

Selling on the Blogosphere



Justin Clayton

Thirty-three-year-old Justin Clayton is a daily painter who, with the help of a daily blog, has sold more than 500 paintings online in less than two years. After completing each work, he posts an image of the work to his blog, which is then e-mailed to hundreds of registered blog subscribers.

Originally from California, where he studied painting, Clayton currently lives in the Austin, Texas area. His paintings have been featured in *USAToday*, *Food & Wine* magazine, *Domino* magazine, and the *Washington Post Express*.

Art Calendar Special Projects Editor Steve Yahn recently spoke with Clayton to find out how he's turned his blog into such a tremendous marketing tool.

ArtCalendar: How often do you make blog entries?

Clayton: About four to five times a week. When I started blogging, I posted about six days a week. The posts are usually a photo of my work with a link to a corresponding eBay auction. Occasionally I'll write something about the painting or some piece of news relating to my artwork.

ArtCalendar: What are the keys to success for an artist using a blog?

Clayton: I think it's a good idea to ask yourself what the main goal of your blog will be and stick to it. Do you want the blog to show your art to potential buyers? Or, is it a place where you talk about art history? Or, is it a blog where you critique art? Whatever the reason, make sure you are posting content that relates to your goal. Not that you can't get off track with your topics once in a while, but consistency will pay off by attracting certain kinds of readers.

ArtCalendar: Do you participate in a Daily Painters Web site, like DailyPainters.com?

Clayton: I'm not involved with that Web site, but I do associate with other groups of artists online. DailyPaintworks.com is one example. It's basically a group of 12 artist friends who got together to work toward a common

goal, that is, to sell their art online. It's a great way to share advertising costs and share experience with each other. It has been a very positive experience for me, and I think these kinds of groups can be worthwhile and beneficial to most artists.

ArtCalendar: What advice do you have for beginning bloggers?

Clayton: Don't get discouraged if your artwork isn't selling right away. It will take some time to get your name out there and develop a following. It's easy to get discouraged if you are comparing yourself to other artists who are selling well. The truth is that many of these artists have been blogging for months or years or have developed a following prior to setting up their blog.

ArtCalendar: What are the advantages of a blog over a Web site?

Clayton: First, search engines love blogs, meaning blogs generally show up quicker and higher in search rankings than do Web sites. Being listed in search engine results like Google will help you get your name out there to the world.

Second, a blog is geared for the sharing of information and is structured in a way that will help you build an interactive atmosphere. It is very easy to post photos, video and a myriad of other appealing components to your blog to make it interesting. You can also enable comments and invite others to



Far Left: *Salt Water Taffy*, oil on board, 5"x5"

Left: *Strawberry Papaya*, oil on board, 5"x5"

participate. These things provide more possibilities for sharing relevant content to attract readers.

ArtCalendar: I notice that visitors to your blog can get your blog entries delivered to them via e-mail. How important is this?

Clayton: Having a way for visitors to subscribe to my blog posts via e-mail has been very important, and I consider it key in being able to reach my collectors. It is a very convenient way for them to get the latest painting the moment I post it on my blog. The blog posts are emailed to them directly. From a marketing standpoint this is a great way of building an email list of potential buyers. Anyone serious about selling their artwork from their blog should have some sort of e-mail list in place.

ArtCalendar: Do blog templates include an e-mail feature, or is that something that needs to be set up after the fact?

Clayton: Most blog templates don't include this. You will have to add this feature. It is by far one of the most valuable things you can do for your blog outside of actually posting on your blog, so I would spend the necessary time to do it. There are a number of ways to go about setting up an e-mail list, but a simple and free way to do this is to use a "groups" Web site like Google Groups. Once you're setup with a group, you'll have a subscribe box you can put on your blog where people can subscribe to your blog.

ArtCalendar: How do you track results?

Clayton: I use a Web service called Google Analytics to get statistical information about my visitors. This is one of many online programs that can give you a good idea of what's going on in terms of people who are visiting. If you do a Web search for "Web site statistics," you'll see a variety of Web statistic services to choose from. Each program has instructions on how to install its tracking software on your blog. Some blogging platforms, like Wordpress.com, already have statistics software included in the setup and it's just a matter of clicking a button to turn it on.

ArtCalendar: Do you have any concerns about selling your artwork through the Internet over through a gallery?

Clayton: No, not really. Most people who buy my paintings pay through PayPal which handles the payments. I've been happy with them and feel comfortable with the way the transactions have been processed. PayPal offers buyer and seller protection which helps with any concerns that might arise. I think there will always be some amount of risk when you're buying or selling in general whether on the Internet or off the Internet. 🐞

If you'd like more information and helpful links, please see Justin Clayton's frequently asked questions page at www.justinpaintings.com/faq.html, or visit www.dailypaintings.blogspot.com.

CHECK OUT MORE AT  **ArtCalendar.com**

BLOG SETUP MADE EASY by Justin Clayton

A blog is fairly simple to set up, and you can be up and running in a couple of hours. To get set up, you'll first want to choose a blogging platform you are comfortable with. Each platform has its advantages and disadvantages so I'd suggest taking a look at a few to see which one suits your needs before committing to one.

Three popular platforms are Blogger.com, Wordpress.com and Typepad.com. I have blogs on both Blogger and Wordpress and would recommend either of those. If you're looking for a no-hassle setup, then Blogger is probably the best bet, as it requires the least amount of technical knowledge in my opinion.

Once you've made your choice, just go to the Web site, and sign up for a free account. There are also many free templates that you can choose from to change the look and feel of your blog. After you have chosen a template and entered some information about yourself, you're ready to start blogging.

You will also want to make sure that comments are turned on if you want to have people commenting on your blog posts.

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