

Sample



Marketing Alain Briot  
Fine Art  
Photography

rockynook

Alain Briot

# Marketing Fine Art Photography

rockynook

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**PART 1**  
**SELLING**  
**FINE ART**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY**

*Successful people do the things  
that unsuccessful people are unwilling to do.*  
JOHN MAXWELL



# Chapter 1

## Taking Control of Your Destiny

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We are successful when we take control of our lives instead of waiting for success to come to us. Marketing your work is taking control of your financial destiny instead of hoping that luck will bring you money and fame. By taking control we ensure that specific things will happen because of our actions, our decisions, and our personal abilities, not because of some unknown outside force that may or may not come our way. By deciding today that you will make things happen, instead of waiting for things to happen “someday,” you take control of your life. It is taking control that, eventually, will bring you success.

Making dreams happen carries both costs and sacrifices. In order to be successful running your photography business, you will need to sacrifice some of the time that you would have otherwise spent creating photographs. This time will instead be spent on marketing your work and selling your photographs at shows or in other venues. It will also be spent doing accounting, ordering supplies, and completing the multitude of tasks that are part of running a successful photography business.

If you follow the advice I offer in this book, you can build a successful business. However, you will no longer be able to spend all your time doing photography. This can be seen as a sacrifice. However it can also be seen as success because you will no longer need to have a job that just “pays the bills” and allows you to do photography on the side.

This is all about choices, about knowing what you really want to do and about doing what is required to make your dreams come true. If you really want something—if you want it enough to work as hard as is necessary to get what you want—you can achieve it. This has proven true for me, and I am sure it will prove just as true for you.

### **The Best-Kept Secret**

A poor photograph well marketed will always outsell a great photograph poorly marketed.

Therefore, the goal is to create great photographs and marketing them effectively.

Photographs do not sell simply because they are pretty. Like any product, photographs sell because they are properly marketed. Better cameras and equipment do not lead to better sales. Better marketing leads to better sales.

Most photographers who sell their work spend far too much time and money on equipment and far too little on marketing. In fact, many photographers do not spend *any* time or money marketing their work. Instead, they wait for people to come and buy from them: they wait to be discovered. Needless to say, they are quickly disappointed because artwork is not sold by waiting for customers to knock on your door. Artwork is sold by knocking on the customer's door, either physically or metaphorically.

Why is that? It is because most people have a very difficult time deciding what is good art and what is bad art. This being the case, people rely on information made available to them regarding the artwork they are looking at. They need to know more about the work presented to them before they can decide to buy it. They need to know who the artist is and why they should buy this artwork. Without this information they will rarely buy, and if they do, they will mostly purchase only low-priced pieces.

This information can be provided to them by the artist's representative. If no one is representing you, then you must provide your audience with this information yourself.

You may say, "But I have had articles written about me, I have done interviews, I have a website, and so on. Why can't my customers learn about me that way?" They certainly will learn about you that way, provided they find these articles, interviews, and websites. The problem is, how do you know they will find this information? And how do you know the right people—those who are considering purchasing your work—will find it? The fact is that you don't. And the fact is that most likely they will not find this information.

This being the case, it is your job, as an artist who is marketing your work, to provide prospective customers with this information. You simply cannot expect your customers to find it on their own.

For example, one of the best marketing pieces you will ever have in your hands is your Artist Statement. The Artist Statement is a crucial piece of information about yourself which, if designed and used properly, will help you generate more sales than you ever thought possible. I will address the Artist Statement in more detail in Chapter 20.

## What is Marketing?

Marketing encompasses a wide variety of promotional activities. There is really no limit to the marketing venues and approaches that can be used. The secret (if there is one) is to develop a marketing system that works for you and that you will fine-tune over time. The next step is to apply this system systematically.

## The Goal of Marketing

The goal of marketing is to generate sales that would otherwise not be generated—to convince that part of the audience that is not yet ready to buy, or is not aware of your product’s existence or advantage, to buy your product.

Therefore, the purpose of marketing is persuasion. How this is achieved is the focus of this book.

Successful marketing is persuasive marketing. A successful marketing campaign is one that persuades a large segment of the audience to buy the product being marketed. An unsuccessful marketing campaign is one that does not persuade a significant segment of the audience to buy the product.

No effort should be spared in persuading customers to buy your product except, of course, illegal or unethical practices. When considering all the marketing venues available, none should be rejected a-priori. Instead each should be carefully considered and then evaluated for its effectiveness.

Effectiveness is the key element in marketing. Fear or insecurity are often reasons people reject a potential marketing approach. Therefore, it is important to eliminate fear from the marketing planning stage.

During the planning stage one must consider not only the positive aspects of a particular approach, but also the negative aspects. For example, a negative outcome is the potential damage to the image and the public perception of a business as a result of a marketing campaign. A marketing campaign must not only be persuasive, it must also keep intact and, preferably, reinforce the image that the business wants to project to its audience. Therefore, an important goal of marketing is the reinforcement of a business image. This is best achieved by the creation of an image that is constantly refined through new marketing campaigns. The goal of each new campaign is to reinforce this business image and to remind the audience why they should buy the advertised products.

## Why Marketing is Indispensable to Success in Photography

What you never want to forget is that marketing is absolutely necessary in order to sell your work. This is true regardless of the type of marketing you decide to do and regardless of the product you decide to sell.

Your marketing can be as simple as talking to your co-workers or as complex as a national campaign orchestrated over a long period of time. The type of marketing you choose to do is not what is important. What is important is that your marketing is aimed at meeting your financial goals and that it reaches your target audience.

When all the expenses are tallied up, creating photographs costs a lot of money. Furthermore, as your level of involvement increases, these costs

*Nobody hangs a \$100 photograph over the mantle in their million-dollar home.*

increase proportionally and, sometimes, unfortunately, exponentially.

For example, if you open a gallery you will have to pay rent for office space, pay for utilities, buy insurance, pay salaries to your employees, and more. All of a sudden you find out that you either need to make additional sales, or you must raise your prices to cover these new expenses. You also find out that your previous marketing approach no longer works because it either does not attract enough customers, or it does not attract customers who are willing to pay your higher prices, or both. As a result, you need to set new financial goals and prepare a marketing campaign designed to reach these goals.

The need for marketing does not make itself known until running your business requires a specific level of income. Until then, marketing is an option. When the time I just described arrives, things take a 180 degree turn and marketing becomes a requirement. At that time marketing is no longer something you *could* do. Instead, marketing becomes something you *must* do. Income from photography is no longer a desire; it is now a necessity and in some instances a dire necessity.

## Crucial Questions

I have seen too many photographers start a business and hope to make a good income without doing much, if any, marketing. Launching a website without doing any marketing is like waiting for a miracle to happen. Opening a gallery without doing any marketing is akin to committing suicide.

Whether you launch a website or open a gallery, if you do not market your work and your location, how are people going to find you? And if people do find you, how do you control who visits your site or walks into your gallery? For you to sell your work, you need to attract people who are interested in your product or services.

At such time, important questions surface such as:

- How will you find the correct marketplace for your work?
- Is there a market for this work in the first place?
- Do you have to compromise and make your work fit a specific marketplace?
- Can you offer a new style or do you have to conform to an existing, sales-proven style?
- Are you going to sell quantity or quality?

These questions are rarely asked by photographers because photographers prefer to focus on getting new camera gear, new software, or new photographic knowledge.

Instead, these questions focus on how to make money by selling your work, something that many artists like to think will happen if they simply do great work. The problem is that great work does not sell itself. Great work, or

any work for that matter, needs marketing in order to sell. You can have the most beautiful photographs in the world, or the best product ever, but it is not going to do you much good if you do not explain to those who are qualified to buy your product *why* they should buy it.

