

Shmanners 269: Art Commissions

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Travis: Hey Teresa, did you know that Batman's friend, Jim Gordon, loves buying art?

Teresa: No.

Travis: That's why they call him the Commissioner! [makes popping sound]

Teresa: It's *Shmanners*.

[theme music plays]

Travis: [rushed] Hello internet, I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy!

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear. How are you?

Travis: That was such a bad joke, you know?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: Like, are you okay?

Travis: Like, I know! It's just such a bad joke. And, like, I thought of it 'cause I thought of the word commissioner, commi—and it makes so much se—

Teresa: It does.

Travis: —but it's bad. [strained] It's so bad! [laughs]

Teresa: I liked—I liked the little [makes popping sound].

Travis: [laughs] Well, when you know what you are. Um, yeah. Uh, and, you know, my tummy hurts a little bit. I don't know why.

Teresa: I'm sorry about that.

Travis: I'm just fine, I'm just old.

Teresa: Let me take your mind off of things.

Travis: Okay, please.

Teresa: Imagine, if you would, a world...

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: ... without art.

Travis: No? That—why—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: —is that supposed to make me feel better? I like art!

Teresa: No. No, just taking your mind off of it.

Travis: Yeah, but, like, usually when someone's like, "Hey. I wanna take your mind off it, by making you feel worse than you do now—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —that's not usually how that works!

Teresa: I wasn't trying to make you—

Travis: I thought you were gonna tell me, like, "Imagine a world with more art."

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: What I'm saying is, art has existed as long as people... and... s—stuff have existed.

Travis: As long as people and stuff.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We are off to just a banger start. Okay. So, art is good, is what you're telling me.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And people like it.

Teresa: And people make it.

Travis: People *make* it!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, first I wanna say thank you to all of the submissions for this. We had a lot of people suggest this topic. Um, I mean, in the internet age, it is possible to contact an artist from anywhere.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And commission a work. So this is something that the people, they want to know.

Travis: Well, and not just that. I would say with the advent of digital, uh, it has made—it has lowered the materials cost, and has made it easier to get the art to the person as well, you know?

You're not shipping, you know, a big canvas. You're not having to buy—so it

takes, uh, some computer know-how and some programs and skill, but you're not buying gesso.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Well, some people are still buying gesso.

Teresa: Some people are, still.

Travis: We used to buy gesso for the theater.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I know what gesso is. Don't act like I don't!

Teresa: I know you know.

Travis: Okay. So! Commissioning art began in 1956.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, we're not gonna start at the beginning, because it started at the beginning. We are gonna start—

Travis: The first time somebody said, "Hey, fellow caveman. Paint me that buffalo," or whatever.

Teresa: Yeah, basically.

Travis: "I like that buffalo and I wanna be able to look at it again when it's not around. Could you put it on something?"

Teresa: "I'll give you this handful of seeds and nuts if you give me that leather with a picture of the buffalo on it."

Travis: "'Cause I like that buffalo, dang it! I don't know why. Something about that buffalo makes me feel emotions!"

Teresa: Okay. So, we're gonna start in Rome.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, gigantic artworks were being commissioned to satisfy the ego of, you know, whoever was in charge, because the ruling class liked to pay people money to show off how much money they have.

Travis: Yeah, and not only that, you know, it—it was true a lot in, I don't know, going back to Egypt and then into Rome and Greece and then in England that not everybody could read?

So if you wanted to show off your exploits, if you wanted to broadcast the history of why you deserve to be in charge and how cool you are, visual representation of it was a much better way to broadcast that than written. And that's why there are so many paintings of, like, conquests and stuff, because you can look at it and understand it without having to be able to read.

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. And, I mean—

Travis: And I just know that off the top of my head. I don't have research in front of me! It's just a thing that I know.

Teresa: Art at this time period—

Travis: I don't know why my tummy ache has made me a little saucy.

Teresa: I don't know! Mmm, spicy.

Travis: I'll try to cool it down a little bit. I'll try to cool it down a little bit. I'm comin' in hot.

Teresa: Um, so at this time, we find that most of the artworks are, you know, to show off and tell those stories and things like that; not, like, art for art's sake.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, so for example the Emperor Nero commissioned—

Travis: Famous fiddler! That's probably apocryphal, isn't it?

Teresa: Prob—I don't know. I don't know if he really fiddled while Rome burned, but anyway.

