

The Business of Art

By Barbara Miracle - 8/1/2007

George Gadson's early career gives him an advantage over many artists in prospering financially as well as artistically. Gadson was a banker three decades ago; after taking an art class as a lark in the early 1980s, he began a transition that now finds him making a living as a sculptor. His breakthrough came in 1995, when he received a commission for limited edition commemorative sculptures for Super Bowl XXIX.

Gadson says his business skills have been instrumental in his success. "I really try to approach my art from a business perspective. I think it's important for artists to learn these skills."

As communities realize the value of a thriving "creative class" to economic development and their overall quality of life, many are developing programs to help artists foster those business and entrepreneurial skills. Gadson was among the instructors at the Broward County Cultural Division's recent four-week "Artist as an Entrepreneur Institute." The institute's curriculum was developed by the Cleveland-based Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC).

Artist LeeAnna Yater says the program "helps everyone kind of see what they need to do."

Another part of helping artists succeed involves building connections between them and the business community. In May, the St. Petersburg-based Florida Craftsmen association helped put together a "Design-Build Dialogue" conference, which focused in part on potential links between artists and developers, real estate professionals and interior designers.

Artists learned that hotel and condo developers, for example, would be more willing to commission sculptural metalwork railings for a project if they knew artists are familiar with building safety codes and had the cash flow to produce the work on time.

The bottom line is the strong link between the health of an area's arts community and business development, says Kay Daly, business assistance manager for Pinellas County Economic Development. "Quality of life is a major economic factor."

Artist Aid

Broward County is launching a microloan program this fall for artists committed to a professional career. Artists can apply for up to \$5,000. The initiatives, which stem from Vision Broward, a 2004 economic and strategic planning blueprint developed by the county, also has resulted in the development of Sailboat Bend Artist Lofts, an affordable live-work space that will open this fall.

Links: For more information about the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, the Florida Craftsmen association and the Broward County Cultural Division, [Go To The Links Page.](#)