

So Really—What is LICENSING?

BECOMING A BRAND TAKES PATIENCE AND FLEXIBILITY.

BY LINDA MARIANO

"Rising Light, Oia, Greece"
by John Scanlon

YOU'VE HEARD THE TERM "licensing" or "art licensing"—and you think you understand what it means. To the uninitiated, it's simply taking a piece of artwork and applying it to a product. Sounds easy enough, right? But in fact, there is a whole multi-billion dollar industry that revolves around licensing—and only a small part of that industry is called Art Licensing. So let's delve a little deeper and clarify where the art world belongs in this exciting arena.



In technical terms, licensing typically refers to the owner of a piece of intellectual property giving rights to another party to use the intellectual property in exchange for some compensation. Examples include a musician allowing a radio station to use her original music in a promotion; Disney granting Mattel the rights to develop and sell "Tinker Bell" dolls; or the Victoria & Albert Museum granting rights for a full array of products inspired by the world's leading museum of art and design. All of these opportunities fall under the umbrella of licensing.

Look around you right now and there will be something within your view that started as someone's intellectual property. Someone created it, they owned it, it belonged to them as the originator. Whether what is in your view is a book, a poster, a mug, a notepad, a computer, or a telephone, all of these items are involved in a license of some sort. And as a result of that item sitting there in front of you, the originator that owns it is receiving compensation for the use and sale of his or her intellectual property.

Of course, it's easy to see the appeal of maximizing the income from a piece of artwork. A singer doesn't just sing his new songs for his fans, but also produces a CD and sells thousands, even millions, of copies. A popular writer finishes her next novel—and it doesn't just sit on a shelf, it goes to a publisher and is sold nationwide, maybe even internationally.

In the Art industry, licensing can take two forms. The first is Art Publishing: the artist grants rights to an art publisher or art distributor to use a particular piece or collection of art, usually for creating and selling prints of the artwork. Art Licensing is the second form: granting rights to a manufacturer to use an artist's work on consumer products—anything from mugs and plates to stationery, apparel, home furnishings, and more. So how does it

"Fab Calla Lillies" by Joan Beiriger



"LICENSED ART IS IMAGE-DRIVEN."

launch a new product line.

For the most part, licensed art is image-driven. Whether for framed prints and galley wraps, or for consumer products on calendars and greeting cards, images and themes that are seen every day and evoke an emotional response are the most sought-after types of art. So artwork with flowers, animals, butterflies, seashells, coastal, and wine images, or humorous characters that are cute, beautiful, amusing, inspiring, and so on are all right on target. By contrast, abstract art and designs have a more limited opportunity for licensing. They may have vibrant colors and an interesting composition that will work for more limited collections or markets. But the hard fact is they will not have the wide appeal of an artwork collection centered around cats or dogs, for example.

