

How Do I Price My Art?

A Pricing Survey with Comments and Observations

by

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Introduction and Thank You (you know who you are)

For many years, even prior to the last twelve as a gourd artist, I have been involved in discussions about pricing. For many years, my husband Tony, who collaborated on this effort, has been in marketing. In the early 80's, we traveled together selling gifts and novelties. Concerning pricing, we learned about wholesale pricing, distribution pricing, consignment, mark-ups, and perceived value.

Tony continued on the road, and I contributed from home until we moved and my gourd saga began. He left the manufacturer's rep business and opened his own business through which he continued expanding his business knowledge, while I started facing selling my gourd art.

As I evolved, expanded, and emerged in public with my art, pricing continued to be a topic of discussion, not in our household, but with other artists and crafters. Moving through the 90's, I sold many pieces of art in an ever-expanding and continuous cycle of shows. And even though most have been in the Midwest, I have traveled as far east as Atlanta and west to Seattle.

Later in the decade, we built my website, www.justgourds.com, and painstakingly shoved our way up the Internet ladder, a ladder that seemingly has no end. But I managed to begin offering art on the web, and the pricing issues continued.

The Internet, aside from selling, has been a way to expand my love for "everything gourds", which includes a monthly newsletter to a steadily growing and large list of crafters, artists, promoters, teachers, gardeners, farmers, collectors, and other enthusiasts.

Marketing requires analysis, but the collecting of information and opinions is often given more weight if it's handled by experts, often self-anointed. In this effort, we went to the people who count the most, my customers and the people on my newsletter list. Their vote counts the most. They vote with their time, their support, and their dollars. I thank them for their participation, giving us some insight into the murky waters of pricing gourd art.

Conclusions for the Scientifically Disabled

Before getting into the heart of the survey, and trying to distill some sense out of the numbers, I have to say that some of the results reinforced my pre-existing beliefs and observations. Yet, I was not looking merely for conceptual ideas about pricing, but specific, numerical, and illustrative monetary judgments on specific pieces of art.

Normally in scientific discovery, conclusions would be left to the end of the report. But I am not bound by those rules, so you will find my opinion, observations, and assessments throughout.

Value Is In the Eye of the Beholder

One key principal, that is hard for some to grasp, is that value is always perceived. Yes, you can and should measure if you want the price to be profitable, but value itself is totally in the eye of the beholder.

Let me give an example. Let's say someone with picky taste and a high income walks into Wal-Mart, looks at a brand name pair of jeans for \$12.99, and thinks "what a cheap pair of junk." A minute later, a lower income mother of four picks up the exact same pair, puts it in her cart and says to her husband, "What a bargain. I'd have to pay twice as much at the mall for this brand." Here are two different people, with two opposing opinions, on exactly the same pair of jeans. There is nothing intrinsic in the jeans that give it an objectively defined value, let alone price.

In gourd art, and I would venture to say all creative works and services, the perceived value is possibly harder to determine. First of all, there is rarely, if ever, a direct comparison. With the example above, the shopper can at least compare prices and value between similar brands, or on the same brand at various stores. With gourds, they are one-of-a-kind, handmade, labor of love, and often unfamiliar to the buyer. Yes, unfamiliar. Some people don't know what a gourd is, will it keep, who is the artist, or how much time it took to decorate.

One Price Fits All

So perceptions vary greatly. Nevertheless, the artist is faced with determining a selling price, a one price fits all. And then, of course, you have to sell it.

As many shows have come and gone, [Internet sales](#) grow, and my retail area in [The Market Place](#) builds, I have adjusted prices up and down incrementally based mostly upon two factors.

The first is my observations and testing of different prices to see if it makes any difference in sales. So I might raise a price from \$19.99 to \$25, or lower a price from \$17.50 to \$15. I have found several key price points, especially on highly demanded, easy to make items like dyed apple gourds and apple gourd feeders. The same is true for items that spike during certain seasons like my stylized snowmen and banana gourd Christmas ornaments.

However, when it comes to the bulk of my work, with so many variations, sizes, characterizations, and adornments, pricing is trickier. Some people, (including my husband), think I'm under-priced, and some think I'm just about right. Overall, very few think I'm overpriced, which in itself may be a reason to keep bumping up my prices.

My perspective is that I love painting gourds. That is fundamental, and without it, nothing else matters to me. I want my work to travel far and wide. When someone buys one of my pieces for themselves or as a gift, I call it "adopted". I speak of my gourds as "finding a home." I really feel this way. I have put much love in every piece, and I want them to go to people who appreciate them. I want my pieces to be a "gift that keeps on giving", creating smiles, memories, and conversation.

How do you price that?

Yes, how do you price these intangibles? How collectible is a collectible? In one sense, only time will tell. What I can tell you is that I am constantly painting, and I sell everything I make. Tony tells everyone that I am intensely dedicated (I call it in love with gourds) and prolific (I call it painting to the bone). Instead of asking “How do I price that?” maybe I should restate it as “How do I value that?”