Travis: I mean, it seems like a metaphor, right?

Teresa: It really does.

Travis: Yeah, of like, he didn't really do a lot to help. You get it.

Teresa: I get it. He commissioned a 103 foot statue of himself to sit outside his personal villa in Rome. Now, the Colossus of Nero no longer exists.

Travis: Why do you think it was 103?

Teresa: Well, maybe because somebody had one that was 100 feet tall.

Travis: Oh my goodness! You're absolutely correct. That's gotta be it, right?

Teresa: I'm sure that's it, right?

Travis: 'Cause there's no way you're like, "You know, [laughs] let's make it to scale."

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Uh, but, you know, we do have some very famous, quote, "artwork," commissioned by Emperor Vespasian.

Travis: Of course.

Teresa: The Colosseum.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: Right! It was a commissioned work of art, built to serve as an amphitheater for public spectacles like mock sea battles, animal hunts, executions, dramas, and of course, you know, that gladiator stuff.

Travis: Yeah, I've seen the movie.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. And we study the Colosseum today as a masterpiece in

ancient architecture, but it was very much at the time a display of power of the Empire.

Travis: Sure a lot of architecture is. I mean, think about pyramids, and a lot of, like, temples and stuff like that. Yeah.

Teresa: Absolutely. Um, and so moving on to the Renaissance—

Travis: [bad French accent] The Renaissance.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. It would be vastly different in the art world, were it not for the Medici family of Florence.

Travis: Because they commissioned a lot?

Teresa: Oh, yeah, they did.

Travis: Okay. Yeah yeah yeah! Okay, great.

Teresa: Um, basically—uh, so they were a family of enormously rich bankers. Um, think, like, the Iron Bank of Dorne.

Travis: [snorts] You mean like *Game of Thro*—

Teresa: From *Game of Thrones*!

Travis: I know it's *Game of Thrones*! But I know you don't [through laughter] watch *Game of Thrones*!

Teresa: I watch enough... clips of *Game of Thrones*—

Travis: There you go. Okay, great.

Teresa: —[laughs] to know what the Iron Bank of Dorne is.

Travis: Okay, great.

Teresa: Anyway, uh—

Travis: There's a show about the Medicis too, I think.

Teresa: Yeah, uhh...

Travis: I think it's—is it just called *Medici*?

Teresa: Is it?

Travis: I don't know. I also know I mostly, whenever I hear the name, I cannot not think of *Assassin's Creed II*.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: I always think of Catherine de' Medici.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Henry VIII's first wife.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: His brother's wife, before that.

Travis: Yeah. Okay, so they commissioned a bunch of stuff 'cause they was very rich.

Teresa: Absolutely, because they were rolling in dough! Uh, so if you think about most of the, like, fancy, famous Renaissance artwork, they probably commissioned it. Um, so, let's see. *Birth of Venus*, Donatello's *Bronze David*, Michelangelo's *Tomb of Lorenzo*. They commissioned work from practically every big name of the time. You know, Raphael, Leonardo—

Travis: Donatello. Michelangelo?

Teresa: [holding back laughter] Yeah! [laughs]

Travis: Leonardo? Are the Ninja Turtles!

Teresa: Every single one. Um—

Travis: Do you wanna know a fun fact I learned recently?

Teresa: What?

Travis: So, back in ancient Greece, it was believed that having a large member...

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: ... was a sign of a lack of intelligence.

Teresa: Oh! Because if you had so much down there, you didn't have as much up... stairs?

Travis: Uh, I think it was more like, you're not an ogre? Along those lines. But—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: —the important thing to note is it is the reason why so many statues from that time, and in the Greek ideal, are often depicted with smaller members, to indicate an ideal, to indicate intelligence and perfection in that way.

Teresa: Uh, so at this time, visual art is really, like, coming into its own. But also, you know, it wasn't just wealthy families that commissioned works of art. Political and religious institutions were hiring artists left and right to create things like... *The Last Supper*.

Travis: The Sistine Chapel!

Teresa: And the Sistine Chapel! That's right, yeah.

Travis: Okay. Phew!

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Can I show ignorance for a moment?

Teresa: Sure!

Travis: Which came first? The Dark Ages or the Renaissance?

Teresa: The Dark Ages came first.