There are countless ways that your work can be marketed, and we will look at many of them in this book. What is important to remember is that marketing has to be done in order to generate the business income you desire.

## Photography Must be Your Career in Order to Succeed

In order to sell your work successfully you need to approach this activity as a career, and not as a hobby. This is because while a hobby is usually done on the side, a career plays a primary importance in your working life. This decision is significant because it will shape how you approach your photography business as a whole.

You can make your photography business a part-time career or a full-time career. Many start doing this part-time and later move on to doing it full-time. For example, you may look at it as having a “day job” and a “night job,” or a full-time job and a part-time job. Others start right off doing it full-time, often by retiring from a previous career and beginning a new career in photography.

Whichever way you look at all this, keep in mind that it is going to be a lot of work and that it will not be easy. I do not want to hide this fact from you. If this were easy, everyone would do it and everyone would be successful at it.

## Market, Market, and Market Again

An old maxim goes like this: If you do not market your work one thing will happen—nothing.

The saying is true. I verified it for myself when I first tried to sell my work. Let me explain.

When I started selling my photographs I thought that having stunning, high-quality work was the secret to selling it. I believed that my work would speak for itself and that its beauty alone would be enough to generate sales. Therefore, my efforts were focused on constantly improving the quality of my work by acquiring better cameras, better equipment and, overall, by learning how to create better photographs.

The way I “marketed” my work was by displaying my work in galleries. Although I did not realize it then, I was relying on the galleries to market my work. But the fact is, the gallery owners marketed their galleries, not my photography. They promoted the name of their gallery, and when doing so, they included all the artists they represented. My name was featured in their marketing materials along with all the other artists they represented. Because

these galleries represented many artists, the name of each individual artist received little attention. This did not work very well for me. Although I did make a few sales, they were at low prices and irregular intervals. I could not rely on this income to make a living from my photography.

Because I believed that the beauty and the quality of my photography would make people want to buy them, when they did not sell I concluded that my photographs were not good enough and that I had to make them better. Consequently, I spent a lot of time and money doing so. Unfortunately, while the quality of my work did improve, my sales did not increase.

Because I had no idea how to market my work myself I decided to place ads in magazines. Since I did not know which magazines to advertise in, I chose to maximize my chances by advertising in magazines that had a national distribution. These ads were very costly.

Although I did not know how to design an effective ad, I could not afford to hire a professional graphic designer. Therefore, I designed my own ads, making beginners' mistakes. As a result my ads generated only marginal income. At the end of the day I barely covered my costs. I certainly did not make a profit.

## The Breakthrough

All these mistakes cost me a lot of time and money. Eventually, I realized that I needed to generate a sufficient income through the sale of my work or quit trying altogether. I could not sustain these expenses if I was not making a profit.

This is when I realized that I needed to study marketing. Because there were no books explaining how to sell fine art photographs, I studied marketing techniques used to sell a variety of other products and devised ways of applying these techniques to the marketing of fine art photographs.

Completing this research took me years. Testing my findings also took a long time because I could only do it through trial and error. The whole process was very time consuming. However, it led me to the formulation of a successful fine art marketing system that can be used to sell photographs and other fine arts, such as paintings, sculptures, etc. Furthermore, this system can be adapted to sell other products as long as these products are sold on the basis of quality rather than quantity.

I now know that the reason my work wasn't selling well was not because of low quality. My work was not selling because it was not marketed properly. What I needed to improve was the quality of my marketing, not the quality of my work. It took me a long time to understand that, and it took me even longer to devise a successful marketing strategy. The outcome of my efforts is the marketing system that I present in this book.

## Skill Enhancement Exercises

In this book, as in my previous books, at the end of most chapters you will find what I call *Skill Enhancement Exercises*. These exercises are designed to help you get the most out of the information provided in each chapter by applying it to your personal situation.

The first Skill Enhancement Exercise in this book focuses on taking care of your own destiny. It consists of two questions. Answer each question in writing as accurately and as honestly as you can. I recommend you keep all your answers to the various Skill Enhancement Exercises in this book in a single notebook, or a single text file on your computer, so that you can refer to your answers easily and monitor your progress.

### Taking Control of Your Destiny

1. What are you doing right now to take control of your own destiny?
2. What else can you do to take better control of your destiny?

## Chapter 7

# How to Price Fine Art Photography

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Pricing your work is a very important aspect of selling your work because the prices you set for your work will define and affect many different things.

First, your prices will define your audience. There is an audience for everything, and when it comes to prices there is an audience for all price points. There is an audience that looks for low-priced items, an audience that looks for medium-priced items, and an audience that looks for high-priced items.

This is the simple version. In practice, it is more complex than that. Price is definitely the factor that most people look at before they consider buying from a specific store or vendor. Notice that I did not say, “before they buy” but “before they *consider* buying.” What this means is that most people will not even look at the work you have for sale until they see what prices you are asking for it. Certainly this takes place in the blink of an eye, and to both merchant and customer it is most often unnoticeable. However it is there.

This fact is known to most business owners. However, most business owners believe that unless their prices are affordable no one will buy from them. This is not accurate. Certainly, you have to be priced fairly; however, you only need to be priced fairly in relationship to products similar to yours. In other words, if you sell a fine art photograph created with the finest supplies and released in a limited edition of 10 in 40×50 inch size, it would make no sense to compare the price of this piece to a similar-sized piece that is mass-produced and created with low-quality materials. Although these two pieces may look similar from a distance, careful observation will reveal that significant differences exist. As a result, the price of the high-quality, limited edition piece is expected to be higher than the price of the low-quality, mass-produced piece.

A discerning audience, meaning people knowledgeable about fine art photography, will see these differences and expect to see a price difference as well. If they wonder why your work is high priced, you can explain the reason to them. This is called *educating your audience*. Just describe what the differences are and then ask the potential buyer what type of artwork they are looking for. Are they looking for mass-produced work created with low-quality supplies, or are they looking for limited edition work created with high-quality materials? Do not shy away from addressing price. Price is very important and your audience does expect to pay more for high-quality work. Name your price and name the price of your competitors. Then ask again what type of

work they are looking for: mass-produced and inexpensive or collectible and high-priced?

You will not hurt your sales by doing this because there is an audience for everything. There is an audience for mass-produced, low priced art and there is an audience for limited-editions, high quality and high priced art. It is also important to know who you are talking to so that you do not waste time trying to sell to the wrong audience. What is also important to know is that even though you may have the right audience, there may still be negotiation required down the road, after your customers find a piece they are interested in taking home with them. Just because customers agree with your pricing in principle does not mean they will not try to negotiate on your prices! Just be sure to tell them, if such is the case, that you cannot drop your price to the level of a mass-produced, low-quality artwork. Once your customers know this, you both know the negotiation parameters you can work with. The rest is salesmanship and skillful negotiation. The goal, as with any successful negotiation, is to reach a win-win agreement.

Your prices will also affect the volume of work you sell. Low prices will generate a high volume of sales while high prices will generate a lower number of sales. Basically, as your prices increase, fewer people can afford to buy your work. This is normal and expected. Therefore, it would be a mistake to set high prices and then wonder why you only make a small number of sales.

**Red Beavertail Cactus Flowers, Arizona –**

Flowers are always popular subjects. They are by nature decorative and because of their many colors it is easy to find one to fit just about any kind of décor. Flowers will often become best selling images (see Chapter 8 for detailed information on how to create best sellers).



## Pricing Based on Expected Sales Volume

As we just saw, the question of how much to charge for your photographs is directly related to the quality and the volume of your work. There are two possible approaches to pricing: you can decide that you want to sell a lot of inexpensive pieces or you can decide that you prefer to sell only a few very expensive pieces.

