a developing artist, contract modelling work or commercial design and modelling can serve to develop techniques and give experience in business dealings - quoting, scheduling, meeting tight deadlines and dealing with business people. This experience can be very valuable and can be applied effectively when better quality work is offered. For artists starting out, almost any work, which uses their skills, is worth having. As their careers develop, they can afford to become more discriminating about the work they accept. While such work may rather fall into the commissioned category, it may be the means by which a selling artist can continue to produce personal work.

This may be particularly relevant when working for an exhibition. The artist may not want to sell any new work until the exhibition and so taking on some sort of lower level bread and butter work may be necessary.

Finding avenues to sell your work is often a problem. Many galleries do not understand medals and may not want to show them, but craft markets may be too down-market, and not the sort of place you can ask a proper price. Specialist medal galleries are extremely rare and any kind of commercial gallery or shop will charge a commission or selling fee, which raises the cost of the work significantly.

Artists' organisations and co-operatives often have exhibition space, so joining one of these may be a way of getting access to a cheaper exhibition space. There is normally rent to pay and you will probably have to run the exhibition yourself. If there is no such space available, you could rent a vacant shop or some commercial space where people will see your work and manage it yourself.

There may be a state or municipal art gallery in your town, which may be interested in showing your work. Talk to the director and see what you can organise.

If you decide to run your own exhibition, you will need to think about all the matters mentioned in 'Exhibitions' section. If you have never done this before you need to speak to somebody who has. There are many details to attend to and it is too much to expect that you can get it right first time. Each country and city has its own way of doing these things, its best avenues for publicity and lists of the right people to invite.

Critics are one of the terrors of having an exhibition. If your town has an art critic, and if medals are not a common art form, a letter to the local art critic explaining what medals are about and how your work relates to the general idea of medals, may be a good idea, together with a printed invitation. The reaction of critics to an exhibition of medals is often unpredictable ranging from love to disdain. Some appreciate the qualities of the medal and some cannot see the point. You will have to be prepared for anything, hoping for the best and expecting the worst. A good philosophic approach to a bad critique is "Today's crit. wraps tomorrow's rubbish." If you get a bad crit. from a critic who explains why he does not like the work, you may learn something. However, many critics use an exhibition as a means for showing how knowledgeable they think they are and take pleasure in tearing your show apart for that purpose. If you get a good studied crit which discusses strengths and weaknesses, count yourself lucky and take notice of what is written. Such critics are quite rare and should be valued.

Ultimately artists must have the confidence in their own work, which enables them to cope with bad criticism. If you believe that your work has good expressive qualities, says something worthwhile about your subject, has good technique and presentation, you can disregard ignorant or malicious criticism. You will not be the first or the last artist to find themselves in that position.

COMPETITIONS AND COMPETITIVE TENDERING

Competitions can be a good way to become better known and a means for exhibiting your work. They can also be a great disappointment and a great waste of time. They often have poor conditions, which demand much original work from artists for little or no payment with a very small chance of success. The inducement to do this work is the possibility that you will win, get the job and get the publicity, which goes with a win. Some artists have begun successful careers with a competition win. Many others have become cynical and disillusioned by entering many competitions without success.

With any competitive process it is important to understand what the process consists of, what work is required, and what are your chances of success. You must therefore decide whether the chances are worth the effort of competing.

Competitions fall into several categories.

1. Open or Public Competition

This is mostly used for works of major importance and is usually advertised in the press. Normally anybody can enter and every entrant does the work for no fee and at his or her own risk. Sometimes a competition will be restricted to inviting 'suitably qualified' artists, which cuts out the general public. Each artist sends in their entry and hopes for the best.

2. Competition by Invitation

In this case artists of known expertise are invited to take part. In most cases a sketch fee is offered as an acknowledgment of that expertise. Sometimes no fee is offered and such invitations should be viewed with some care. You need to consider carefully what you are being asked to design, what use will be made of your design, what is the prize and/or commission worth and what stages are involved in any production process.

The problem of clients wanting free designs before making a choice is a problem all over the world. It is a result of fierce competition between artists and between mints, which clients use to their own advantage. The problem with it is that it puts a strain on competitors and may eventually cause artists not to bother entering. This happened in Australia with competitive tendering for public sculpture and eventually the rules were changed because the best sculptors who had other sources of work refused to put in designs. In such cases, if 40 artists submit, this gives a 2½% chance of success. If an entry takes a week's work it becomes clear that an artist cannot afford to do this very often.

It is unfortunate but sometimes true that an artist with a big reputation can charge for sketches when lesser a known artist cannot. Procedures to give equal treatment to all competing artists should be the aim.

The feeling that clients are getting work for nothing is often an illusion. In the end, everything has to be paid for somehow, and fees and costs will rise to cover the cost of unsuccessful tenders and submissions.

Artists' organisations should work towards a fair set of competitive conditions which ensures that artists are paid for their work as far as is possible. It must be made clear to clients that getting the idea is often the hardest part of the process and it is this part for which they do not want to pay.