Travis: Okay. So in the Dark Ages, that explains why. [laughs] Oh my God, I'm an idiot. So, there—a lot of the art is very two dimensional, right? And so, like, people say—and then in the Renaissance you get a lot more depth and you get a lot more—it seems like a huge leap forward.

Teresa: It's a more realistic visual style.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, and I think that it is now referred to as the Middle Ages.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Not the Dark Ages.

Travis: In the Middle Ages—one of my favorite things about Middle Age art is how bad everyone seemed to be at painting babies.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, there were reasons for that. This is a sidebar. Um, but—so really, the only babies that people painted were the infant Jesus, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But because of the doctrine of the time, Jesus was born fully man, right? Is the whole thing. Like, he's a full—he's full man, but also full God, but, like—all that kind of stuff, right? So you weren't allowed to draw him as an actual baby. You had to draw him as a baby-sized grown man.

Travis: [amused] Uh-huh? Love it.

Teresa: And that was, like—it was—that's the way that you did it, because that's what the Church said you should do.

Travis: And whether on purpose or inadvertently, I always feel like everyone else's face in the picture is usually depicted as you would expect [laughs] if you were looking a baby full-sized man.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, no doubt, uh, you are also familiar with the *Mona Lisa*.

Travis: I've heard of it, yes!

Teresa: Indeed. It's believed to be a commissioned portrait of an Italian noblewoman, uh, Lisa del Giocondo.

Travis: I was gonna be really upset if her name wasn't Lisa.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: It'd be really weird, right?

Teresa: That would be weird.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and the painting is studied at length, obvs, as one of the, you know, pinnacles of Renaissance art.

Travis: Well, it's a—listen. It's a really good painting. I don't know if you guys have seen it. It's, like, good. But it's not that big. You'd be surprised, 'cause people think it's big. It's not that big, but it's very good. It's—it's—you know what? I think more people would like it if they saw it. It's real—it's a really good...

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: Like, he was a good painter and stuff.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It was just—I'm just saying, like, I'm gonna go out on a limb here, and I don't care what anybody else thinks. I think the *Mona Lisa* is a good painting.

Teresa: Oh! Do you?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, the works of Da Vinci were so popular that King Francis I—

Travis: They wrote a series of books about him.

Teresa: [laughs] They—[snort-laughs] Can you let me get, like, one sentence out?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Thanks. So saucy!

Travis: It's—my tummy hurts.

Teresa: King Francis I of France arranged for him to come to France later in his life so that Da Vinci might die on French soil.

Travis: Ooh la la!

Teresa: And—

Travis: *Zut alors!*

Teresa: —the Louvre has the only *Mona Lisa* because King Francis was that much of a die-hard of a Da Vinci fanboy.

Travis: I see. Okay.

Teresa: So, here is an example of art commissions changing the course of history.

Travis: [gasps] I want—I can't wait to hear it. But first... how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

Teresa: Let's go.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Speaking of art, brushing your teeth! What's that, Travis? Seems pretty mechanical to me. Oh, is it? Because I think tooth brushing can be effective and beautiful! Just look at Quip's aesthetically pleasing line of tooth care equipment.

Teresa: That was a work of art. That whole—

Travis: Thank you very much!

Teresa: —that whole yarn. That tale you just told? I loved it.

Travis: Thank you very much! Because here's the thing. It's not just toothbrush and toothpaste. You got, uh—the floss dispenser is one of my favorites, 'cause it's little. It's got a little mirror in it, so you have the case right there. It's like a compact, so you can floss wherever you are, and it's all self-contained, right?

Teresa: And instead of using, like, three feet of floss, they've got this little special grabber thing, right?

Travis: You were using three feet of floss?

Teresa: Well, enough to, like—I'm not saying I was using three feet. But—

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: —you use a lot more floss, 'cause you gotta wrap it around your hands.

Travis: This is like those little picks, you know? But without all the waste of throwing away that much plastic over and over again.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: 'Cause you just dispense the little, like, what? Three inches of floss? You pick up new floss with the same handle. It's perfect. Plus, that mouthwash. You get—

Teresa: Oh, I like that mouthwash.

Travis: It's condensed, right? So it's just a little bit at a time. You mix it with water, tastes great.

Teresa: And it's pretty!

Travis: It's very pretty. So, go check it out, because along with the mouthwash, Quip also delivers fresh brush heads, floss, and toothpaste refills every three months from 5 dollars. Shipping is free, so you can save money and skip the hustle and bustle of in-store shopping.