Take Your Pick If You Want a Formula

There are plenty of pricing formulas, from the very simple to the very complex. I am familiar with some of them, some are re-iterated in the comments to the survey, and many are available through books and business consultants. The common thread is counting. Count the cost of supplies, count your time, and count your expenses. As I said earlier, you need this information to determine your profitability. If you have a business, profit is important, but what about the hobbyist, are they in the same boat?

Who Is the Beholder, and Whose Eyes Are Doing the Looking

For the time being, we have come full circle. As we will explore in the survey, value, as defined and perceived by the buyers and collectors of art, can be evaluated by asking. Nothing replaces asking. It still may be difficult to zero in on your pricing, and value in their eyes will probably be all over the board (as you will see from the survey), but at least you will know what they are thinking and how they perceive your work and efforts.

You will know some of their thoughts, and you will have taken some time to let them know that you truly care about their opinion (which I most certainly do). You will make a connection, a connection to someone with whom you have a common interest, or share a common moment, or tell a story. The connection and taking time to invest in a relationship, or hear a story, is as important, probably more important, than their opinion about a particular piece of art.

It's important in and of itself, and it's important because success is about relationships. So you see, it's not just trying to see yourself and your work through their eyes, its them seeing themselves through your eyes, through your stories, through your teaching.

And so, I present the findings of my simple pricing survey along with my thoughts, observations, and conclusions. I intended to do this from the start. And I hope it has value for you. What value? You be the judge.

The Survey

The survey was announced through my newsletter, which contained a link that opened a browser window and proceeded with the survey online. After the explanation, I asked three open ended questions on pricing on three pieces of art. By open ended, I mean that I did not provide prices to choose or vote on. You will see below as I provide all the copy, questions, and pictures from the survey.

On the back end, the answers including the comments were collected, and the summary appears below with comments. One hundred sixteen (116) of my newsletter subscribers participated in the survey. This represents almost 9% of my subscribers. If you are familiar with surveys, you will recognize that 9% is a very positive response rate. So let's move on to the results.

<i>Survey Questions and Total Responses</i>	
In my opinion Sammy's price would be . . .	
Total Respondents	112
(skipped this question)	4
For the Cowardly Lion I think . . .	
Total Respondents	110
(skipped this question)	6
The price on this Santa is (your best guess)?	
Total Respondents	110
(skipped this question)	6
If you have any other thoughts . . .	
Total Respondents	62
(skipped this question)	54
Total Survey Respondents	116

The summary chart above shows how many people answered each question in the survey. As you can see, over half volunteered additional comments. All of these appear at the end of this report.

Here is the opening of the survey, as it appeared.

I Just Have To Get This Off My Head

I recently received a letter from a very nice woman in New York, asking me to help her figure out prices for her finished gourd art. The emails we have been exchanging back and forth have re-stimulated an ongoing conversation I've had with myself and my husband about prices.

This whole topic of pricing is very interesting to me. I am always questioning my prices, asking myself "Am I charging enough, am I charging too little, what is this worth as a gift?"

You see, of course, gourd painting is my passion, but it is also my business. As both, I want you to be able to afford my art, and at the same time I want it to be valued for what it is . . . all hand-made with care, creativity, and love.

And the reality is that everything I make is limited. It has to be. Even though I paint and create eight hours a day, I can only make so many pieces.

My husband is a marketing and business person. And he told me to ask you. Yes, he has all the pricing formulas and considerations, but he said that your opinion is the only thing that really matters. He told me that most businesses don't take the time to ask their clients anything, but the client's opinion is the only one that really counts. That makes a lot of sense to me.

You see, I can guess and guess, and think and think about what to charge. But what YOU think is really more important. And in the long run, it's important to me to satisfy you completely.

Now I know many of you are on my list to get information, projects, ideas, insights, and a host of other tidbits I provide on gourds. And I am glad to provide this because I have so much to tell, and I love seeing the interest and know-how of gourds flourish. So even if you don't visit my site to buy anything, just gather helpful information and ideas, I value your opinion and ask for your input on this short survey.

And I am so glad that so many of you remain on my list, because my husband and I have so many ideas and new ways to give you what you are interested in. So stick with me the next few months as there is plenty to come.

Now let me get back to the point. When it comes to pricing, I'm kind of stuck some of the time. So, I most gratefully and humbly ask that you take a minute (less time than you spent reading my ramblings about this) and tell me what you would pay for a couple of pieces of gourd art, if you were purchasing it.

No tricks. This is anonymous. I'm not selling anything here, just humbly asking for your opinion. That's all.

So, go to the next page, look at the pictures, and just fill in the blank, what you would expect to pay if you were purchasing each piece.

I ask this as a teeny, tiny, favor and, without getting too gushy, thank you again for your opinions.

**Thanks so much
Melynda**

Following this survey introduction, clicking the “next page” link went to the first picture. Here is the picture, description, question, and for the first piece of gourd art, and a summary of the answers.

This is followed by the second and third pictures, descriptions, questions, and summary chart of the answers.

The pictures for all the questions are the same size as they appeared in the survey. What you do not see below are the text boxes which people used to type in their answers.



Sammy is an adorable patriotic rabbit, standing 8" tall, made from a banana gourd. He is holding a flag also made from gourd pieces and has paper clay sculpted features. He is patriotically painted and sealed to last indefinitely.