Suppose that your goal is to make \$20,000 this year selling your photographs. To reach this goal you have several options as far as pricing your work is concerned:

You can sell a single, monumentally large and incredibly stunning photograph for \$20,000, or you can sell:

- 2 for \$10,000 each,
- 4 for \$5000 each,
- 8 for \$2500 each,
- 16 for \$1250 each,
- 32 for \$750 each,
- 64 for \$313 each,
- 128 for \$157 each,
- 256 for \$78 each,
- 512 for \$40 each,
- 1,000 for \$20 each or
- 2,000 for \$10 each

In this example the amount you want to charge and the number of photographs you want to sell (or can create) in one year define where you fall on the scale above. You may think that this example is oversimplified. It is not. Just read it again and you will see that the whole issue of pricing your work is embedded in it. If you desire to reach a higher income just start with a single photograph at this higher income level and work your way down using the same scale of increased quantity and decreased price.

There are basically three questions embedded in the above example:

- How much are you comfortable selling your work for?
- How many pieces can you realistically expect to sell in one year?
- How large is the audience that you are addressing?

Your answers to these questions are the basis on which you can start pricing your work.

## Pricing Based on Actual Costs

There are various methods you can use to price your work. The first one is the one we just discussed, which is based on the expected volume of sales. However, while this approach is useful in giving you a general idea about the number of sales that you can reasonably expect to make, it does not allow you to calculate a precise cost of production for individual pieces.

The second pricing approach is based on your production costs. When pricing your work according to this approach there are five basic steps involved. First, add the cost of all the supplies you used to create your photographs: the cost of the print (paper, plus inks or chemicals), the mat board and the mounting tape, and the plastic bag. If it is framed, add the cost of the frame plus glass and backing, the framing supplies (wire, screws, framing staples), and so on. Add up the costs of all the materials you used to create the piece. You need to count every single item you paid for because the cost of each item is part of the final cost of creating your product. Remember that you paid for all these things and that you need to account for them in order to recoup your expenses.

Second, you also need to take into consideration the total cost of operating your studio (rent, mortgage, utilities, insurance) and the cost of doing business (fees, licenses, business insurance, etc.). If you do art shows you need to add show fees and travel expenses—such as gas, food, and lodging—to this total. Because operating costs are spread over the creation of multiple photographs, you will need to divide your total operating costs by the number of photographs you create so that you have a per-item amount that you can add to the cost of supplies.

Third, decide how much you want to make per hour. Then estimate how many hours it took you to create each specific photograph and multiply this figure by how much you want to make an hour. This total is your cost for the time you spent working on this piece.

Fourth, calculate the grand total by adding the cost of supplies, the costs of production, and the cost of your time. The sum represents your total cost for creating the piece that you are pricing.

The fifth step is to do the following: Multiply your total cost by two to arrive at your **wholesale** price. Multiply your wholesale price by two to arrive at your **retail** price.

Once you have reached the above wholesale and retail prices, compare them to the prices photographers in your area are charging for work of similar size and quality. If your prices are much higher, you may want to look into your costs and reduce them. If your prices are much lower you may want to raise your prices because people will most likely expect to pay what your competitors are asking. You can under-price your competitors but there is no need to offer the same item at half the price your competitors are asking.

**CALCULATING COSTS FOR WHOLESALE AND RETAIL PRICING***Costs of Supplies**+ Operating Costs**+ Cost of your time**= Total Cost of Production**Total cost of production × 2 = Wholesale price**Wholesale price × 2 = Retail price*

*Note:* This is only a starting point. In practice, I recommend multiplying your costs by a factor higher than two. However, the multiplying factor you choose to use is up to you. The only hard and fast rule is that a factor of two is the absolute minimum to use.

## Pricing Based on Leverage and Reputation

The third type of pricing uses your leverage and reputation as the main elements of your pricing. This approach to pricing starts with the calculation of your total costs, as we just saw. However, instead of applying a multiplying factor and leaving it at that, you continue by adding a leverage and reputation factor.

This leverage and reputation factor is not an actual number but rather a price point that you arrive at over the course of your career. Therefore, this pricing approach is not one you can use when you are just starting to sell your work. Instead, it is one you can use only after you have built both leverage and reputation. At that time, you can start to increase your prices regularly to reflect your increasing worth.

You may think there is a conflict between these two pricing approaches, but there is no conflict. There is a progression from one approach to the other. You must start by calculating your costs of production and applying a multiplying factor to get a starting price. Once this starting price is set, you need to increase this price proportionally to your level of leverage and reputation.

Understandably, when you are just starting you will not yet have a reputation and you will not have any leverage. You must work on developing these while you are selling your work. You do so by doing shows, by enlarging your audience, by increasing the number of collectors who own your work, by submitting your work for publication, by doing interviews, by receiving awards, and more. As your leverage and reputation grow, you continue increasing your prices. Over time, your costs of production become a smaller and smaller

percentage of your prices until they are virtually irrelevant. At that time the switch from a cost-based to a leverage-based pricing approach is complete.

## What is Leverage?

Let's look at leverage in the context of pricing your work. Leverage is simply an advantage that you have built over the course of your career, through exhibiting and publishing your work, and through peer recognition of your accomplishments in your field. Leverage is also represented in the value of your work when it is seen as an investment. For example, an artist with strong leverage will see his work go up in price in the secondary market, meaning that when sold by one collector to another his work will sell for more than what the first collector paid for it when they purchased it directly from him.

Leverage is also based on reputation. For that reason it is very important that you protect your reputation. This means having integrity, offering work that is only of the highest standard, and offering warranties when appropriate. Offering low-quality work, not having warranties, not being concerned with customer satisfaction, not having integrity, and trying to cut corners wherever possible will definitely result in damaging your reputation in the long run.

If you attend to your career properly, your leverage and reputation will increase regularly; and because your prices reflect your leverage and reputation, your prices must also increase regularly. I recommend that you increase your prices 10% to 20% once or twice a year. The percentage and frequency you use will be based on your level of confidence, the speed at which your reputation is growing, and the ongoing market conditions that you are experiencing.

Pricing based on leverage is ultimately the way in which fine art is priced. A Picasso does not cost millions of dollars because the auction house wants to make their yearly income from just a couple of sales, or because a multiplying factor was applied to the total cost of production. A Picasso does not follow volume-based pricing or pricing based on cost of goods.

Instead, a Picasso, a Monet—or any fine art work recognized for its quality and for the achievement of the artist—is priced on the basis of the leverage and reputation of that artist. This is why prices for work by internationally known artists reach such heights. That these works are rare is a factor, but rarity is not the main determining factor. The fact is, well known artists—including Monet, Picasso, and many others—were much more prolific than is often believed. If their work were priced in regard to production, prices would undoubtedly be lower. It is the reputation and the leverage that they command that makes their work so costly.

*Pricing based on leverage is ultimately the way in which fine art is priced.*

## Should You Offer Limited Editions?

This is an important question to consider when pricing your work. The first thing to say about this is that deciding to offer limited editions is a marketing decision rather than an artistic decision. It is a marketing decision because with today's digital technology we can make 1,000 prints of the same image and keep the same quality from the first print to the 1,000th print.

In the past, with printing technologies such as lithography, copper plate printing, photogravure, and others, quality declined as more prints were made. This is why the editions were numbered. The first prints were understood to offer the highest quality because this is when the copper plate had its highest relief or when the lithography stone had the finest colors. As more impressions were made, the engraving on the plate became flattened, the colors on the stone started fading away, and consequently the print quality declined. Unless the collector was present during printing and was able to pull aside the first prints, the only way to know which prints were first and which were last was by looking at the number on the print. This is why prints were not only signed but also numbered by the artist.

Today, numbering no longer indicates a specific level of quality because, as I explained previously, all prints in a digitally printed photographic edition will look the same.