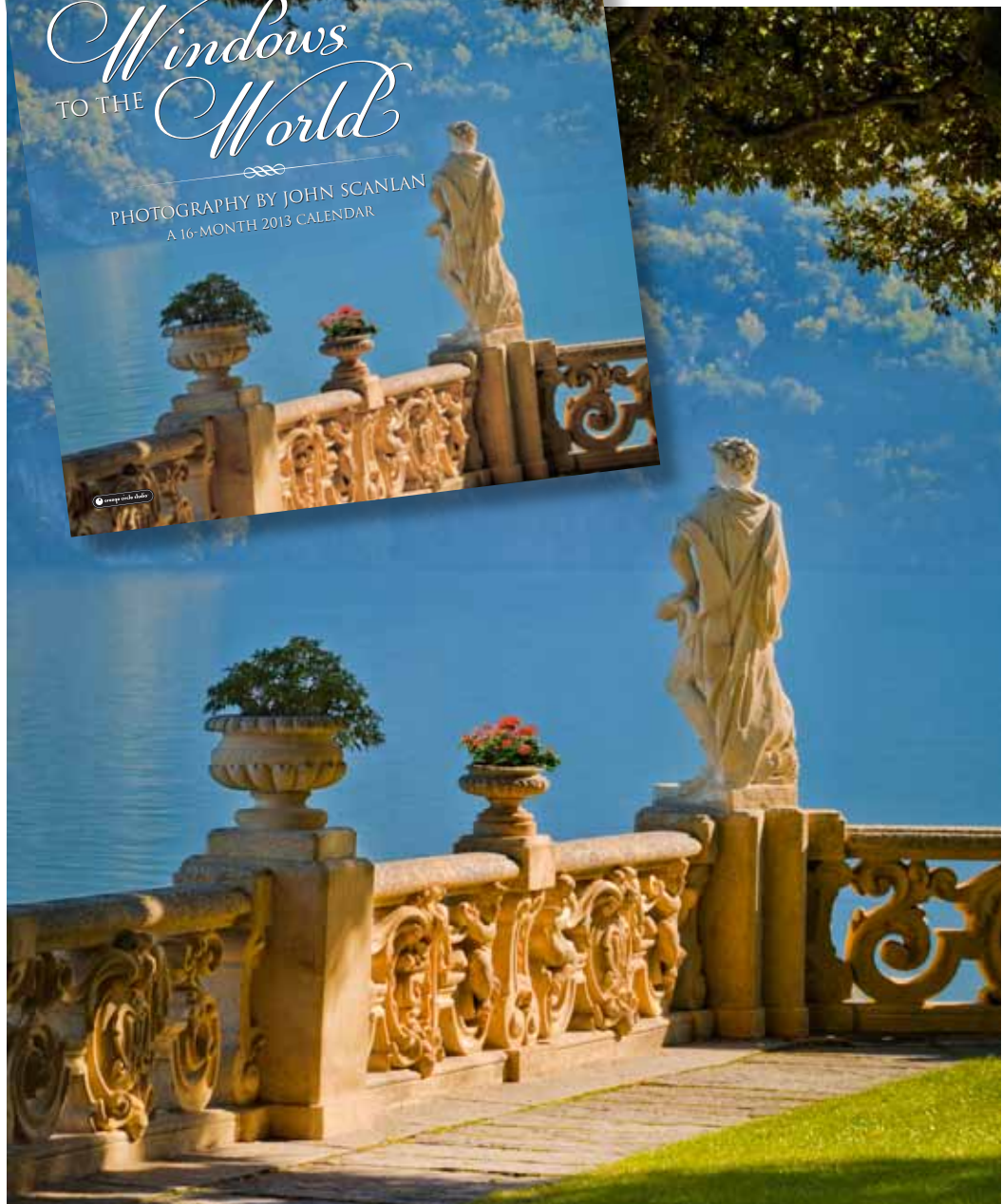
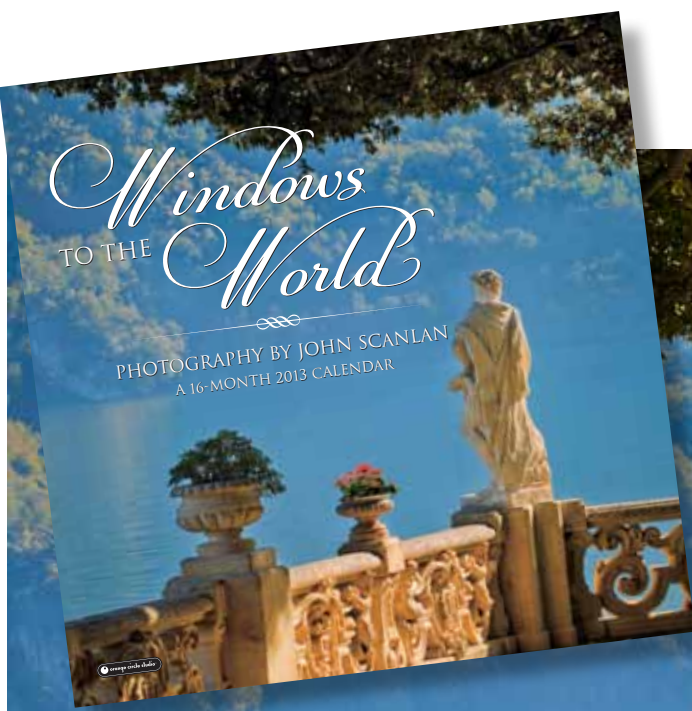
One of the key ways to figure out if your art is licensable



"Peachy Tulips" by Joan Beiriger

happen? How does art get licensed? Is all art licensable?

