

Tip #87

Part 2,

Keeping an Art Blog

An interview with blogger

Katherine Tyrrell of
"Making a Mark" - and more!



Potential - 8"x10", coloured pencils on Arches HP
It was exhibited at the Annual Exhibition of the United Kingdom Coloured Pencil Society (UKCPS) in 2008 and is due to be exhibited at the Annual Exhibition of Society of Botanical Artists at Central Hall, Westminster, London. (24 April to 3 May 2009)

Katherine's various blogs have been on my reading list for a long time - I first found her Travels with a Sketchbook (<http://travelsketch.blogspot.com/>) a few years ago, and then her wonderful Making a Mark (<http://makingamark.blogspot.com/>) with all its various pages, Squidoo lenses and links. Inspiring, helpful, inclusive, broad-ranging - if you're not aware of this one, check it out and bookmark it!

This one is question and answer format-I hope you enjoy it!

How long have you been blogging?

I piloted my first blog in December 2005, did a few posts and then started to publish "Making A Mark" in January 2006. I'd observed blogs for a while before starting and I wanted to try and work out the answers to some obvious potential problem areas before I started. Which is pretty much the way I approach most things. Watch, research and then jump in!

In just over three years I've gained nearly 1,500+ subscribers and I've had nearly 450,00 visitors to my blog.

Why did you choose Blogger over some of the other choices?

It was free! Seriously, I won't pay for anything unless it adds a lot of extra value. None of my Internet sites cost me a penny (except for domain name registration). Plus Blogger was pretty intuitive and easy to use. My poll in Blogging

for Artists - Resources for Artists (<http://www.squidoo.com/blogging-for-artists>) identifies Blogger as the most popular platform for art bloggers.

Is the current direction the one you envisioned when you started? And if not, how did the change come about?

Yes and no.

Before I started, I noticed that popular and successful blogs posted on a fairly frequent basis. Plus they usually had a clear focus with some wiggle room for a variety of topics to help with posting frequency. So, between starting the pilot blog and going live to the public my blog title changed, the URL changed and the strapline changed! No longer just about me and my artwork, it now included reviews of books, art materials and exhibitions. This helped me create the 'voice' of my blog and made it much easier to talk with my readers.

In Years 2 and 3 I documented my art education projects and linked activities. I want to know as much as I can about whatever I'm interested in and I like to share what I discover. I now get lots of feedback saying how much people appreciate this. At least one blogger now uses my blog in preference to Google and people ask me questions all the time!

I didn't realise how much I would enjoy writing or how much blogging would become a normal part of my life. I post to a blog virtually every single day. Travels with a Sketchbook was started in 2006 to record my sketches and notes for two major trips to the west and east coasts of the USA. I now contribute to two group blogs (Urban Sketchers at <http://www.urbansketchers.com/> and Watermarks at <http://watermarks-art.blogspot.com/>), run the UKCPS News blog (<http://ukeps.blogspot.com/>) and my third personal blog Making a Mark reviews (<http://makingamarkreviews.blogspot.com> - launch date: 14th April 2009).

I never thought I'd be writing about the business end of art. However I've got a heavy duty business background which seems to transfer very readily to the art economy. I started writing about the potential impact of the coming recession in January 2008. Now it's here, I focus on trying to provide helpful information for difficult times.

You offer an astounding number of resources; how much time do you spend a week on the many pages and lenses you provide?

Making A Mark on Squidoo contains all my 'resources for artists' information sites which started after I lost all my bookmarked links. I routinely archive my research to them and it's a pleasure to share them with others with similar interests. Timewise I work very fast when researching so they don't take me long to make once I get started. I also no longer do ironing if I can possibly avoid it and won't win any prizes for housework!

Does the blog benefit your own work, or do you find it detracts? Can you expand on that answer a bit, if necessary?

It's a huge benefit. Here are some of the reasons why:

Blogging provides me with a structure for working through things I'm interested in. I've learned a LOT through my blog projects.

Writing about how other artists work and have worked has really helped me to review and evaluate my own approaches.

Writing exhibition reviews means I look much more closely when I visit an exhibition.

Blogging stops me being totally self-indulgent and allows me to pass on what I've learned to other people.

Most of all blogging makes me think through what I'm doing. It helps me to understand much better what I do and don't want to do in future when developing my art.

And of course, please feel free to visit my original blog at <http://katequicksilvr.livejournal.com/> or my new gallery blog at <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/>!