1. In my opinion Sammy's price would be . . .

Here is a summary of the answers.

<i>For Sammy the Bunny . . .</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
\$15.00	8	7.21%
\$20.00	15	13.51%
\$25.00	26	23.42%
\$30.00	9	8.11%
\$35.00	10	9.01%
\$40.00	4	3.60%
\$45.00	5	4.50%
<i>Under 4 Responses</i>	6	5.41%
Total Responses	111	100.00%

As you can see with this first question, and will see on the next two, there is quite a range of opinion. In the chart, you are looking at actual answers, not approximations or ranges. Sammy was the only piece that had a high concentration on a few dollar amounts, with almost 25% estimating a selling price of \$25.

Under 4 Responses means that there were 6 additional responses at price points other than those listed, with each price point receiving less than 4 total responses.



Cowardly Lion (my favorite ::))

"What puts the ape in apricot
 Courage what do they have that I
 haven't got...Courage "

This beautiful Cowardly Lion from the Wizard of Oz stands approximately 8" tall and is trimmed in hand-dyed Missouri Mohair. Each piece, as with all my work, is hand-signed and dated. The Cowardly Lion is a great gift for any Wizard of Oz collector, and he comes with a natural wreath stand.

2. For the Cowardly Lion, I think the price would be . . . (pretend you are playing the Price is Right)

Here is the summary of the answers for Question #2.

<i>For the Cowardly Lion . . .</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
\$20.00	6	5.50%
\$25.00	13	11.93%
\$30.00	12	11.01%
\$35.00	12	11.01%
\$40.00	12	11.01%
\$45.00	4	3.67%
\$50.00	8	7.34%
\$75.00	4	3.67%
<i>Under 4 Responses</i>	38	34.86%
Total Responses	109	100.00%

In contrast to Sammy, the Cowardly Lion had a much wider range of answers, which you will notice more when you see the high-low-average chart. However, you can see above that over one-third of the answers received less than 4 responses, and no price reached 12% of the total. I'm not sure of all the reasons, but it appears that the addition of the mohair may have a very wide impact on perceived value. The additional adornments and hair on the Santa in the last question would tend to support this theory, as you will also see a very wide range of answers below on question #3.



Every year I make two or three large, ornate, and intricate art pieces. The Old World Santa stands almost 2 1/2 feet tall, with a gourd body, head, arms, and spirit. Intricately painted, his beard and whiskers are made of Missouri mohair, and he is wrapped in genuine mink. He is adorned with goodie bag, pine, ornaments, and surprises for all the good boys and girls, and maybe you too!

3. The price on this Santa is (your best guess)?

Here is a summary of the answers.

<i>For the Old World Santa . . .</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
\$50.00	12	10.91%
\$60.00	5	4.55%
\$65.00	6	5.45%
\$75.00	12	10.91%
\$85.00	5	4.55%
\$100.00	10	9.09%
\$125.00	9	8.18%
\$150.00	9	8.18%
<i>Under 5 Responses</i>	42	38.18%
Total Responses	110	100.00%

For the Old World Santa, there were almost 40% of the answers at prices not listed in the chart. Many of these prices only had one or two tallies. I was rather amazed at the variety of guesses and the extreme range of the answers. I do find it interesting that the highest tallies were at \$50, \$75, and \$100.

In fact, if you look at all three charts, you will notice that the highest numbers of responses, in all cases, were round whole dollars. In the actual data collected, there were some answers ending in .99 and .95. As you will see in the last chart below, these tended to be on the low end. But the vast majority of responses are in whole dollars.

I am a juried member of the [Best of Missouri Hands](#), which is a premier organization representing artisans from throughout the state of Missouri. A business consultant for artists spoke at one of the conferences, talking about the perception of artwork, and encouraging round whole dollars in pricing. She said it establishes the work as a piece of art, a collectible, which is differentiated from mass produced or store-bought goods by the manner in which it is priced.

By looking at my survey, I would say that almost everyone who participated either consciously or subconsciously thinks of art in this manner as opposed to “incentive pricing”. I can tell you that I still use 12.50, 17.50, and other half-dollar prices, mostly in the under \$20 range, but also in two of the three survey pieces, as you will see. But I have pretty much eliminated the lowering of \$25 to 24.95, and other similar retail price setting standards.

Will the Real Price Please Stand Up?

It's time to reveal the overall array of prices and the actual selling price of the three pieces of art. The chart below shows you the lowest and highest dollar response for each item, the average price, and the actual price.

	<i>Lowest Price</i>	<i>Highest Price</i>	<i>Ave Price</i>	<i>Median Price</i>	<i>Actual Price</i>
For Sammy the Bunny	\$7.95	\$75	\$27.71	\$41.48	\$27.50
For the Cowardly Lion	\$9.99	\$125	\$39.73	\$67.50	\$32.50
For the Old World Santa	\$19.95	\$450	\$95.19	\$234.98	\$125

Now you can see the incredibly wide margins between the lowest and highest prices. Even within these responses, there is still a subjective undetermined value, based upon individual perception. For example, \$40 may be a high price for a gourd, or it may represent a significant outlay of disposable income; whereas, to another respondent, it may represent an average amount they would spend on a gift, or an insignificant outlay of disposable income.