Some customers are clearly aware of this fact and consider limited editions to be marketing schemes. Other customers like limited editions regardless of these considerations because, after all, they do limit how many prints are being made, even though all prints are of equal quality. Finally, some customers like specific numbers, for private reasons, and limited editions offer the opportunity to own artwork that is both pleasing and personalized, if one can find the print number that is meaningful to them.

The question of whether or not to create limited editions is also related to the issue of purposely creating scarcity. While it can be said that artists create false scarcity through the use of limited editions, it can also be said that they are using quantity as a way to control what they spend their time doing, either printing the same piece over and over again or creating new pieces and moving forward with their art. Eventually all artists face this dilemma and there is value in creating new work versus spending your time repeatedly printing old work. Printing 10 images takes a certain amount of time. Printing 100 images takes 10 times more time, and so on. Since we only have 24 hours in a day, no matter who we are, the number of prints we make per image basically affects how many new images we can create.

If you do offer limited editions you need to carefully keep track of the number of prints released. You also have to include a certificate of authenticity with each piece. This certificate must, at the very least, feature the title of the artwork, the print number, the total number of prints in the edition and your signature. In other words, you must do it right. Do not just put a number on

the print. Instead, provide credible proof that the edition is truly limited and that you are carefully keeping track of how many copies are being printed and sold.

Finally, end the edition when the last copy is sold and avoid creating a new piece that is too similar to the one you just sold out. There is nothing more irritating for a customer than to find out that the edition of the piece they purchased is sold out, but that you just released a new piece that is virtually identical, save for a few minor details. If you limit, you must truly limit, not just pretend that you do.



**Sunset, Canyonlands National Park, Utah** – Landscapes are popular because, just like flowers, they offer a pleasant and restful subject to look at. As such they fit well in a home environment and are frequently used as home décor.

## Summary of Things to Consider When Pricing Your Work

**1 – Want versus need:** Art is a “want” item, not a “need” item. You therefore have to make people want to purchase your art. You cannot expect them to come and buy it without you doing anything. You have to sell it actively.

**2 – Price matters:** The quality of your work must be in tune with the prices you set. In the eyes of your audience, high prices reflect high quality and low prices reflect low quality. When you sell your work on the basis of quality, for your customers to agree to the prices you ask, you must strive to achieve only the finest quality and demonstrate excellence in every area of your work.

**3 – Price complaints:** If nobody complains about the price of your work, your prices are too low. If you price your work adequately, you must expect a certain number of pricing complaints. This is not a bad thing. In fact, it is a good thing because it means that your work is priced correctly.

*If nobody complains about the price of your work, your prices are too low.*

**4 – You control the volume of work by the price:** The higher the price, the lower the volume of sales. The lower the price, the higher the volume of sales. In turn, the volume of sales dictates the size of the inventory you need to carry. Therefore, the lower your prices are, the larger your inventory needs to be and the higher your prices are, the smaller your inventory needs to be.

**5 – You need to carefully consider the relationship between pricing and salability:** I advise against selling your work on the basis of price. Getting more business with lower prices is relatively easy, but keeping business obtained purely because of price is difficult. Here is the rule that applies to this approach: If customers come to you because of price, they will leave you because of price.

*If customers come to you because of price, they will leave you because of price.*

Because of this I recommend that you sell your work on the basis of your images being the unique expression of your vision and personality, your talent, your artistic skills, and your desire to share all this with an audience who appreciates your work. Here is the rule that applies to this approach: If people buy from you because of the uniqueness and the quality of your work, they will come back for the uniqueness and the quality of your work.

For this reason I recommend you price your work on the basis of your leverage and reputation, as we saw earlier. Do all you can to build your leverage and your reputation by seeking publication of your work, doing shows, and participating in other activities conducive to increasing your leverage.

**6 – You must decide how much you want to make per hour:** What do you think your skills are worth? What hourly wage do you want to pay yourself for your hard work? Personally, I charge \$330 per hour (at the time this book is written) plus materials and expenses. This fee is the same whether I sell a product or

a service. For products, I multiply the total by two for wholesale and four for retail. For services, the fee is simply \$330 per hour plus any expenses incurred.

**7 – You need to raise your prices by 10% to 20% once or twice a year:**

Everything you buy increases in price with regularity. This is a fact of life and it affects all of us, whether or not we are in business for ourselves. We have come to expect it. Therefore, your customers expect you to raise your prices. What is surprising to your customers is not that your prices go up but that your prices stay the same year after year!

Prices increase because costs go up: the cost of living, the cost of supplies, of labor, gas, etc go up. Your prices need to go up in the same proportion. If not, your income may stay the same but you will make less and less money. Furthermore, as we saw earlier, your prices also need to increase as your leverage increases.

**8 – You need a masterpiece:** A “masterpiece” is a piece that is so large, so impressive, and so outrageously priced that nobody who thinks clearly would buy it. If someone does buy it then you need to immediately raise the price of the next masterpiece because this is not supposed to happen. When compared to your masterpiece, all your other pieces will seem “inexpensive”.

When asked the price of your masterpiece, simply quote the price in a soft, unconcerned voice. Say, for example, “This piece is my largest. It is only \$8,000.” Most of your customers will yell, scream, and otherwise complain about the price. You can then mention that you have a slightly smaller piece for, say, only \$5,000. If this is still too much, you can continue going down in size and therefore in price. Each time you do so, make sure to spend a lot of time explaining the advantages that each size offers. Do not move to the next smaller size too fast. Take your time.

**9 – You must understand the 80/20 law:** The 80/20 law stipulates that 80% of your profits come from 20% of your efforts. Once you find out what those 20% are you can maximize your efforts in that one area.

To find what your 20% are you simply look at your sales receipts:

- Find out what brings you the most income for the least amount of work.
- Look at the income versus work ratio.
- Make a ratio for all the different products you sell.
- The product for which this ratio is the lowest is the one you need to focus on.

**10 – Know what your average sale is:** You calculate your average sale by taking your total income from sales and dividing it by the number of sales you made. The number of sales you made is the number of invoices you wrote. If an invoice has several items on it, it is still considered a single sale.

It is best to make this calculation over a one-year period because a relatively long time-span will give you a more accurate result. However, you may want to know what your average sale is for a specific show, or a specific time frame. If such is the case it is perfectly OK to do so. The goal is to increase your average sale as much as possible.

**11 – You need to find out where you fit in:** Where does your product fit price-wise among other similar products your customers are buying? Is it more expensive, less expensive? Is it on the low end or the high end of the scale?

You do not exist in a vacuum. People who buy from you also buy from other businesses. People who buy your product (photographs are a product) buy other products as well. Which of these other products fit in the same category of purchases as yours? Finding this out will enable you to price your work more accurately.

**12 – You must educate your audience as follows:**

- Most people cannot tell average photography from good photography, or good photography from very good photography
- Most people do not understand how art is priced
- Your audience relies on your marketing to help them decide whether or not to buy your work
- Your marketing must focus on, among other things, educating your audience about your work. Therefore, your marketing must explain:
  - » What makes your work unique
  - » Why your work is priced the way it is (quality, leverage, reputation, etc.)
  - » All other important aspects of your work

**13 – The price of your work is only one of many selling points:** When buying art, for many people the deciding factor is not price. Instead, it is one or more of the following considerations:

- Whether or not you can ship
- If your work will fit in their chosen location of their home
- If it is the right size
- If it is a landscape, whether they have been at the location depicted in the photograph
- If they are in love with the piece
- If the piece is available immediately or later
- The quality of the work
- The subject matter
- The colors
- The location
- The presentation (matting, framing, mounting)
- The personal style of the artist

- The uniqueness of the artist's style and of the subject matter
- The marketing approach used by the artist
- More ...

