

# artbizblog

for the business of being an artist

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Alyson B Stanfield

## 6 Be's of the Art Biz

by GUEST BLOGGER on AUGUST 14, 2011

I first met Mara Purl as a member of the Colorado Independent Publishers Association. I didn't think we had much in common. After all, I wrote about the art business and she wrote novels. We were both, though, focused on connecting with our people.

I recently heard Mara speak about her journey as a hyphenate (see below) and am delighted to be part of her blog tour for the September 1 release of her book, [What the Heart Knows](#). Miranda Jones, the central character in the book, is a fine artist.

- Alyson

Guest blogger: [Mara Purl](#)

An "artist" can refer very specifically to someone working in the fine arts. It can also be used in a broader sense to include anyone living and working as a creative professional. Following that definition, I'm a life-long artist. And in Los Angeles, I'm known as a "hyphenate", or someone who works in more than one discipline. So I'm a writer-performer-producer.


As a performer, I worked as an actress in theatre and on television, probably my best known role being "Darla Cook" on Days Of Our Lives.

As a producer, I created my own soap opera, but for radio. My original radio serial [Milford-Haven U.S.A.](#) became the first American radio drama ever licensed and broadcast by the BBC, and had 4.5 million listeners in the U.K.

As a writer, I've penned scores of teleplays, radio plays, and theatrical plays; worked as a professional journalist for several years; have written several non-fiction books. And now, I'm a novelist.



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The following are what I call the Be's in the Artist Biz.

## 1 Be Authentic

I was intrigued to discover that "author" and "authentic" share the same root word, which means "created by one's own hand."

It's important to study, and also to find and learn from mentors. I've been fortunate to study with great teachers and learn from extraordinary mentors. But ultimately, **the most important part of the artist's work is to listen to your own inner voice . . . listen hard and closely enough that it becomes louder than all others.**

In writing it's actually called "finding your voice." This becomes the most valuable aspect of your work, that which no one else can duplicate, that which you are here to authentically share.

## 2 Be Brave

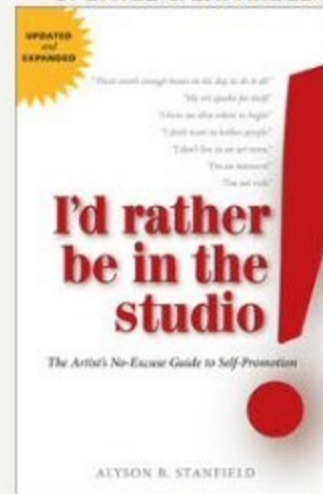
**There is no substitute for the raw courage required to be an artist.**

I can think of at least two moments in my life that required enough courage for me to leap over a chasm. One was quitting a secure day job.

The other took even more guts. I'd been invited by a radio station owner to create a show for him to broadcast. I outlined my show, a very early version of Milford-Haven, and sent him the first four scripts. But getting no response from him, I drove up to the town where his station was only to discover he had sold the station and was long gone. I, however, was not invested in my project. So I asked the new owners if they were interested. "No," they said, "We've been throwing away your scripts." I had to make an important decision on the spot. "What if I found sponsors?" I asked. "That would be different! Then we'd broadcast your show!"

I left the station knowing I now needed sponsors, but having no clue how to get them. So I started walking up and down the main street of the town, pitching my still non-existent show to store owners. And they bought sponsorships! If I'd stopped to think about what I was doing, I'd have gotten cold feet. Instead, I followed my heart. The word "courage" comes from the French word (*coeur*) for "heart"!

UPDATED & EXPANDED in 2011!



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Join me for any or all of these events.

Aug 10: Untitled Art Show 8pm live radio  
Aug 16: Fort Collins, CO Poudre Studio Artists 5-7pm book event + Q&A session  
Aug 31: Boulder, CO - Jerrie Hurd studio -  
RSVP only 5:30-7:30pm

### 3 Be Persistent

**I have now rewritten my first novel at least ten times.** Why? First, because I was transitioning from writing scripts to writing narrative voice, and had a lot to learn. But even after I basically knew the form, I continued to grow as a writer. I saw what I'd left out, saw character's moments of decision or trepidation, recognition or bafflement, and understood more clearly how to let my heart speak directly to my readers.