And, if you go to getquip.com/shmanners right now, you can get 5 dollars off a mouthwash starter kit. That's 5 dollars off a mouthwash starter kit, which includes a refillable dispenser and a 90 dose supply of Quip's four-times concentrated formula at getquip.com/shmanners, spelled G-E-T-Q-U-I-P.com/shmanners. Quip! The good habits company.

Teresa: *Shmanners* is also sponsored in part this week by Brooklinen. Now, here's the thing. You want nice sheets, right?

Travis: Yes, I do!

Teresa: You sleep on there!

Travis: I do!

Teresa: I want it to be nice. And you know, if you want something really nice, sometimes you gotta pay a lot for it.

Travis: Oh no! I don't wanna pay a lot for something nice.

Teresa: That's where Brooklinen comes in!

Travis: [gasps loudly] Thank you, Brooklinen! Because Brooklinen works directly with manufacturers to make luxury available directly to you without the luxury level markups. So, you can get their amazing array of products at a reasonable price!

Teresa: Alright. Um, so they're so confident in their core products that they come with a 365 day warranty, and their fans are confident too, because they've received over 75,000 5-star reviews. Give yourself the comfort, refresh you deserve, and get it for less at Brooklinen. Go to [brooklinen](http://brooklinen.com)—

Travis: Have we said—it's, like, bedding and stu—sheets. It really—

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Okay, great.

Teresa: Yeah, 'cause I said you sleep on it.

Travis: That's true. Okay, great.

Teresa: On your sheets.

Travis: [holding back laughter] Go to brooklinen.com and use the promo code "shmanners" to get 20 dollars off with a minimum purchase of 100 dollars. That B-R-O-O-K-L-I-N-E-N.com and enter promo code "shmanners" for 20 dollars off with a minimum purchase of 100 dollars. One more time. Brooklinen.com, promo code "shmanners."

Okay, Teresa. How, oh how, did art commissions change the world?

Teresa: Okay. Well, so we were talking about how rich people, famous people, politicians, religious groups, commissioned art from people in order to display power or communicate something. Um, but here's one of the things that was commissioned to make a statement.

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*.

Travis: Ohh! I know this one, yes. I enjoy Picasso's work.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. So, the Spanish Republic government commissioned Pablo Picasso in January of 1937 to make something for the Paris World's Fair. Uh, Picasso wasn't, like, totally into it, and didn't really start painting until April 26th of that year, but that day is special because on that day the Spanish town of Guernica was mercilessly bombed by the Germans, who decided to try out their new aerial weaponry on the village of people. You know, Blitzkrieg bombings. Um, and during the two hour onslaught, almost a third of the residents were killed or wounded.

Uh, so Picasso took notice, right? And he was approached by the poet Juan Larrea, um, and begged Picasso to paint the bombing. Um, because it was such a historical event, right?

So, he wanted to, it's said, capture the feeling of the bomb, right? I mean, because Picasso's paintings are very abstract, right? Um, but it is so enormous, and it is very colorful, and it is just dripping with symbolism.

Travis: Yeah. Moving to look—if you've never seen it, like, even if you know nothing about what it's based on, it is one of the most thought-provoking pieces of art I've ever seen. Like, it just immediately gets your mind racing.

Teresa: The original hangs in the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, but there's also one at the United Nations Security Council in New York. Um, I mean, not the original. A reproduction, obviously.

So, Picasso, ehh, as a dude... I mean, he was a pretty bad dude.

Travis: Good—made good art.

Teresa: Made good art.

Travis: [uncertainly] Yeah.

Teresa: Uh—

Travis: Not that that excuses the bad behavior, let's be clear. The art is good.

Teresa: But *Guernica* transcends Picasso himself. I mean, it's just... it's amazing. Here's another one, a very powerful art commission piece found in Dublin. Um, most people are aware of the Great Hunger, which is also known as the Potato Famine.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: And a person named Norma Smurfit commissioned Dublin sculptor Rowan Gillespie to create a piece called *Famine* as a monument to Ireland's painful history.

Um, it was unveiled in 1997. It is haunting, really. Uh, there are people who are obviously stricken with famine, um—

Travis: Oh, boy. Yeah, I hadn't seen this before and I just pulled it up. Aw, man! Haunting.