## Product Cost Calculation Forms

As we saw earlier, knowing exactly how much it costs you to produce a product is essential. To determine this, you must account for each and every item that you used in creating your product.

This information will be very useful when it comes to calculating the cost of your inventory at the end of the year. Your inventory cost is the money you have tied up in items stocked for resale. If you stock ten framed pieces, then you are stocking ten times the cost associated with all the parts that go into making this framed piece.

Shown below are three forms used to calculate your cost of goods. These are the same forms that Natalie and I use to calculate the cost of goods of my fine art pieces.

## Conclusion

Thinking about all the issues related to pricing your work takes us very far from creating photographs and enjoying the results in the privacy of our home. Certainly, if you decide to sell your work, you will have to wear two hats: that of a photographer and that of a businessperson. You will also have to schedule your activities so that you have time to market and sell your work as well as time to photograph and create new images.

So why should we bother with all this? In my case the underlying reason is two-fold. First, I want to make a living doing what I like. Second, I want to be in charge of my own destiny. Marketing and selling my work is the key to reaching these two goals, and I find doing this just as exciting as taking photographs.

## Skill Enhancement Exercises

**Exercise 1: The cost of doing business.** Being in business costs money. List all the things you have to buy or pay for as an artist in business; things that you would not have to buy or pay for if you were not in business. These include the supplies necessary to create your work (paper, ink, matboard, etc.). It also includes things that are in excess of the cost of supplies, such as rent, utilities, insurance, fees, etc.

**Exercise 2: Pricing.** Decide on a price for each of the products you decided you were going to sell after completing the Skill Enhancement Exercises at the end of Chapter 5: *What to Sell*.

Calculate these prices based on the information featured in this chapter. Finally, calculate both a retail and a wholesale price.

*Alain Briot – Beaux Arts Photography*

Product name: Framed Photograph

| Part Description                         | Cost each | Quantity x | Total cost for item |
|--|-----------|------------|---------------------|
| <b>1 – Costs of your materials:</b>      |           |            |                     |
| Paper                                    |           |            |                     |
| Ink                                      |           |            |                     |
| Mat board                                |           |            |                     |
| Mounting Tape                            |           |            |                     |
| Dry mounting supplies                    |           |            |                     |
| Frame                                    |           |            |                     |
| Glass                                    |           |            |                     |
| Screws                                   |           |            |                     |
| Wire                                     |           |            |                     |
| Paper Backing                            |           |            |                     |
| ATG Tape                                 |           |            |                     |
| Framing staples                          |           |            |                     |
| Print Label                              |           |            |                     |
| Other materials and supplies             |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>2 – Cost of your time:</b>            |           |            |                     |
| Number of hours spent creating product:  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>3 – Wholesale and Retail factors:</b> |           |            |                     |
| 2× Factor = minimum wholesale price      |           |            |                     |
| 4× Factor = minimum retail price         |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>4 – Leverage factor</b>               |           |            |                     |
| → Can be applied to retail & wholesale   |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>5 – Final wholesale price</b>         |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>6 – Final retail price</b>            |           |            |                     |

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 Full-sized downloadable forms and documents may be found at [www.beautiful-landscape.com/Briot\\_Marketing.html](http://www.beautiful-landscape.com/Briot_Marketing.html)

*Alain Briot – Beaux Arts Photography*

Product name: Poster (also applies to DVD)

| Part Description                                 | Cost each | Quantity x | Total cost for item |
|--|-----------|------------|---------------------|
| <b>1 – Design costs</b>                          |           |            |                     |
| Layout/design (if done by hired designer)        |           |            |                     |
| Layout/design (if done by you)                   |           |            |                     |
| =Number of hours spent creating product:         |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>2 – Poster costs</b>                          |           |            |                     |
| Total cost for print run                         |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>3 – Shipping costs</b>                        |           |            |                     |
| For shipping files from you to printer           |           |            |                     |
| For shipping posters from printer to you         |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>4 – Other supplies or expenses</b>            |           |            |                     |
| (if applicable)                                  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>5 – Total all costs above</b>                 |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>6 – Divide this total by the # of posters</b> |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>7 – Wholesale and Retail factors:</b>         |           |            |                     |
| 2× Factor = minimum wholesale price              |           |            |                     |
| 4× Factor = minimum retail price                 |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>8 – Leverage factor</b>                       |           |            |                     |
| → Can be applied to retail & wholesale           |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>9 – Final wholesale price:</b>                |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>10 – Final Retail price:</b>                  |           |            |                     |

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*Alain Briot – Beaux Arts Photography*

Product name: .....

| Part Description                         | Cost each | Quantity x | Total cost for item |
|--|-----------|------------|---------------------|
| <b>1 – Cost of your materials:</b>       |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>2 – Cost of your time:</b>            |           |            |                     |
| Number of hours spent creating product:  |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>3 – Wholesale and Retail factors:</b> |           |            |                     |
| 2x Factor = minimum wholesale price      |           |            |                     |
| 4x Factor = minimum retail price         |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>4 – Leverage factor</b>               |           |            |                     |
| → Can be applied to retail & wholesale   |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>5 – Final wholesale price:</b>        |           |            |                     |
|  |           |            |                     |
| <b>6 – Final Retail price:</b>           |           |            |                     |

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# Chapter 8

## Best Sellers

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Having a best seller is a goal for many photographers who are selling their work. In a way, a best seller is a guarantee that a specific image will bring a regular income over a long period of time. Having a best seller is therefore an important business asset.

Creating a best seller is a somewhat mysterious process with no hard and fast rule regarding how to do this. Often, it is somewhat of a surprise when a specific image turns out to be a best seller. And, just as often, images that we expect to become best sellers turn out not to be very popular with buyers.

However, there are a number of things that can be said about creating best-selling images. For example, there are specific types of images, locations, colors, print types, and more, that are known to sell particularly well. There is also a specific approach that you can follow to increase your chances of creating best-selling images.

In this chapter I will go through all of these points, starting with a description of the process I recommend to create best sellers and continuing with a list of best-selling subjects, print types, colors, etc.

### Two Main Approaches to Creating Best Sellers

Creating a best seller does not have to be a conscious goal. You have, in this matter, two possible options open to you.

First, you can set out to create a best seller by following the advice in this chapter. If you do, chances are high that you will indeed create one best-selling image, or an entire collection. However, you will also create work that, to some extent, is somewhat cliché because you are following a recipe. There is no way around this.

Second, you can set out to create work that pleases you, regardless of what anyone else says or thinks, and not take into consideration any of the recommendations in this chapter. In this case you will be creating work that is uniquely yours—work that is personal and is motivated by your inner desire to express yourself and share with the world what you see in your mind's eye. The result, if you follow this approach to its full potential, will be work that has not been seen before, work that is new and that may not fall into the lists of best-selling techniques and subjects provided here.

Which of these two approaches you decide to follow is up to you. Personally, I have followed both. I started with the first option, creating best sellers purposefully, and I have been very successful with it. It did take me a number of years of trial and error, but I eventually created an image that sold extremely well at Grand Canyon National Park. Sales from that image alone, in a number of different sizes and presentations, over a period of several years, amounted to enough money to allow me to buy my first house with cash. I chose this image, titled *Yavapai Dusk*, as the cover image of this book because of its relevance to the topic of marketing fine art photography. It played an important role in my career and it is safe to say that without this one image I would not be where I am today. To this day this image is displayed prominently in my house, and is enjoyed by friends and visitors.

If you do decide to follow the second approach—that is, to follow your heart and create images that are meaningful to you regardless of their selling potential—I recommend you study my two previous books, in particular *Mastering Photographic Composition, Creativity and Personal Style*, which focuses on the development of a personal style and gives you all the information necessary to do so.