I suppose if I were more scientific, I would have had more demographic questions such as income, geographic location, occupation, etc. etc. Analysis by demographics would probably have revealed more, but I opted to make the survey simple, easy, quick, and fun. Even with anonymity, I expect my overall participation level would have been lower if I had included more personal questions, and increased the length of the survey. But now that you can see that much more information could have been collected and shared, maybe it will pave the way and lower any objections to participating in longer surveys with more revealing questions.

Nevertheless, I don't want to lessen the "fun", as it was and remains an integral part of my work, my website, my newsletter, and my teaching.

I know what the Average Price is, but I'm not sure how much importance to place on it in this particular undertaking. Of course it is a measure of the average of all the responses to a particular question, but I it a marginal direct correlation to value. I do, however, find it interesting that my actual selling prices are very close to the averages from the survey. This is especially true for Sammy and the Cowardly Lion.

The median prices are the exact middle between the high and low. As with average, I'm not sure how to correlate this to value or perception, but it does indicate that in some circles I could definitely price these items higher and still be within an acceptable price range for many people.

Take This Thought with You

So what can you conclude from all these observations, facts, and charts? Hopefully you gained some insight, maybe a little revelation, possibly some confusion, or simply a big, long, pensive “hmmmmmm”.

Before I end with all the comments from the survey, I want to leave you with one thought. If you take nothing else from this report, take this one thought with you as a personal guiding question, a measure of your own growth as a person and as an artist, either professional or hobbyist.

Value yourself!

For some of you, this may be a platitude that you’ve heard before. Even so, I don’t mean this only as a nice, positive, attitudinal affirmation. I mean it in practice and words, the way you express yourself.

If you don’t value your work, your art, and express it, don’t expect anyone else to see it or believe it. Let’s say, for example, that someone picks up a gourd you made and have sitting on a bookshelf, and asks where it came from. You say, “I painted it, but it’s really not that good.” Being nice, they may say, “Oh, yes it is, it’s nice.” All the while, you’re thinking “Yeah, right.” And you know what? You are right. They put it down, and that’s the end of that bit of conversation.

Try this instead. You could say, “Yes, I found that gourd at a farmer’s market. I searched the Internet and found out that lot’s of people decorate them. In fact, gourds have been used for all sorts of things all over the world for centuries. I never thought about it before. I had so much fun painting it. I’ve always enjoyed painting privately, but this is really different and unique.”

See the difference. Value your experiences, your ideas, your skills, you activities, and share them with others through stories. If you sell your work, you will get more response, and create value if you tell your stories as part of the process of selling.

If you don’t tell others about you and about your creations, don’t expect them to know. Don’t expect them to be interested. And don’t expect them to buy or desire to own your artwork. So I say one more time . . .

Value yourself!

Take that thought with you always.

Comments from the Survey

The last question on the survey asked for comments, all of which I am sharing in their entirety. The only parts I have removed are personal names and email addresses. Even though the survey was anonymous, some people included this information anyway in their comments. Also, I have corrected some spelling, but I have made no grammatical changes. Enjoy these various perspectives, and if you didn't do so this time, maybe next time you'll jump into the fray. The wording on Question 4 of the survey appears below, followed by all the answers.

4. If you have any other thoughts or observations about prices, collecting, and giving gourd gifts, please share them with me. I appreciate your honesty.

Yes it is a difficult quandary pricing. As an amateur I myself am often stumped. We know or care how much time it took to make something. Buyers are critical want something unique and reasonable. If a person can afford anything then he/she wants the very best. I am working on gourds to sell at our club art show and will try to price them to sell. They cost only \$1.00 a piece. Anything above that is profit. IF we should give them to a store to sell they jack the price 25-50%. Recouping some of the costs of my hobby as well as the satisfaction knowing the object is good enough to be bought is usually pleasing to me.

Melynda I am in the same boat you are. As my work improves (I am kinda new here) I want to increase the price. I am blessed with a friend/teacher who is a seasoned gourd artist so she is a great help. I have found pieces for \$35-45 sell better than the same pieces for \$25-30.

It is hard to say truthfully because I had no idea how long it took for you to paint them and form them. Plus the added embellishments cost. I enjoyed seeing them. I just love painting gourds and I have only been doing them for a year. I had no idea I could paint at all. Thank you for sharing you art and I love what you do...I have to say it again Thank you for involving me. Sheryl (gourd head) this is the name my family gave me...Now I am stuck with it. Gourds have changed my life. 1 year ago I was in a depression so bad I never got out of bed and now I paint some everyday and I feel they have saved my life. Sorry I am rambling but I wanted to share with you how much painting gourds has saved my life. Have a Great Day and Happy Painting!