Teresa: Thin—thin and gaunt, and different expressions of hunger, despair, and some with determination.

Travis: And it's—it's, like, out in the open, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It is a statue set, right? That is, like, among the people, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So it's—it's right there. It's very—"in your face" is such a trite term, but it is, you know? It's very, very cool.

Teresa: You can walk amongst it.

Travis: Yeah. And feel like you are one of them.

Teresa: Um, and so it's so popular that cities of Toronto and Boston each commissioned Gillespie to make sister sculptures in their cities to honor their Irish heritage.

Travis: Hm!

Teresa: And so no matter what the medium, it is clear that art commission has had an enormous impact on history and culture and society as a whole. And in general, artists rely on patrons' support, and with that, they've been able to document historical figures, develop new techniques, influence artist movements, and bring about political and social change.

Um, and, I mean, the cool thing today is you don't need to be a queen, right? Or a celebrity or a government official, to have your own special piece.

Travis: No. Sometimes you just need, like, reward things for your Twitch channel—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and you can commission people to do stuff, or you might need a tour

poster for a *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* live show, and you can commission stuff from people.

Teresa: That's right, and you should always pay people.

Travis: Pay people for their work.

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: It's very, very important.

Okay, so we've got some questions...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... that I think maybe we might be able to help with. What do you say we answer those questions?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: This is from Jeannette. Jeannette asks:

"I'm still pretty new at selling art commissions and I want to know what I should include in the package with my customer's order. I've seen everything from just receipts and business cards to small gifts like stickers and candy. Should I also add personalized notes?"

Teresa: Um, I think that anything you can do to make your connection with the person who is buying your art is a good idea. Um, let me instead tell you a few things not to pack.

Travis: Glitter!

Teresa: Right. Uh, glitter, confetti, um, what else? Like, little things—like, candies that are easily pulverized, right?

Travis: Yeah, or meltable.

Teresa: Or meltable. Don't pack any of that stuff. Um—

Travis: You know, I would say—you mentioned personalized notes, and if that's something that you are comfortable doing, I think that that's great, 'cause it doesn't add a lot of extra expense, um, while having—you know, I buy a lot of stuff off of Etsy, and having—just even if it's just like a "Hey, thank you so much!" And the person's signed name, it's a much different feeling, you know, than buying something from, like, a chain store or buying something online.

You know, that kind of thing. Of saying, like, "A human being made this thing, put it in this box, and sent it to me." It feels special. You know what I mean?

Teresa: I agree.

Travis: I would caution against going too overboard and adding so much expense that it's costing you a lot of money to include those personal things.

Um, this comes from Carrohan, @Carrohan.

"Is there a right/wrong way to ask for changes in a piece you've commissioned, during the phase of work where it's appropriate to do so? I know artists want feedback, but I'm always scared I'll word it wrong or ask too much."

Teresa: I think that the thing—when someone is being paid to make art, they want to get paid for something they like—that the person likes. Does that make sense?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So is there such a thing as too much feedback? I think if it goes into, uh, changing the artist's style, yeah.

Travis: Right, yeah.

Teresa: You should've picked somebody else, right?

Travis: That's why it is important to research ahead of time to make sure that the artist that you are commissioning matches the style you are looking for.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Um, I—

Teresa: Um, so don't—I wouldn't say to—if someone is very cartoonish in their style, they're very exaggerated, asking them to make something that's hyperrealistic is probably not a good idea, right? That's not the kind of feedback that you should share. That is a "Thank you so much, but I have decided my interests lay elsewhere." [laughs] Right?

Travis: Yeah. I also highly recommend being careful in your feedback. So, a couple things that you can do to make your feedback better, right? One is, be clear in it, right? Being direct about what you're looking for is not rude. Right?

And I think talking around it too much, like "You know, and I—and I think it might be—" will just muddy the water and make it very confusing. If you can say very specific things and not general, like "I don't know, I was hoping it would feel happier," or whatever. What's that mean, right?

But if you can say, like, "I think the facial expression is a little bit too much like this," or "I think the colors are a little too dark," right? Actionable feedback rather than, "I don't know, it's just not working."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Where that's not very actionable. And also be careful not to give conflicting pieces. Like, you know, "I—I think it's too dark right now. Is there any way to use more grays and pur—" or whatever. It's like, well, that's not helping.