## The Best Seller Creation Process

Let us now look at the process of creating a best seller on purpose. Let's say I photographed the Grand Canyon for a week with the definite goal of bringing back a best-selling photograph of it.

Setting such a goal is the key to success because once this goal is defined everything I do will be aimed at reaching it. If I did not set this specific goal, chances are I would get sidetracked into photographing things that are interesting, pretty, or unique but that have no chance of becoming best sellers.

Think of creating a best seller as being an assignment. You may not be working for an editor who is giving you this assignment, however, you can give this assignment to yourself. Doing so will immediately focus your efforts and give you a clear understanding of what you are looking for when photographing and, later, when editing your work and deciding which images you are going to keep.

Setting a specific assignment for yourself will also give meaning to your endeavor and provide you with a benchmark against which you can compare your results. There is nothing as effective as setting a goal beforehand to let you know whether or not you reached this goal when you look at the results!

In this example my self-assigned task is to create a best-selling image of the Grand Canyon. When my photography trip is completed and I return to my studio the first thing I do is edit my photographs by searching for those that come closest to the goal. Of course, there is some guesswork involved; but having this goal in mind definitely enables me to make a selection right

*There is nothing as effective as setting a goal beforehand to let you know whether or not you reached this goal when you look at the results!*

away. As in many things in life, starting with a goal in mind guarantees better results in the future.

When editing photographs with the goal of finding a best seller, I select the images that I believe will be popular with my audience. Being involved in photography as a business the way I am has given me the experience of knowing, to a certain extent, which images will be popular with my buying audience. This is certainly a big help when looking for best sellers.

## A Gradual, Multi-stage Process

Of course, finding images that I think will become popular is not my only objective. I also look for images that are free of technical problems, have a strong composition, and have a unique light quality, among other things.

The selection process is a multi-stage process. In my case, I no longer rely only on my own judgment, as I know that I am too emotionally involved with my work to be objective about its selling potential. I know that I like certain images for reasons that have nothing to do with the visual content of these images.

Let me give you two examples using images that have become worldwide best sellers. The first of these two images is *Yavapai Dusk*, the photograph that I mentioned previously and which I often describe as having “paid for my house.” If it had been my call, this photograph would never have been printed. Let me explain.

When I created *Yavapai Dusk* my goal was to create a best-selling photograph of the Grand Canyon. Armed with this goal in mind I scouted a suitable location for several days. I finally decided on Yavapai Point because it provides some of the most stunning views of the Grand Canyon from the South Rim. It also shows the Grand Canyon the way the majority of visitors see it.

The composition I selected involved using a small pinion pine whose appearance had been shaped by living on the canyon edge, exposed to brutal winds, merciless freezing conditions in winter and dire heat in summer. This, added to the nearly total lack of topsoil from which to derive nourishment, created a shape that only a bonsai master could improve on.

I had worked out a composition, lens selection, and camera position over an entire day. The main problem was getting both the pinion pine, which stood only a few feet away from the camera, and the canyon itself perfectly sharp while using a short telephoto lens to emphasize the size of the tree and the distant formations in the Grand Canyon. Once this was done I had to wait for the perfect light, which in this specific instance happened just prior to sunset and only lasted a few minutes. I also had to be there at a specific time of the year when the position of the sun is such that the mesas behind the pinion pine are in direct light while the tree itself is in the shade. My carefully designed plan of action for this image worked perfectly. Reassured that I had

the image on film, I relaxed and considered the possibility of creating a second image. However, the sun was minutes away from setting and if I were to do a second composition, I had to work very quickly.

In front of me the canyon turned orange, then red, then crimson—a color that I had never seen before. I set up my camera right along the canyon's rim to capture as much of this color as possible. I had no choice but to include part of a large pinion pine on the right side of the image. I did not change the lens, for lack of time, and focused the photograph almost intuitively. I adjusted the exposure to account for the fading light level, closed the lens, inserted the film holder, and released the shutter. I turned the film holder around and took a second photograph as the sun started to fade. As it would turn out, only the first exposure showed the crimson color. By the time I took the second exposure it was already too late and the color was gone.

When I received my film back from the lab I had all but forgotten about this second image. I reviewed the film to see if I had captured the one I worked so hard at creating and I saw that I succeeded. I had not only a vertical version of this image but also a horizontal, both perfectly sharp and well exposed. I took only a passing glance at the second image I created that day and focused instead on creating a 40×50 print of *Yavapai Tree*.

An intended best seller is only a best seller if people buy it. In the case of *Yavapai Tree* the public's response was not what I expected. It's not that people didn't like it. They did. They just didn't like it as much as I liked it. It sold well, but it was not a runaway success. Why? It's hard to say. If I knew, I would be creating best sellers everyday! I think it was essentially because customers saw the tree, which to me was an artistic element, as obscuring part of the canyon, so that the Grand Canyon was not shown as much as it could have been. People wanted to see the Grand Canyon, not a tree in front of the Grand Canyon. The fact that the tree had a uniquely artistic shape was not doing it for them.

In my quest to find the best seller I was seeking, I went back to my film file and took a second look at the images I had taken that fateful day at the Grand Canyon. I had only created three images: a horizontal and a vertical composition of *Yavapai Tree* and the horizontal image that I now call *Yavapai Dusk*. I had tried to sell both the vertical and the horizontal versions of *Yavapai Tree* with limited success. If there was a best seller in this shoot, what I had to do was quite simple: I needed to print, mat, and frame the third image and see what would happen in regard to sales.

I honestly expected that this third image would suffer a worse fate in terms of sales than the two others. I was little prepared for what was to take place. We sold out of every size, both matted and framed, of *Yavapai Dusk* on the first day of a seven-day show. We were left to contemplate how much better we could have done if we had brought an inventory sufficient to last the whole show. At the next show we brought a much larger inventory of *Yavapai Dusk*, one that we believed would carry us through, yet we found our stock depleted, in all sizes framed and unframed, after only three days.

It took us four shows until we brought a stock of *Yavapai Dusk* large enough to last us a week. Even then, we would run out of certain sizes, as well as of matted and framed versions, no matter how many we brought. Until we stopped selling at this particular show, we were unable to carry enough inventory of this specific image to see us through an entire one-week show. We were facing a production as well as a carrying-capability problem. We could only make so many in the time we had available between two shows and we could only carry so many in the space we had available in our vehicles. I know it is hard to believe and I know that it is a good problem to have. However it was a serious problem and we needed to find a solution.

The only viable solution was to offer certain sizes on a “ship only” basis to make sure we had a display piece available for the entire show. “Ship only” pieces are pieces that are displayed and sold but that customers cannot carry away with them. Instead, these pieces are shipped to customers. We did this to make sure that we had these pieces on display for the entire show. Once back home we would print, mat, frame, and ship however many pieces of that framed size we had sold. We would then prepare for the next show and do it all over again.

## Involve Other People in the Selection Process

The above example shows how difficult it can be to select the best images from a shoot. Eventually, once you have reduced the images to those that are technically perfect, it all boils down to a matter of taste. Therefore, unless your goal is to please yourself and nobody else, it makes complete sense to have other people help you make the final selection, or at least give you their advice.

In my case I often ask Natalie, my wife, for her opinion. While she is often present when I photograph, she does not look at the photographs from the same perspective. She looks at them from a more audience-based perspective. Without her advice I would not have printed several images that have become best sellers. For this reason I strongly recommend that you have your spouse, significant other, friends, or relatives, look at your work and give you their opinion. The goal is not to have them critique your work. The goal is to find out which images they like and which images have the potential of becoming best sellers.