Dear Melynda I just want you to know that my prices are probably lower than what you would sell for. I too do gourds and I am probably too cheap but I have found out that people will easily spend under \$50.00 for something special and \$25.00 is very affordable for birthdays and such. I also sign my pieces(of course my work isn't as wonderful as yours) I ask myself 2 questions when I started pricing my things. Would I do this even if I didn't get paid for it? Would I rather my stuff sit on a shelf waiting for that one person to come along or would I rather sell a lot and keep doing what I'm doing? I have quoted a price lower than I should of to someone that came along and really loved my gourds. Why? Because I knew they saw the beauty that I saw and I have many repeat customers by doing this. Thanks so much for the tips and being NORMAL. You are a gourd head sister<LOL>.Thanks again and Happy Gourding

It's very hard giving a price on one's original art. Taking the time you spend on each piece and the amount it costs for supplies you would like to get back money wise. Sometimes your time suffers. Detail of a piece would be important to me regarding the amount of money I would spend and of course the person's talent in painting. I consider the painting more of a talent than decorating an item with clothing etc. Then again if you are growing and drying your own gourds that takes a great deal of time and care.

I also have a pricing dilemma. Based on the time I put into my creations I find that most pieces work out to less than minimum wage. I don't want to give my work away but then I don't want to be accused of highway robbery either! As an artist you know that a bit of your own spirit in each of your creations. I think that is why I have such a hard time putting a price on my work. If I could just divorce myself from the \$\$ end of it and let someone else deal with the money thing I would be a happy camper. Unfortunately finances mandate I earn a living in the real world with a real job. Not

half as much fun as doing what I love creating art. Each gourd I select kind of has a spirit of its own and therefore dictates the end creation. You and your great web pages have inspired me to pursue gourd art. My art is great stress therapy and I try to paint a little each day. You can see what your inspiration has led me to create by going to my web page. I have a few of my creations posted. I based my pricing using a combination of yours and others plus what I felt the local market would bear. Had no problem moving product at Christmas season and was busier than I planned.

I am a calligrapher and I have a terrible time pricing things. I am always very low so you may not even want to look at my guesses. I just hate to charge people.

Just guessing I don't know how much time was spent on this project. You do an excellent job. I am a beginner trying to learn myself.

I may be way too low on these prices. I am basing my estimates on the rural Upper Midwest area that I live in.

I know that making an item takes time and lots of care as I have done it for years. The only trouble that I see with most of our crafts is that somewhere in China or some other poor country in the old world there is a person with as much talent and skill to do the same thing that we are doing. They unfortunately get paid nothing for their talents and time. Then they send it over here to be sold for almost nothing. I have tried for years to figure out how to sell handcrafted items for a price that will make me a little money and pay for my supplies. I still haven't been able to do that. A lot of the things that I make are made with care and time where someone else just throws something together and it is not quality can sell theirs but mine goes by the wayside. It might be because of the area that I am living as it is not a very successful area as a lot of small places are. I hope that everyone who makes art work can sell them for a good price. Sorry I am so long winded.

I am not a 'spender' and would say I am 'frugal'. I recently painted pop bottles for the garden brought them to work and asked the maintenance man to drill a few holes in them they sit on sticks and spin in the breeze. Well folks saw them and now I have orders! Orders for pop bottles!!! My co-workers say about 5-6 dollars each. You my friend do art in the true sense of the word I painted pop bottles that took less than an hour each do not consider it 'art' and could gain 5-6 dollars for 30 to 60 mins of work. How is one to price anything! I had a T-shirt with a man on it washing a window the caption read What is Art? And below the photograph it read Art is a window washer. This rings so true of pop bottles gourds and fine arts. Good luck I am looking forward to the outcome of the survey.

I think your gourds are marvelous. It must be hard to put a price on them. How much is feeling worth? And thought and time? All your pieces all seem to fit in a family. I really enjoy looking at them. I have many gourds in a basket and want to start making things with them. They just sit there because I'm afraid to try. Maybe with your newsletters coming you can encourage me by what you write and do. Thank You

I have checked out your gourds on your web site and have agreed with your pricing. It has helped me with my pricing. I think it all depends on your area. Where I am I have to keep things relatively low. My last newsletter of yours was November so I hope all is well with you. Thanks again.

I agree that each artist needs to determine their own price. Pay close attention to the time spent especially and how attached you may feel to a piece.

I think you should add up your time you put into your craft plus paint and stuff used when your done with the project add up time + material and triple it. Or maybe more if it was really a tricky piece to do.

Pricing depends a lot on where you're selling your gourds. A local craft fair where items being sold are mostly cute looking will not command higher prices. A show where items being sold are more unusual made of different types of materials etc. command a much higher price. Usually these types of show require that you submit your work to judges and after previewing your work they will either allow you to join the show or not. The reason for this is to maintain a higher quality show. Selling your work for consignment at a craft-type store will also not get you the prices you're looking

for. Although you may spend hours creating your work if your work is too much like other stuff being sold it doesn't matter what your price you will never recover a true price for your time and effort.

It is very hard to price the items we do. I love doing my painting and gourds but I find that some people just wouldn't pay the price. They look at a price and think it is high but they do not think of all the time you put into the item. Your items are gorgeous and worth what ever you sell them for

This was very tough there aren't very many artists here who paint the gourds...just my art teacher and myself. I love your web site 'cause I don't do well with combining the appropriate colors etc. Glad we don't live near each other. I never get any work done. Thanks for the opportunity to chat w/ you.