Um, and also, you know, make sure ahead of time that before the project starts, that you've communicated as clearly as you can what it is you're looking for.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Um, and not just saying, like, "I trust you. Do whatever you want." And then it comes back and was like, "Well, I don't know. I don't like that."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "I don't like what you did." Um, this is from True Jack who asks:

"What if a piece is more difficult or takes longer than you expect?"

Teresa: I think this actually—I'm not quite sure what side this question is meant for. I mean, if you are the artist and a piece is more difficult or takes longer, I think that, um, communication is key, right? So letting the purchaser know about any extra expenses or, you know, "I thought this was gonna take 10 hours. It's taking 20 hours. Can I—can we discuss making this a little more within the price range of 20 hours of work?" And things like that.

Um, but if you are commissioning, you're buying a piece, and you hear that it's more difficult and it's gonna take longer, try and be, you know, understanding. A lot of times, like, I know everybody seems to have a side hustle, but sometimes art is the side hustle at the moment. Um, and it can take a while. So try and be patient and understanding, um, and if it comes up that they perhaps need more funds, I think that, you know, keep it mind that if it is more difficult, they probably deserve more money for it.

Travis: Yeah. And chances are if you're asking for something that is more difficult, in the end result it'll end up being what you want more if you are able to pay them for their time.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, and I think along those same lines, if you are the artist who is being commissioned, I think one, it can be pretty scary to tell someone, like, "It's going to be more expensive," or "It's taking longer."

But clear lines of communication rather than waiting until they communicate to you, like, "Why is this taking so long?"

And then you're like, "Well... " Right?

Teresa: Exactly, yeah. Get ahead of it.

Travis: Right? And also, as soon as you realize it's gonna cost more, let 'em know, right? Um, that is why pricing-wise I recommend using verbiage like, "My prices start at this number."

And then that way, when you're negotiating the commission with the person, you could say, like, "Okay, great. That's a little more difficult, or it's a little more intricate, more detailed than what I normally do, so I'm going to start at that price, and then we might have to do, like, an hourly thing after that."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um, this is a question from Mick.

"What's the best way to ask people you know for full price? It's awkward when it's someone I don't really consider to be that close that expects a discount."

Teresa: Ooh, yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They want a friends and family discount... but they're not your friend or your family.

Travis: I think in this case, speaking in concrete terms rather than saying, "Well, I usually charge," saying "It costs blank." Right? The price is this. Right? Because I will say, this is a dorky, dorky example, but I've been going to a lot of flea markets lately.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And when I ask the price of something, you can tell the difference when someone answers and they're willing to, like, make a deal, versus when someone answers and that's the price of the thing. If they're like, "That is five dollars." Or if they look at it and go, "Well, um, I'm gonna say five dollars?"

Right? Where it's like, "Oh, okay. You're open—you aren't sure it's worth that much." Right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But the thing is is, when we're talking about art, your time is worth money, and you should know your value. And the thing is, is when you're doing work for people, if you're giving them a discount to the point where it's not worth your while, they're not doing you a favor. You know what I mean?

Like, you're creating something for them. So I think not—don't make it about that. If they expect a discount, that's their problem. But just say, like, "Listen. This is my job. This is how I pay bills, and it costs this much."

Teresa: Also, think about market value, right? If you have priced your items effectively, that means that there are comparable items out in the world that are about the same range, right? The same range of materials and the same hours worth of work or expertise. So you wouldn't expect every artist out there to take a hit just so that this one person could have a discount, right? No, you are able to explain to them, "This is market price. This is the value of the market right now."

Travis: Uh, along those same lines, Patrick asked:

"When you have requested a price on a commission and realized it's out of your price range, how to decline or negotiate something that works for everyone?"

Teresa: Um, I think that... it depends on how far along the piece is.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right? If the piece is nearly completed and you are surprised by the amount of money it takes, um, I think that you can... there is a way to maybe negotiate a payment plan, but as far as, like, a price reduction... without—I don't know. Like, I'm just... [laughs]

Travis: The only way—so, if—

Teresa: No, I have this vision of someone, like, asking for an 8x10, and they want to pay for half of it so, like, the artist just, like—

Travis: "Here's a 4x5."

Teresa: —cuts the paper in half.

Travis: Or 4x10? Wheh, who knows. But no, I understand, man. Like, although that's the—to be fair, there is a, like, "Well, I can make a smaller version of it that's, like, less detailed. And would that—"

Teresa: Right. But that's something that you wanna be aware of beforehand.