These ten rewrites and early editions have taken ten years. But what is time compared to realizing your heart's desire? Time is nothing but a tool to use wisely.

Another example I could share is about my publisher. I'd heard of the president of the company for some time, and read about his projects. From the first, I felt resonance with what he believed in and how he'd created his company. About two years later, I had an opportunity to meet him, and prepared carefully for my short time with him. But the meeting turned out to be even shorter than scheduled, because he stopped it abruptly by saying he couldn't work with me. Shocked, I asked why, and he said he felt I wasn't ready.

**I spent another two years learning everything I could about being ready . . .** interviewing mentors, researching my genre. At the end of the two years, a very special opportunity arose for me to meet with him again. In a few minutes, he offered me a contract and I'm now working with the ideal publisher for me and my books.

Oct 1-2: Bonemia, NY [workshop](#)

October 15-16: Golden, CO [Social Media Immersion](#)

October 26-27: Tulsa, OK [Oklahoma Arts Conference](#)

November 5: Philadelphia, PA [Social Media Immersion](#)



## 4 Be in Integrity

What I mean by that is discover your core purpose and see how and where you can connect every aspect of your work to that purpose. Declare your word. Then live up to your word.

As customers search for or encounter things they might want to buy, one thing in their minds and hearts is trust. Can they trust you? Can they trust your work? Is it derivative or truly original? Will it be worth their investment?



The visible part of this appears in the form of branding, a very important part of marketing. When my books are on display on a website or in a bookstore, my publisher, designers, marketing team and I work to create one impression, a recognizable brand.

We've chosen signature colors, fonts, and layouts for my covers. And the key to my branding are the original watercolors painted for me by renowned artist Mary Helsaple. Mary and I have worked together for several years and are closely aligned in our motives and aspirations. Starting with the line-drawings created for my radio drama, she is creating the watercolors that are the ultimate visual representation of my fictitious town, my story, and my brand.

**The invisible part of this quality of trustworthiness is tangible to the intuition.** If you are clear about your commitment to your work, and are living the word you've declared, your customers will know it.

## 5 Be the Experience

One key point where art and business must connect is "the recipient's experience." That recipient is called a "customer" from a business perspective, a "viewer" from a museum perspective, a "reader" from an author perspective, a "client" from a designer or decorator perspective.

**Whatever that recipient is called, to me it's all about that person's experience.**

I like to create for myself a "guided tour" of what my reader will experience when she (for me, it's mostly women, as I write Women's Fiction) encounters me or my book in any form whatsoever. So I work on this in all the ways I can think of, whether it's for this current blog tour, or a bookstore signing, one of my Milford-Haven Socie-Tea events, or a seminar for writers, a book festival panel or a package received in the mail.

## 6 Be Creative

This is obvious. We are creative, that's why we're artists!

What I mean by this is own your creativity, treasure it, and use it in all areas of your career, not just the core creative work itself. Be creative in your branding, in your approach to clients/readers/customer, and in your approach to balancing your creative and your business activities.

In a place like Kyoto, Japan, or Florence, Italy, you find yourself in a place that is already creative. For example, lunch is "good" if the presentation includes the perfect flavors, plate, utensils, window view, aromas, music, and ambience. These are all artistic considerations.

But in America, lunch is generally considered "good" if it's moderately nutritious and gets you back to your studio or desk in less than 90 minutes. So, in our culture, we have to rebalance our own space each day.

**Is your studio/ office a place that inspires you to work for hours at a time?**

Do you have a special location for reflection/ meditation/ quiet?

Do you take yourself on "artist dates" where you absorb something inspiring like hiking in nature, visiting a museum, or people-watching in a café?

Schedule these special times into your life to keep your own juices flowing.



### About Mara Purl

Mara is an actress-turned-writer-performer-producer. Her wildly successful radio show based on the fictional town of Milford-Haven has 4.5 million listeners in the United Kingdom. Her book, *What the Heart Knows*, will be released on September 1, 2011.



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