If you don't grow your own gourds I would charge 3 to 4 times what I paid for the cleaned gourd. Of course there are exceptional pieces like your Santa that should absolutely cost MORE!! I wish I could afford HIM!! When I was doing ceramics we typically charged at least 3 times the original green ware. Hope I came close to what you had in mind.

I truly understand that you don't know just how much to charge you think to yourself I spent so many hours making this item but I want it to sell some times I look at item in stores and that helps a little I sell gourd flower arrangements with as many as 40 small gourds each one cleaned and hand painted by me some in baskets and I am happy if I get 30.00 and most have nice ribbon and I look at flower arrangements at Hobby Lobby and they will have a price of 40.00 on very small arrangements. So you just never know unless of course you sell it then you know that was the right price.

It depends on your area. My sister and I just started gourd art set up a booth at our church bazaar and did \$1200 on gourds marked \$45 and under. \$45 was our highest price but we have to consider our audience - not familiar with gourds and rural small town. \$45 can be a lot of money for a whimsy like a pretty bird house or jack-o-lantern. I'd up prices for internet sales.

I don't envy you trying to make these decisions-- My gourds have just been used as gifts -- and I have generally said no when asked to make one to sell- mainly cause I have no idea what to expect as a fair price!

I am a member of the Fallbrook California Gourd Patch. We have a show of over 200 gourds at the Escondido Ca. Art Guild. Your question is our question also. My thought is if you price something too high it is going to sit in my home not in someone else's. I say start lower you can always go up on the next one. If it doesn't sell then I come down at the next sale.

I think all the art work is very well done. In my opinion I thought the Cowardly Lion would be a higher price because it would be a collector unique and original piece. The Santa was exquisite some lucky girl will have a mink one way or another! You do nice work!

Hi Melynda I love gourds too. I have a lot of problems pricing them. What I am willing to pay and what I think they are worth are two different things. Of course that is because I can create my own and I am very thrifty and on a tight budget. In my area I can sell a few birdhouses (painted apples with leaves and folk art flowers very comparable to your work) for \$10-\$20 but that hardly seems like enough for the time it takes me. You seem to be faster than I am though. Sorry I'm not much help. Good luck

Hi Melynda Your work to beautiful. I must tell you I have never yet done a gourd. I have 3 of them all dry. I have never attempted to paint or carved them. So perhaps I should not try to price But I think I took all the hard pleasure work into consideration. Thanks for your e-mailings. I look forward to them!

Melynda I found it difficult to price your gourds because my interest is different than yours.

I am no expert. I have done one craft fair (small at work affair) I sold all of my gourds. Did I price too low or not enough? My most expensive gourd was a Santa painted on a medium to large gourd but it was gorgeous and I only charged \$45 and think I could of gotten \$65. However it wasn't a difficult painting project but very effective. I made another gourd very similar but you know gourds are never the exact same but she thought I was asking \$65 and was willing to pay it. She also has the salary to afford it. I'm debating prices also and I think the factors include material cost (if you are able to get large quantities at low prices great) I personally don't have a resale # so pick items from garage sales nature e-bay and store sales to try to keep my embellishments at a low price. Time put into a piece. As I'm sure you are aware some things you can turn out quickly and others you spend a lot of time perfecting them. The most important thing I learned as a first time seller was the clientele. Who are you selling to? I work in a hospital so my clientele ranged from people with minimum wage to 6 digit salaries or more for all I know. So I had a lot of things priced at \$20.00 range. That's what I would pay for a gift to someone or even myself. However I heard people who liked what I had but felt \$20 was too much. These were mostly the lower paid people. The higher paid people bought two. Luckily I had a lot of the jewelry gourds that I made into ornaments and the people who couldn't t afford the larger size felt they got something they liked at a price they could afford. I try to price my item by how much it cost to make and times it by three. However the large gourd that I sold was more than that. It actually was a funny story because when I arrived that morning I had no idea how much to charge for that one gourd. First of all I was especially proud of it secondly I had stayed up late the night before finishing everything and the last thing I wanted to do was sit at a table selling stuff for 9 hours. When I walked in with my stuff and put it on the table I immediately had two people ask me how much? I was tired I knew this gourd was special and wasn't sure how much I should charge and couldn't give my fellow crafters an answer. The one woman says I can see you don't want to let that one go. She was right. But like I said there was a lot of interest in that one gourd because of not just the painting but how perfectly the gourd stood BECAUSE OF IT'S FLAWS. I've recreated the pattern many times but have yet to find another gourd with the same flaws! Hope I have given you some insight. I have seen many beautiful gourds out there and feel that I am very much an amateur but would someday like to make the jump from crafter to artist

I also find it hard to judge pricing since I visit several State Shows. Many different items at various prices.

I am afraid that my pricing might be WAY under the real value but what I am considering is today's customer and the challenging economy. Good luck.