Travis: Absolutely.

Teresa: Because if they've already put the time into the 8x10, you know, you—

Travis: I will say, commissioning things for, like, websites and Twitch and stuff like that, almost always—I can't think of an exception, in fact, where the price has not been discussed before the commission was, like, started. Where the artist will ask, like, "What's your budget on this?" Or I will ask, like, "What's your rate?" Right?

And so I think that one, along those lines, before you begin, if you have a set budget for the project, ask them what the rate is. But if they come back and they say, like, "My rate is this much, and it's outside of your budget."

Responding, "Ah, I totally understand that it's outside my budget. Thank you so much for your time."

Teresa: Perfect.

Travis: Now, they might come back and say, "Well, what is your budget? Maybe we can figure something out."

But I would avoid going back after they told you their rate and saying, "Well, would you accept this much?"

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: 'Cause they just told you their rate. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: So, like, take that as fact.

Teresa: Let the artist talk about—bring up the idea of negotiation first.

Travis: Right. Because otherwise what you're saying is like, "Well, how 'bout—[laughs quietly] how 'bout I value your time less?" And whether you mean that or not, that—like, never assume that the person is going to take that in a spirit you intend or whatever, because I guarantee you they have countless times had people say, like, "I'm not paying that much!" Right? And you don't wanna be one of those people.

Teresa: "Make me that thing that takes you a long time, but make it for less

than you usually do, 'cause I don't value you. I just want your thing."

Travis: And we know that that's not what you mean, but ooh, it's so easy to sound that way. Ooh. Sue asks—one last question, here.

"Is tipping an artist common, and if so, how much should you tip?"

Teresa: Um, I'm not quite—I wasn't able to find out if there's, like, a 20% tip rate for artists, but if you love what they do and you want to support them outside of what they've, you know—what the rate you've negotiated is, do it.

Travis: And not just love what they do, which you should, but if the speed at which they're able to complete the thing—'cause I have had that where it's like, "Oh, I didn't know I needed art for this. I needed art for this. Can this be—could you have it done by this time?"

And they're like, "You got it." And then it's done on time? I tip for that every time, right?

Where, "Thank you so much, you really saved my bacon. Like, kept me—like, gave me this thing that I didn't know I needed and got it done in time."

And also, sometimes people have gotten—like, done work for me where I'm like, "Okay. This is beautiful and you did not charge me enough money for this."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And so I will give them more money because I'm like, "You undervalued your skills, and here is the money for this."

I think as far as the rate goes, follow your heart, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah. I like to make things even numbers, because that's the way that I am.

Travis: Absolutely.

Teresa: Um, so if something comes up and they ask for, hmm, 25 bucks, I'm gonna move it up to 30, because it's not about the percentage. It's like, I like a nice, round, even, feel-good number. So I don't think that there's any

kind of, like, 20% for good service type thing.

Travis: [singing] Listen to your heart.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: When it—[stops singing] and not only that. Another great thing you can do is to talk to the artist and say, "Would it be okay, or would—you know, I would like to promote this work. Is it alright if I tag you in it and tell people who did this?" Right?

Especially if you're doing, like, an avatar for a social media site, or art for your Twitch channel or your YouTube channel or whatever. Giving credit to those people along with paying for them, oh, that's so important. Exposure doesn't pay the bills, my friends, so you're not going to say, "Ah, I'll promote you on my channel for free artwork."

But saying "This is great. Here's your rate. Here's your tip. Can I also tell people about what a pleasure it was to work for you and show off this thing?" Right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: That is—is great. Uh, and along those same lines, we wanna say thank you to some people. First, thank you to Alex, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Alex is our researcher. She's out there answering them emails, goin' through for submissions and idioms, doing the research. She's amazing. Thank you, Alex. And we wouldn't be able to pay Alex for her work, which we absolutely want to do, without your support through Maximumfun.org.

We also wanna say thank you to all of you who listen and tell friends about the show and share links and all that stuff. It means the world to us. Go to mcelroymerch.com and check out some new merch over there. There's some really cool stuff. Let's see. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That is @shmannerscast, and that's where we got all of these great questions for today's episode, so give us a follow there, and be on the lookout for, um... submitting a question. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: We'd also like to thank Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group on Facebook.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

Travis: You've been listening to *Shmanners*...

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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