## What Makes a Best Seller?

Is there any way to actually tell if an image will become a best seller? With over 20 years of experience behind me, and with tens of thousands of images sold, I have enough knowledge of what makes a photograph popular to make

an educated guess about which ones have a chance of becoming best sellers. However, both good and bad surprises are common. Often, what I think will sell well doesn't and what I think will not sell becomes popular. The variables are many and include not only what your photograph depicts, its technical qualities, and the way it is presented but also, and sometimes mostly, what your customers are looking for at a given time.

A variety of factors contribute to the creation of best-selling images. Often, as we will see, it is not a single factor that makes a photograph a best seller. Instead, it is the sum of several different factors that, when combined in a single image, add up to make the image irresistible and something that people feel they have to have.

### Print Types that Sell Best

- › High contrast photographs
- › Highly saturated photographs
- › High contrast and highly saturated photographs
  - › People love the combination of high contrast and high saturation!
  - › This explains why Velvia photographs printed on Cibachrome sold so well in film days.
  - › Today this look can be easily created in Photoshop.

### Colors that Sell Best

- › Reds in cold climates and just about everywhere else
  - › Red is the least common color in nature.
  - › Red is the color people are most attracted to.
- › Blues in warm and in dry climates such as deserts
  - › Blues make the viewer think of water and metaphorically give a feeling of coolness.
  - › Photographs with blue waters are very popular (see waterfalls, below).
- › Fashionable or “trendy” colors
  - › Your photographs may sell because their colors match the proverbial couch, in other words the color scheme of the buyer's home décor.

## Subjects that Sell Best

- Popular and famous locations
  - » Photographs of popular locations in the area where you are selling sell well.
  - » Find out what the most popular areas are, photograph them, and have these photographs available during shows or in stores in that area.
  - » Your “locations collection” can be adapted to the different areas where you do shows, or sell in stores, by changing which collections you show at the different shows or stores, and by always focusing on local scenery.
  - » What sells well in one location may not sell well, or at all, in another location. For example, Paris photographs did not do well at all at the Grand Canyon because people wanted photographs of the Grand Canyon, not photographs of other locations.
  - » Understandably, people want to purchase images of the location they are visiting. How well your photograph depicts this location is the key to its success. People often want a photograph that shows the location the way they saw it. For this reason “creative” or “artistic” photographs do not always sell well.
  
- Flowers
  - » Flowers sell very well and never fall out of fashion.
  - » Irises are particularly popular. You cannot go wrong with irises!
  - » Photograph just the flowers and nothing else.
  - » Working in a studio makes things easier. You have no wind, you control the lighting, and you control all the other variables.
  - » Use a plain background, such as a black cloth or other solid color, to simplify the image.
  - » Think of this process as creating “flowerscapes.”
  
- Photographs related to a specific activity
  - » The activity must be practiced by the audience you are targeting. For example, a golf audience will be interested in golf courses from all over the world. Having such a collection and making sure it features the most popular and challenging courses and holes is guaranteed to be successful. You just need to find shows that golfers attend and sell your work there. The Pro Shops on the golf courses may also be interested in carrying your work.
  - » In such a case, be sure to get permission before taking photographs because you will be photographing private property. You will also need the owner’s permission to sell the photographs.

- » The same approach can be used with just about any activity.
  - » Skiing
  - » Car racing
  - » Snowboarding
  - » Mountain biking
  - » Mountain climbing
  - » You name it!
  
- » Slot canyons
  - » The polished and flowing shapes found in slot canyons fascinate people.
  - » The color saturation and the unique light quality also fascinates people.
  - » It is a semi-abstract type of scenery and it works very well as wall décor.
  - » The endless possible interpretations of slot canyon images leave room for the viewer's imagination and makes the image a subject of conversation.
  
- » Horses
  - » Horses running, herds galloping, etc.
  - » Horses portraits.
  - » There are many people who love horses and/or who have a horse.
  - » Because horses are difficult to photograph, people who like horses look for professional images to display in their home or office.
  
- » Photographs featuring water scenes (waterfalls, seascapes, lakes, ponds, etc.).
  - » These are popular to decorate washrooms, bathrooms, laundry rooms, etc.
  - » Because water scenes are soothing, they also sell well to decorate other locations in homes and offices (see the section on blue colors above).
  - » Water is also the source of life and it is beautiful to look at.
  
- » Subjects that are uncommon or difficult to photograph
  - » Night photography.
  - » Night photographs with artificial light added.
  - » Star trails and star fields.
  - » Horses, as we saw previously.
  - » Underwater scenes.
  - » Any subject that people love but have been unable to capture themselves in photographs.

- › Exotic destinations
  - » The specific destinations are subject to trends, fashion, and news.
  - » In Europe, the most popular countries are:
    - » France
    - » Greece
    - » Italy (Tuscany, primarily)
    - » England
  - » Typical village scenes are particularly popular.
    - » They create a nostalgic and exotic feeling.
    - » They complement home décor trends, such as Italian or French.
    - » They show things and places like they were in the past.
    - » The most successful images are those that have a romantic feel to them.
    - » Images need to be devoid of modern devices (cars, modern appliances, etc.).
    - » Images sell best when they show pre-industrial age scenes, which means farming scenes, fields, farming village, farmer's markets, etc.
  
- › Reflections
  - » Reflections are beautiful and have an intriguing quality.
  - » People do not know how to photograph reflections.
  - » People also do not notice reflections in the real world.
  - » Photographs showing only reflections are popular. These are images in which no other part of the landscape is shown.
  - » Photographs showing both the subject and its reflections also work great.
  
- › Single trees shown alone and centered in the landscape
  - » You cannot go wrong with photographs of single trees!
  - » They sell well just about every time.
  - » They have a metaphorical quality that talks about loneliness and strength.
  - » They touch something deep within us and have a lot of meaning to many people.
  - » Always photograph single trees when you see them!

### Photographic Formats that Sell Best

- ▶ Horizontal panoramic photographs
  - » These were uncommon and hard to find until recently.
  - » They fit conveniently over a couch, a bed, or over any furniture where the wall space is wider than it is tall.
  
- ▶ Vertical panoramic photographs
  - » They fit in tall narrow places such as at the end of a hallway, on pillars between rooms, in stairways, and in entryways.
  
- ▶ Very large photographs
  - » These were uncommon and hard to find until the advent of large format inkjet printers.
  - » Many people still think that only top-of-the-line photographers can make huge size prints.
  - » Large photographs are necessary to decorate very large spaces and walls.
  - » Contemporary homes often have large wall spaces.
  
- ▶ Small photographs
  - » There is also a need for smaller size photographs to decorate intimate areas.

### Framing and Mounting Styles that Sell Best

- ▶ Photographs printed on canvas and stretched on stretcher bars
  - » When printed on canvas photographs look like paintings. This increases the perceived value of the photograph. It also places the photograph at a price point comparable to paintings. This means you can sell the photograph for a higher price. Limiting the edition through numbering further increases the perceived value. The photograph does not need to be framed because people love the simple look of an unframed stretched canvas.
  - » A gallery wrap presentation can be used. This means printing the image larger so it is extended to the edges of the canvas. This presentation can make a canvas print an even better best seller.
  
- ▶ Photographs framed in very wide frames
  - » A wide frame is a frame anywhere from 5" wide and up. This presentation gives a powerful and gutsy presence to the piece. Most people are not used to seeing photographs framed with very large frames.