Dear Melynda I received the beautiful golden Retriever and it was just adorable. I think your prices are reasonable (maybe too reasonable.) I too am a gourd artist when not teaching and there is so much time involved that is very valuable to me. The buyer sees the finished product. He does not see the hard and tedious time-consuming work that goes into creating a gourd. It takes a full day just to sand and prime the gourd to get it ready to paint. It is not unusual for large gourds here at craft fairs to sell for \$125!!! The most I have ever sold one of my gourds for was \$45. It was a large gourd which I had painted as a golfer. Golfing is very popular down here (Alabama). However I live in a very poor area so my prices cannot be too high. In larger cities though the price is what the artist deserves for all of his time that he has given. When you figure it out hourly a gourd artist is making about 10 cents an hour when you also include the cost of the paints etc. I think your prices are a tad low. What you might do is put a few items on there for a higher price and see if they sell. If they don't just go back to your original price. I have never had much luck on the net with my painted gourds. However I sell like crazy at craft fairs etc. in tourist areas. I am near Panama City Fl. where there are a lot of retirees. They don't mind paying for something that they know a lot of time and love has gone into creating the finished product. GOOD LUCK. Hope this helps!

In refinishing furniture and pricing accordingly I was always told to take 4 x's the amount you paid to put into your work. Your work is beautiful.

Hi Melynda I have only been working with gourds for about 3 years we have a gourd farm in KY and I also struggle with the pricing on my pieces. Any info you gather and can share with us all

would be greatly appreciated. Presently I don't use any formulas at all in my pricing I just look at a piece and see what I would pay or what I think its worth. Sad that we can't value our time but maybe someday gourd art will be considered TRUE art. It's getting there and hopefully it won't be long ;o) Take care

You do absolutely beautiful artwork. I also craft gourds but I prefer the more basic pieces. I don't add clay hair etc. I want my gourds to look like gourds with just a touch of imagination. Thank you for all your helpful hints I look forward to your newsletter and I visit your site often.

I think the most difficult thing we do is to get the public to see our work as art and not some little artsy crafty hobby that we quickly toss out in the laundry room while folding clothes.

I have started to sell gourds with my jewelry and craft business. I am stumped also on what to charge. I look on the Internet and see high prices on pieces but I can't sell mine for \$25.00. I don't think people appreciate the work and time put into one piece. But my husband's motto is If they really want it they'll pay for it. My highest priced bowl is \$45 and still I can't get rid of it. I've sort of gotten discouraged and haven't done much with them lately. Oh well I'll just keep them until I finally sell them.

You Asked for my opinion. I would rather purchase something that I could recognize as a gourd. I appreciate the work you put into your pieces but to me I find it difficult to see a gourd. They tend to look like many other pieces that are made from cast pieces paper mache fimo or ceramic.

You do beautiful work!

Sorry I am not qualified to answer since I have been to only one gourd show and just planted the seed that purchased--I was really impressed with the art involved. Your projects are lovely good luck on your business and fun.

I had trouble putting a price on the first one because it didn't give dimensions but I'm guessing a banana gourd is 6-8 in. From the looks however I bet you have a ton of time involved. I've only been working with gourds for 3 years and have worked with gourds 2. I have a farm gift shop that I sell gifts that grow on the farm. I have trouble with pricing as well. You are a talented artist so you have to take that into account along with your time. I am not an artist but can copy simple things or am more of a craft person. Some tidbits that may help. Someone once told me that people like the words natural home-made or one of a kind. With natural people think it is better. She told me they didn't care if it came from Indiana or India as long as it was natural. I noticed that in your add you mentioned Missouri Mohair and mink. I've not bought those two items so as a consumer I don't have any idea of the value of those two items. Personally from the gourd art that I sold this past fall in my shop I sold more of the smaller gourd ornaments than I did my larger gourds. I sold more baskets than I did my decorated and painted gourds. Keep in mind that I'm not an elaborate artist like you and I'm just beginning. My shop is not solely based on gourds and it is only in the fall. We raise pumpkins miniature gourds Indian corn and make our own straw bales (3sizes) and have a corn maze. This was just the first year for me to sell the crafted gourds and I only had 60-75 crafted ones to sell. Hope this helps. If you have any pointers for me please pass them on. I had several requests for the dried gourds so this year I am going to sell those dried and cleaned. I have apple birdhouse egg swan ladle. I'm looking for prices for them and easy ideas for egg gourds. People seemed to like ornaments. I had them displayed on a lighted tree so I'm looking for simple ideas. Here I am rambling on. Keep up the good work. If I can help in any way please let me know. I love exchange ideas. For me this is new territory to have a shop and know what sells. Hope this helps. If you have any pointers for me I would appreciate it.

The reason I priced your gourd art at my level is the rarity of buying a one of a kind piece. Even though you make many that are similar none are exactly alike. I grow gourds and know they are very inexpensive until an artist gets their hands on them. Your work is very good but where I live here in Tenn. A gourd is mostly used as a utensil not as art which is what I would like to see more of. P S I am an artist also but not on gourds. Maybe I will start doing them.