In practice there will be many variations on the problem. If a mint approaches you for a design and they are doing their quote for nothing, you may make some arrangement of part payment before they win the tender and part payment later. This kind of arrangement will depend very much on your relationship with the mint and you may feel that the risk of part payment only is worth while.

If a mint or foundry wants to be the entrepreneur of a medal issue, you may be asked to do the design for little or no initial fee, but with a royalty on sales. Again the people and organisations involved and the subject of the medal will determine your decision. My own experience is that the bigger the initial design payment the safer it is for the artist. Entrepreneurs often believe that sales will be unrealistically high and convince artists to take risks on their behalf. A combination of initial fee and royalty may be fairest.

As a general principle, an invitation to submit a design should be considered as if it were a commission to do so, and a sketch fee should be paid. The idea that the organiser only pays for the winning design ignores this and is incorrect. Similarly any demand for a transfer of copyright without a fee should be rejected. In some cases an organising body will want to acquire copyright so that unsuccessful designs cannot be used by the artist in competition with the organiser. In such cases the organiser should give an undertaking that they will not use the unsuccessful designs for any purpose. The designs are thus frozen so that nobody can use them. A better alternative is for the artist to retain copyright, but to agree not to use the design for any purpose.

3. Competitive Tendering

This can take various forms, but the first step is usually for artists to submit an expression of interest which consists of a curriculum vitae, a folio of photos or set of slides and a letter expressing interest and explaining why you feel that you are suitable and qualified for the work.

The next stage is for the client to choose a few artists, usually 3 to 5, and for a fee, commission them to produce designs. This fee should vary with the amount of work required, the number of designs and the form which the submission should take i.e. drawn, modelled, cast, struck.

From these submissions, a winner is chosen. In some cases the process is longer with a long list chosen for a first stage design, then a short list to develop the design further and then a winner.

In some cases the requirements for an expression of interest include designs for no fee. This situation should be avoided as far as possible as it means that the client is getting a large choice of designs for no fee. If the process becomes entrenched, artists can end up doing large amounts of work for nothing for every project which comes up. This is good for clients, but unsustainable for artists in the long term.

Some organisers of competitive processes do not understand the difference between a public competition, competitive tendering and a competition by invitation.

Be especially careful to find out if you are the only artist invited or are there other artists invited. If so, you are then in a competition and you need to be paid a sketch fee. If you win you may still be asked to take some of the entrepreneurial risk. Be very careful under such circumstances and seek legal advice if necessary.

4. Competitions for the Best Work

This is where each artist submits work/s to be judged for a prize.

Make sure you understand what the prize is - money, a trip, tools or materials, free bronzecasting etc. Is it worth the trouble of entering?

Check if the prize is acquisitive or not - i.e. does the organiser or sponsor keep your work.

Will the works be exhibited - will you get exposure if you do not win. Make sure the works are well presented in any exhibition as far as possible.

Make sure you understand different categories of prizes. Enter yours in the correct category.

If it is a selling exhibition give all relevant details of price, size, material, title, edition number. Allow for selling commission in your price.

5. Competitions Generally

Things to watch for generally are whether the organisers want to acquire copyright in all submitted designs or in the winning design only or none at all. Make sure that the winners' prize is large enough to allow you to produce the finished work. Check if the prize is separate from a commission or is it only a money prize. Is the competition for a commission, or is it a prize for the sake of the honour and the money prize. Check who are the judges. Do they know you or your work. Are they friends, enemies or neutral. Do you know what kind of work they prefer. Do you know them at all. In a specialised area such as medals, people tend to know something about most other people in the field. While the judging of competitions should be as objective as possible it is impossible to keep personal likes and dislikes completely removed from it. Certain judges will be known for favouring certain types of work.

Check who is the organiser or client and what you know about them. Make sure that there are provisions for the return of your entry. If you send a finished work check if there is any provision for insurance or must you provide your own. Make sure you are protected against unauthorised use of your design.

What form does the submission take. Is it drawings or a modelled product and if so, in what material.

If you win, what is the process of final production, if it is for a commission.

Read all instructions carefully and if it is for a commission or a design for a subject, make your design relevant.

In all cases, good presentation is vital. Good drawings, well executed modellings, well-finished metal castings, etc. are all important. Written parts should be clear and to the point. Artistic jargon usually does not impress judges.

PORTRAITS

Portraits can be a significant part of a medallists' output and income. There are many opportunities for them to be used and medal portraits have some important advantages over other forms of portraiture.

Medal portraits generally cost less than a conventional painted portrait. They can be reproduced, and given to family members, different departments of an institution etc. for a fairly modest cost. There are many occasions where a full painted portrait is too extravagant or ostentatious for the occasion and a medal is a more modest or elegant solution to the occasion. Medals also lend themselves to series' of portraits. Successive presidents, professors or family members can be done over many years by different artists and can be displayed in quite a modest space very effectively. Medals are perhaps the most durable form of portraiture. They do not burn easily, resist damage well, can be removed easily in case of fire or disaster, and if the original is kept by the artist, they can be recast with equal originality, if they are destroyed.

