

# Ask the Artsperts

by Kristine Meek and Juliana Meek  
Harmon-Meek Gallery, Naples, FL

## Prolific Artists

### Dear Artsperts:

I noticed at an artist's gallery exhibition that he had created a lot of paintings in the past year. Should I be concerned about his apparent prolific style?

Signed,  
Mo' Paintings Mo' Problems

### Dear Mo,

The number of works of art an artist produces will only have a negative effect on his values if the works do not sell year after year and the artist ends up with too many unsold works. But the fact that many internationally known artists have produced tens of thousands of works of art without much concern on the buying public should serve to show that for the most part it is a myth that fewer works equals more value.

When Andy Warhol was alive he had over one hundred "assistants" creating works with the "Warhol" name on them. He called his studio "The Factory" and when he died he left an estate of more than 94,000 paintings and prints with his name on them. Add to this the thousands of works he sold during his life and one might think there couldn't possibly be enough people interested in his work to sustain his price level, which often reaches into the millions of Dollars for major creations.

Other artists such as Damien Hirst, Mark Kostabi, Jeff Koons and Peter Max also produce thousands of works, heightened by the print medium's multiple editions or through employing artist assistants and yet all of their works still sell to those collectors interested in their respective imagery.

Some artists may appear to have produced a lot of works of art in a specific year but perhaps a significant percentage were actually started in previous years and happened to be finished and dated in one year leading up to an exhibition. Some artists will mark on the back of a painting when a particular work was started and completed but many artists simply mark when it was finished.

Robert Vickrey's annual exhibitions with our gallery from 1981 to 2011 would often bring a chorus of statements like: "He sure painted a lot of work this past year". If one were to more closely examine the wall description labels they might see that the dates were from different years as our gallery often would include unsold paintings from previous shows, or from other galleries representing him, or works the artist has held back from previous exhibitions. Since he painted with the difficult egg tempera medium it only allowed him to paint about thirty paintings a year, of which he would typically sell twenty. When Vickrey died in 2012 he left an estate of only 80 finished paintings.

The popularity of an artist and the volume of sales should only be of concern if it is not balanced with critical acclaim and museum representation – as long as the artist is selling, being talked about, and achieving critical praise the value of the artist's work will be maintained.

Signed,  
The Artsperts



Hunt Slonem in his studio working on paintings at various stages of completion.



Robert Vickrey (1926-2011) memorial exhibition at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art in Indiana 2016.

Richard Segalman produces about 45 works a year. Pictured to the right and below are images from his 80th birthday exhibition at Harmon-Meek Gallery. The exhibition included works from earlier years. Over 60 works were sold during the exhibition leaving only a third of the works for future exhibitions at the gallery or loaning to museums.