MY Mom always said I have champagne tastes and a beer budget. So I come by that honestly. That said I feel artists need to be well paid for their work but there's a big difference between what I

think something is worth and what I can afford to pay. (The prices I posted were sort of in between - more than I can afford and probably less that the items are worth.) There's a big difference too on the purpose and how much I fall in love with something. I might buy a \$15 item just for fun if it caught my fancy. A \$25 item for a special friend and I might save up for a year or so for a \$100 item for myself that I'd fallen in love with. LOL Hope this helps a little.

Hello Melynda Do you add the description as you said in the viewing of what we just looked at? Maybe add that to a hang tag even how every gourd is hand grown and hand made in the USA! :-)
As a crafter/candle maker I only buy hand made in the USA. So to me that is a strong point to

make. Also stress that it is a one of a kind. The gourds I make are just bird house gourds I paint and then sponge on flowers and I sell them for \$20.00 but your gourds have so much detail in them and time that I think your customers should know. Ok just my point of view.

Hi Melynda the prices I gave are only reflected by what I could maybe afford but more than likely they are worth more then this. keep up the good work I truly enjoy your newsletter and you inspire me so much I only wish I could be half as good thanks

Melynda: Your works of art are just that and as such I have no clue what they are worth. My wife on the other hand would buy some of them no matter what the cost if she liked it. I am new in gourd crafts and stick to making bird houses which I give away as gifts. I don't have any artistic talent at all and can appreciate the gift that you possess. The one thing I do know however is that our time is worth a whole lot more than what people get charged for it. I guess that is why I give my stuff away otherwise my friends wouldn't be able to afford me. Good luck in your quest.

My favorite was Santa. Your artwork is great. I wouldn't buy these pieces (I'm more for the natural look) It was neat.

I appreciate the 'one-of-a-kind'-ness of all art. I really enjoy looking at many different forms of craft/art but shouldn't everyone be able to 'own' some? Frankly I feel most art is priced beyond the reach of the 'average' person. I know the only art I can own is what I make myself - I am supporting my elderly mother as well as my disabled husband. Money is very tight!

I think the prices for your items are reasonable. As an inexperienced gourd crafter I have looked around many websites craft shows and gourd farms to see what crafters are doing and what they are pricing their items for. I grow a few gourds. I also buy gourds and dabble in creating crafts. I know the time and effort you spent in creating your goods. I have one opinion: I believe an individual sincere in purchasing and appreciating gourds and gourd crafts would not question the price for an item.

You might get a more realistic price if you would give a range

Of course I'm only suggesting what I would pay. I admit sometimes they are so overly priced I cannot afford them.

Your work is unique and beautiful

Your work is great!

Only you know the amount of work that goes into each gourd. If you get a general idea what other people charge go by your gut instinct. If people won't pay what you are asking the right person hasn't seen it. Keep it and enjoy your work. You can't give your product away. Keep up the good work. I enjoy what you are doing. It's very creative. I am a crafter who loves to make dolls fabric items and paper mache. Pricing has always been a struggle for me too. Good luck and keep up the good work.

Melynda I live in the southern part of United States and I also have a hard time pricing pieces. It's nice to know I'm not the only one having trouble with prices. The pieces that you shared here are beautiful.

Melynda first off I admire your creativity & your passion for your arts & gourds. I really feel that the pricing of the gourds should correspond with location higher pricing for the more affluent neighborhoods galleries etc.

The prices I listed might be a bit low. I live in Texas right around the corner from a gourd farm so the prices of the gourds are very cheap. I know in other parts of the country the gourd you begin with would be much more expensive. You do beautiful work. I have painted some birdhouse gourds with one-stroke flowers. I love painting gourds.

I find that everyone loves gourd gifts not many people know what to pay for them. I have a hard time pricing mine also. I have started to try to track time on each piece to come up with a fair price. It isn't always accurate but it seems to work well.

I completed your survey and gave prices that are probably very low considering the time materials and particularly your considerable expertise and ability. The prices are based upon what I think someone would pay for the items; I'm new at gourds and what people might want and pay for them. I (try to) sell gourds that are painted (one color) and there is no way I can get the actual cost for my time involved particularly if I include the time spent growing them. But I do sell a few and this coming year should be a little bit better; however I'll never be able to charge enough to cover my expenses and make much money. It's just a little extra income for something I like to do. Your work is fabulous but I'm just not in tune with what people pay for this type of thing--we need to find the right buyer for our particular talents. (Keep in mind I'm new at this.)

We only grow a few gourds mainly just to watch them grow but we sure do enjoy them. We were visiting son in Austin TX. and he took us to a gourd show there and we sure did enjoy that. Upon our return from Japan we did some woodcraft and made many craft shows and we know how much work you put into your projects. We enjoy your newsletter. Thank you.

How long did it take you to complete each of the projects? Sometimes I price my works on how long it takes to complete them as well as the extras I put into it i.e. material trinkets etc. They are all very beautiful and certainly products to be treasured. :)

Being a sales & marketing person as well I feel as if pricing varies depending upon the market you are targeting. Is it a general audience? If so then the prices are as I indicated. If you are targeting a more select upper scale audience then add approx. 35% to the prices indicated Have a great day.

I have found that my prices have to vary depending on what sale I am at. If I am in a better store or area my prices are higher. I know it is a lot of trouble re-pricing things but I have found it to be worth it.