The fact is that it is possible for artists to license any art style and any theme. But the key to launching in the Art Licensing world is to have a collection of artwork that is themed to have mass appeal to a wide variety of consumers. Art publishers and manufacturers are looking for art that will increase the sales of their products—which is in fact the whole purpose of Art Licensing. They may be looking for art to fit a particular theme or to extend an existing product line or something fresh and innovative to



“IT CAN TAKE YEARS FOR AN ARTIST’S WORK TO BECOME PART OF A MANUFACTURER’S PRODUCT LINE.”

er’s product line. It may sit in their files lingering for a decision for months or longer. Even if a manufacturer said yes today, it is likely preparing for a product launch a year or more away. And if the product is for a particular retailer, the process can have further delays waiting for the retail buyer to add the collection to their assortment. As in most things, patience is a virtue, so don’t be dismayed if you find yourself playing the waiting game.

Of course, there’s much more to be said about Art Licensing. For those attending Artexpo New York, please join me on Sunday, March 24, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. for an informative seminar “Your Top 10 Checklist for Understanding Art Licensing” and we’ll explore all of this and more in added depth. In the meantime, use the starting points here to explore the business of Art Licensing. And I’ll hope to see you at Artexpo New York! **ABN**

All photographs courtesy of the artists. Linda Mariano can be reached at lmariano85@yahoo.com.

John Scanlan,
“Reverie-Lake
Como, Italy”

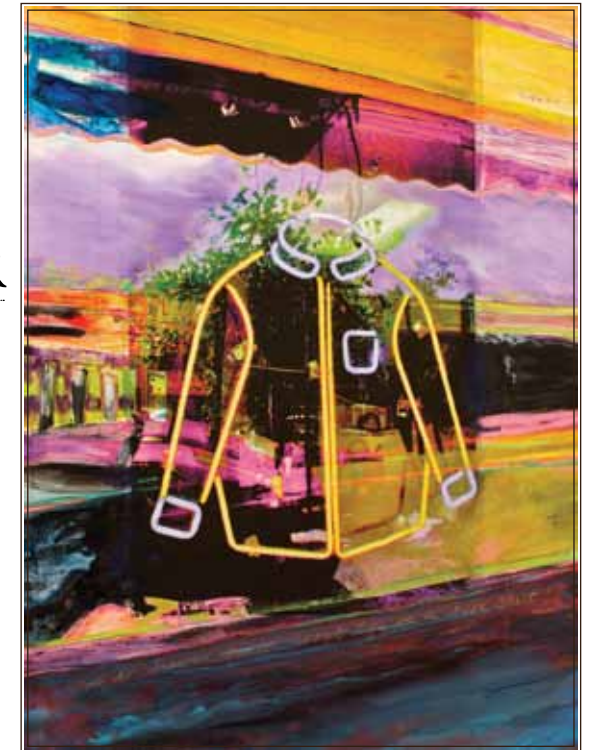
is to get it out there and get feedback from as many people in the licensing industry as possible. Find people who are experienced in Art Licensing and who will give you a truthful and candid opinion. Take their input and use it to your advantage in deciding how to develop your art further so it can be licensed.

Another important way to gauge the licensing appeal of a particular art collection is to look at the artwork and products of people who have been successful in licensing their art. Mary Engelbreit, Laurel Burch, Warren Kimble, Jim Shore, Paul Brent, Susan Winget, John Scanlan, and Thomas Kincade to name a few. Of course, artists need to do and create what they love, but there may be a way to make slight modifications that will make the work more appealing for Art Licensing. Certainly, artists that are successful in Art Licensing are constantly evolving their art. It really becomes part of the strategy!

Artists and their work seldom get sudden success—if it comes, it’s often a process that takes years. It is the same with Art Licensing. It can take years for an artist’s work to become part of a manufactur-



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