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THE ART OF MARKETING ART

By russ cooper

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In Canada, there are 140 000 professional artists with an average declared income of about \$22 000, precariously near the 2007 Statistics Canada low-income cut-off of \$21 666. As such, the rewarding but often unpredictable trade of art requires a bit more than a keen sense of creativity these days – it takes a serious approach and planning.



Students await the presenters at the Selling your Art conference.

On Feb. 6, well over 100 fine arts students packed EV 1.615 for the Marketing Yourself: Selling Your Art workshop for a chance to gain practical information about best ways to succeed in the world of art.

A co-presentation of Urbana Marketing and Art Matters, the format was simple: Invite real-world artists and marketers to share their experiences; get together with students and burgeoning artists; find out what it takes to make it.

After a short introduction from Julie Johnston of Art Matters and Ana

Marinescu of Urbana Marketing, the first presentation took a resolutely business approach. Drawing on the material from *Marketing Yourself*, the book based on their course, JMSB Lecturer and Academic Director of the Marketing Co-op Harold Simpkins and Associate Professor of Marketing Jordan LeBel deflated many longstanding myths about marketing and gave concrete advice on actions to take.

"For artists such as yourselves, the portfolio and the killer cover letter should be at the end of marketing yourself. It begins with setting goals and having a plan," said Simpkins.

Following a marketing plan, LeBel stated, doesn't mean you're 'painting by the



JMSB Professors Harold Simpkins (left) and Jordan LeBel.

numbers' or that creativity will be rendered inflexible.

"Sometimes not having a plan means an inability or lack of conviction to make tough decisions," he said. "We suggest you take the time to know yourself and what makes you happy. That way, you don't end up in a mid-life crisis."

While Simpkins and LeBel covered the pragmatic side of the afternoon's events, the conference also welcomed a recognized few from the artistic community to share their practical understanding of the business. Among the presenters were curator of Musée d'art contemporain Mark Lanctôt; Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers of Leisure Projects; the photographic portrait artists Sanchez Brothers, Jason and Carlos (both former Concordia students); and Donald Browne, owner of Donald Browne Gallery in the Belgo Building on Ste. Catherine St.

Culminating in a dynamic panel, the conference's presenters participated in a lively discussion to answer questions, share personal anecdotes and offer words of wisdom to those in attendance – a chance for a touch of timelessness, but ever the artists, many took it as a chance to express themselves and have some fun.

Said Mark Lanctôt: "If a tree falls in the forest, take a picture and show people."

Said Susannah Wesley: "Stay alert but stay relaxed."

Said Jason Sanchez: "Keep truckin'."

Art Matters will be held from Feb. 27 to March 15 at venues throughout Concordia and Montreal. For more info, visit artmatters.concordia.ca.

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1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., GM-606, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8, Canada

Telephone: +1.514.848.2424, ext. 4183

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