- » The frames are almost always wood. The wood can be left natural or painted black or some other color.
- » This presentation dramatically increases the perceived value of the photograph.
- » Photographs framed without glass
  - » The photograph can be dry mounted on various supports, such as aluminum, wood, Gatorboard, plexiglass, etc. When no glass is used the photograph needs to be laminated to prevent damage to the print surface.
  - » Or the photograph can be adhered under optical-quality plexiglass. This adds shine to the image and increases contrast. This is a relatively new process, and customers are often not familiar with it and are not sure how it is done. There is a sort of “mystery” regarding how the print is mounted. The process is seen as being “exotic” and this increases both interest and demand.
  - » The lack of frame gives a very contemporary look to the piece and focuses the viewer’s attention on the photograph rather than on the frame.
- » Photographs matted in canvas-covered mats
  - » This presentation is not seen often by customers and has an uncommon yet classical and refined quality.
- » Photographs matted in black, canvas-covered mats
  - » This presentation also has an uncommon quality. The interest is the dramatic presentation created by using a wide black canvas mat. A white mats offer a quiet presentation while a black mat creates a dramatic presentation by drawing the viewer’s attention to the image.
  - » Black also increases the perceived color saturation of photograph. This creates a powerful presentation guaranteed to generate maximum impact.
  - » A black mat makes the photograph look brighter than a white mat and also isolates the image from its surrounding in a dramatic manner. Therefore, the image stands out more than when matted in white.
- » Photographs matted in decorated mats
  - » These are popular with an audience looking for decorative rather than fine art pieces. They can be customized for different geographical areas. Simply use décor items related to the cultural and natural items found in that area.
  - » See example at the end of this chapter.

- Triptychs and other multi-image presentation
  - Several images matted, framed, or mounted together sell very well. Triptychs—three photographs matted or framed together—are the most popular presentation.
  - An excellent approach is to select photographs with a similar theme, such as three photographs of rainbows. Or three photographs of horses, flowers, slot canyons, moonrises, lightning, etc.
  - See example below.

### Where Photographs for Décor Can Sell

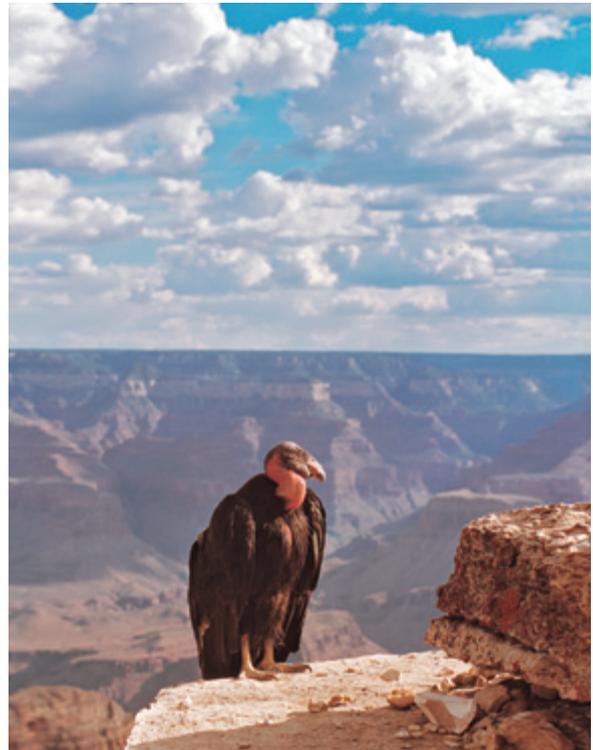
- Home décor
  - Keep in mind that all rooms in a house can be decorated with photographs, not just the main living areas. People will buy photographs for a hallway, a laundry room, etc. Even walk-in closets can be decorated with photographs.
  - Do not forget the garage! Car photographs sell well for garages.
- Workplace and corporate decor
  - Boardrooms, hallways, bathrooms, waiting rooms, and private offices all need wall décor. You can create specific photographs with a “corporate feel” for these locations.
- You can sell photographs to decorate a wide variety of locations
  - Do not rule out any location. I have even sold photographs to decorate RVs!

## Best Seller Examples



**The next best seller?** – In photography, as in other marketing endeavors, one always tries to secure a best seller. What makes people tick, or in this case reach for their wallets, is always elusive. To continue photographing in hope of capturing the one that will make it all worthwhile generates motivation.

**Condor, Grand Canyon National Park, South Rim** – In the search for best sellers, rare, uncommon, or newsworthy subjects can be valuable additions to your photographic collection. Condors were recently re-introduced to Grand Canyon National Park and this event has generated a lot of media coverage. Visitors want to bring back photographs of this elusive raptor, and if you have the goods you may be in business.



**Vertical panorama of Antelope Light Dance –**

Vertical panoramas have become popular items because they fit in areas where no other format will fit. Here, a vertical panoramic version of *Antelope Light Dance* is exactly what is needed to fill the space between the window and the filing cabinet.

While this piece is not as impressive as the original 4x5 ratio version of this popular photograph, it does look very nice, especially when the larger version is not there to offer a direct comparison.

**Yavapai Dusk displayed in a home setting** – Sales from this image alone brought in enough money to allow me to pay for my first house in cash. I chose it as the cover image for this book because of its importance in the context of the book. It is safe to say that without this one image I would not be where I am today.





### Three Natural Phenomena triptych –

Sometimes a best seller is the result of a combination of elements. In this instance the framing, the matting, and the selection of photographs all combined to create a piece that literally “flew off the walls” when we sold our work at Grand Canyon National Park.

Capturing a lightning strike, a moonrise, and a rainbow is something challenging for many tourists. Framing them together as a triptych increases the excitement by displaying all three together. The best-selling format of the triptych itself adds another level of excitement to this piece. Finally, the Italian, burl-inlayed frame is a best-selling frame and the Southwestern mat decorations are also very popular.

With all these best-selling factors brought together in a single piece, it is no surprise that we could hardly keep these in stock! In fact, we ran out of these at just about every show.



**Navajo Mustangs in a home environment** – This photograph of running horses—a popular subject, as I explain in this chapter—is 75" wide. Yet, it barely covers the space over this sofa, which means it could be quite a bit larger and still not be too large. In today's homes, wall space is plentiful and large pieces are often required to fill large spaces.

If you cannot make the piece any larger, because of image resolution, printing capabilities, or some other constraint, you can always use a wide molding to make the piece bigger while keeping the print size the same. If this photograph WERE framed in a 6" wide molding, this piece would become 87" wide—a foot wider than it is now—and may work better as a wall display in this location.



**Burning Bush #3, Antelope Canyon, Arizona** – Visual metaphors can be very powerful. Relatively few people in the world have been to Antelope Canyon, where this image was created. However, the title points to a story known to many.

## Conclusion

Creating a best seller can be challenging, but once you succeed the rewards are certainly worth it. One of the main decisions you will have to make is whether to proceed by using the list above, or whether you prefer to follow your own inspiration and create a best seller that is truly representative of your vision and inspiration.

While the second approach is more difficult and will take more time to complete, it is, in my opinion, the better of the two. Not only will you prevent being blamed for “selling your soul,” you will also, potentially, be able to create a best seller that will outdo the salability of any “manufactured” best seller. Why? Because you will be the only one to have this image. Others will have to copy you and that is always difficult to do. In the arts, as in sports, it is easier to lead than to try to catch up.



# Marketing Fine Art Photography

Alain Briot

Many photographers have considered selling their work to make a profit and help defray the high costs of equipment. However, they often don't have the business and marketing knowledge required to successfully sell fine art photographs.

In *Marketing Fine Art Photography*, Alain Briot teaches you how to take control of the selling process and increase your profits. He offers practical, up-to-date and field-tested marketing techniques from the viewpoint of a fine art landscape photographer who earns a living from the sale of his prints. His approach is based on offering quality not quantity, and offering something unique rather than something that is mass-produced.

After a series of trials and errors, Briot devised a marketing system that allowed him to get out of

debt, pay for a state-of-the-art studio, and purchase his first home, all from the sale of his photography. He has taught fine art photography marketing to numerous students in seminars, through one-on-one consulting, and through his Marketing Mastery tutorial DVD.

Topics include:

- Defining fine art photography
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