



Utrecht Art Supplies

Just for Fun: Dealing with Criticism



"Public Exhibition of a Picture" Joan Ferrer Miró 1888

One fact of life as an artist is unavoidable: if you show your work, people will express opinions about it. Most observations are positive, but some remarks can really shake your confidence. Learning to objectively process and deal with this feedback is essential to sustained success as a professional.

Criticism from instructors

This is the advice that will shape your work for years to come. In the relationship between art student and teacher, each has serious expectations from the other, and feelings can sometimes get hurt. When a trusted instructor makes a cutting remark, it's important to remember a few things:

- Your teacher genuinely wants you to succeed and improve.
- Your teacher has been where you are, and has had experiences you haven't yet encountered.
- Nobody's perfect- your teacher might be wrong.

Criticism from the Public

At the opening of an exhibition, there's a lot of chatter about the artwork- that's a good thing! Especially at a public opening, it shouldn't be surprising when a visitor occasionally expresses something negative about the show. Before you get defensive, remember that each person attending is an invited guest, and that by publicizing the show you asked them to look at your work. After taking each negative comment with a BIG grain of salt, a good response might be to say, "Wow, I never looked at my work that way when it was in my studio. It's great to get a different perspective!"

Criticism from the press

Reading a review of your work can be scary, exhilarating and humbling all at the same time. It's always worth the risk sending out press releases, even if a critic might publish something less than generous. If you do receive a mixed or bad review, as long as the story includes a photo of your art, visitors will form their own opinions regardless of the critic's position. Keep a clipping for your scrapbook and move on.

Criticism from your peers

Getting advice and opinions from your peers is so important that most artists actively seek it out. Other artists will look at your work from a perspective close to yours, but with subtle shades of difference that can reveal things you might have missed. Set ego aside and be prepared to seriously consider this feedback.

Learn from unfair criticism

There's no getting around the fact that some remarks are just malicious. While it's generally not worth wasting time on mean people, unfair critique, if nothing else, provides a skewed glimpse into the mind of people who don't want you to succeed.

Harsh criticism may have exactly zero influence on how you'll make art in the future, but it does give you some idea of the concepts, bias and baggage some people bring with them.

Defending against unfair criticism helps you develop a thick skin while sharpening your ability to communicate clearly about objectives and goals in art.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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