



Lone Wolf
Theatre Company

Resources

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Lone Wolf Howl: ART AND MONEY LIKE OIL AND VINEGAR FOR SOME

(Originally published in Cochrane Times: March 22, 2006)

for the Cochrane Times — Recently, at the March meeting of the Cochrane Community Arts and Culture Committee (CCACC), we talked about art. Specifically, the ongoing task of getting some of it in the public RancheHouse building (so many walls, so little to see).

Now Lady Art is sometimes a whore and sometimes a saint (which is what has made her so bloody fascinating throughout our existence), and She has many a bedfellow, not the strangest of which is money (which we also talked about). Art and money -- there exists no surer recipe for ad-nauseum discussion than the coupling of these two commodities, which is exactly what ensued.

The question came up during our looonng talk about whether or not the artists (whose work will one day be showcased in the RancheHouse) should – or should not – be paid.

And, if so, how much? And where will the money come from? And how will we convince town council of the additional expenditure of taxpayer dollars? And on and on and on.

A fine discussion with many a viewpoint tossed in to keep it alive for the better part of our two-hour meeting. But I couldn't help being conscious of the why of it all. Why were we even talking about this? Of course the artists would be paid, I thought. If you're going to edify the edifice, then you compensate the creators. This – in the popular parlance of the present – is a no-brainer. It's how I make my living. I'm a full-time, professional, self-sustaining artist. If I didn't get paid for my work, then I'm neither full-time nor professional and I'd have very little right or reason to sit on the CCACC to begin with.

Of course the artists will be paid.

But alas, the thought of paying an artist terrifies some people, as it seemed to do last night.

This fear is allayed with suggestions such as, 'Let's not use the work of professionals, but amateurs... you know, up-and-comers who would love to have their work showcased,' or, 'If there's a bio of the artist and contact information, then it's really promotion for them to sell their work to the public,' implying that they'll get paid later by someone or someplace that actually has money, which leads to (my personal favourite), 'We'd be helping them out by facilitating future contacts and connections.'

The little wisdom I have (which I don't always heed) has taught me over the years to keep quiet in times of absurdity until the opportunity presents itself to point it out. Sure enough, it came up that the committee is having difficulty finding a professional contractor to develop the necessary infrastructure within the building to properly showcase the art (lighting, rigging for canvases, display cabinets, et al). Town council has approved \$20,000 towards this end (and kudos to them for doing so), but like everywhere else in the province, there's a shortage of skilled contractors willing to take on such a small potatoes gig.

'Let's get someone to do it for free,' I suggested, 'and give the twenty grand to the artists.' Laughter ensued, of course, 'cause that Barry... he's always joking around. Surely there would be some up-and-coming finishing carpenter who dabbles in wiring to take on the job (and wouldn't he be thrilled with the opportunity to showcase his work for the public to see).

Not only could he volunteer his time and his talent, but we would also expect him to foot the bill for all his supplies, tools, and the heat & electricity in his workshop.

After all, we're giving him a golden opportunity that any number of chaps would be

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tickled with. He could put up a bio and contact number, guaranteeing that he'll be noticed.

Then he could negotiate some small fee for his next contract... you know, with someone who has real money to pay. Not like us.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: artists are professionals and should be recognized as such. Getting paid is part of that recognition.

Many will work pro bono (God knows I do frequently enough), but that should always be the choice of the artist, not the expectation of the patron.

Our mission at the CCACC is to "rejuvenate the arts in the cultural community of Cochrane through education, promotion and advice."

We're two years in and still unclear about whether or not artists should be paid for their work.

Egads! Perhaps we as a committee need to seek a bit more education and advice ourselves.

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