



ARE YOU READY TO EXPORT - Video Summary

Andrea Graham

Tip Two:

Diversify Your Practice

Your goal should be to spend as much time doing what you love and making enough money to satisfy yourself doing so. This is a balance but there are ways to stay within what you do and make money doing so. Diversity offers flexibility and allows you to accommodate the market to some degree and respond to a wider range of opportunities.

In my own international practice, I teach which takes many hours coordinating and planning but this has served as an excellent income stream. I did start locally, in schools, in private homes and community halls. Opportunities to teach abroad took time and hard work. While away teaching, I make use of a new place by building contacts, visiting museums and looking for further opportunities and inspiration.

I also make art for exhibitions in public galleries, Artist-Run Centres, University galleries and Museums. Payment for these may just cover my expenses and materials. These are not money makers. They do however fulfill me creatively, force me to make art to meet deadline and create continued interest in my work which feeds other opportunities such as lectures, teaching and commercial gallery interest. There are also my commercial galleries that I carefully balance so not to over commit with promises of inventory. One of these streams alone are not enough to sustain me, but combined it does.

A couple of years ago the Craft Ontario shop contacted me and asked if I could add one of a kind hand felted hats to what I was already creating for them. At first, I admit, I was annoyed because I make sculpture, not hats. I then reframed it in a way that not only made this palatable, but a fun proposition. I could create sculptures for the head for a fashion forward, high end market. I still find them fun to make and will continue to make then on a limited basis but under a different business name. This is an example of something I can compromise on because it will not overtake other areas of my work and it is on my own terms.

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Are you good at writing? Make use of those skills and write grants and proposals. Look into funded programs through local and provincial arts councils. Many of these are short term income generators that after some hard work can fund a few months of your own creative playtime or a trip to an international show. You may even be able to provide grant and proposal services to other artists building your own network along the way. Are your materials purchased wholesale? Can you create a small resell market? Be careful that these endeavors do not overtake your art time. Remember it is a balance and your goal is to spend as much time as you can doing what you love and not getting really good at the things we do not really want to be doing!