As with most medals they can be cast or struck, or both, depending on their purpose which gives great flexibility. Sizes can be whatever is required from the smallest struck size, to very large, if cast.

Clients can range from private individuals wanting portraits of themselves, their children, spouses, sweethearts etc. to a company wanting their chairperson or director done, to schools and universities wanting chancellors and professors done, or hospitals and research institutions wanting to commemorate doctors, researchers or administrators.

While every artist will have their own way of doing portraits, some aspects are common to most approaches and need to be kept in mind.

A portrait should be done from a live subject. If one accepts that a portrait is a combination of a physical likeness and an expression of character through the likeness, then it becomes clear that artists need to get to know their subjects and understand their character, likes, dislikes, smiles, frown etc. Every person has their own individual average expression, which is a function of their overall character, and it is mostly this personal average that a portraitist is seeking to

identify and put down in modelled form. Unless you have the time to spend with the subject, this is not usually possible to achieve.

Frequently medallists are asked to do portraits from photos. If the person is dead, there is no option. Often, it is very difficult working with photos, as they frequently do not show what you need. Profiles in particular are hard to find since people are usually photographed full face or three-quarter and profiles are usually found as incidentals on photos where somebody else is the main subject.

In these cases it is often best to take the modelling as far as you can from the photos and then invite the client and family or friends who knew the person to comment and help with final adjustments. This can be difficult as opinions will vary, but the important thing to remember under these circumstances is that your assessment together with this assistance will be as good an attempt as anybody else's at that persons' likeness.

If the person is unobtainable - in another part of the world, permanently ill etc., you may be able to get photos made which give you the best chance of a good result. You can ask for proper profile shots and a series of shots taken from all around the head. Ask for information about the character of the person, what they do, how they live etc.

Sometimes clients will ask for a portrait to be done from photos as a surprise for the subject. It is much better to explain that if the client wants a good result, it is better to have sittings from life. The surprise can be the announcement that the portrait will be done. It is important to explain the difference between a likeness taken from a photo and a portrait in the full sense, which involves a characterisation of the subject.

The conduct of sittings can have a significant impact on the result. Setting up the workspace, with good natural light coming from the right direction is vital. Do not be bashful about moving furniture around or looking at different rooms in a house if you are having sittings away from your studio. The best light is from the direction away from the sun i.e. north facing windows in the northern hemisphere, and south facing in the south. Direct sunlight is bad and artificial light seems to lead to serious errors, which become apparent in daylight.

Sittings should not be too long. Two hours with a break of 15-20 minutes in the middle is usually enough. Most people cannot maintain the necessary level of concentration for much longer than that. As you tire you start making mistakes and damage previous work. Also a sitter has a limited endurance and two hours seems enough for most people.

Keeping the subject animated and interested is important. If you are able to maintain a conversation while working you will get a much more animated result. You can lead the conversation through a range of subjects and through this you can observe how the face reacts to different moods. A subject sitting still and quiet will tend to sag and even fall asleep, which is not the way to get a lively end product.

Before starting it is a good idea to show the sitter the stages of the process - modelling, mould, lettering, plasters pattern and bronze casting or striking. This gives them a much better idea of what you are doing and why.

Ask the client or subject to think carefully about any inscription required - name, dates, occupation, titles etc. The amount of inscription may affect the size of the portrait itself, if you need to fit a long inscription in, and the size of the medal is limited.

If the work is to be struck, be careful with your height of relief. High relief will be more difficult to strike. A portrait involves a large mass of metal in the middle, which means a lot of metal must be moved in the striking process. Consult your mint about modelling heights. The design of the reverse needs to be considered in conjunction with the portrait side when striking is being considered. The relationship of the relief mass on both sides is important.

Portraits can be incorporated into an overall design to give some idea of the activities or character of the person portrayed. In this situation the portrait is often small or only a part of the head is shown to leave space for a design. These situations often occur when an award medal is made in honour of a particular person. The same considerations apply to the portrait, but the process of a designed commissioned piece come into play as well. It is common to have a portrait on one side and a symbolic or illustrative design on the reverse.

The most traditional form of medal portrait is the profile. This has the advantage of needing the least compression of the volume and the shape of the face is largely defined by the bony structure of the head. Often clients find this aspect difficult because they never see themselves in that way. The more the face is turned towards you, the more difficult it tends to become to prevent the face from appearing squashed, especially if modelling height is restricted by striking. Full face is most difficult, as the nose usually looks flattened. However, everything can be achieved if you are good enough.

Spectacles pose a particular problem. In profile the arm can cover the eye. Leaving the arm off and only putting in the lens part exposes the face while telling the viewer that the subject wore glasses. In three-quarter, the problem is worse, since the glasses can appear to occupy most of the face. As far as possible, suggesting the glasses, rather than modelling them in full, often seems to work better, but as each case is different the artist must decide as each requires.