




THE INTERVIEW

BY JANE CONNOLLY



Learn the art of business with Crista

ARTISTS can get to grips with the business world by taking part in a special workshop in Tunbridge Wells.

Although the life of an artist might seem far removed from the world of commerce, even creative people need to know how to make a living from their passion. Art consultant Crista Cloutier invites Kent artists to join her for a one-day workshop at the Wobblybridge Art Gallery, where she hopes to equip them with some key tools for a successful career.

Cloutier hails from America and while running her own award-winning gallery in Phoenix, Arizona, she frequently came across this problem.

"One of the things they don't teach you in art school is how to handle your business as an artist," she said. "I see it all the time. When you look at art schools, the number of people who actually go on to be working artists is very few. I worked a lot with university students when I had the gallery and they just asked so many questions, I realised they were not being prepared. They didn't really know what would happen after graduation. They'd been in a rarefied world where someone was telling them what to make and how to make it, but they had no idea how to price the work or get into a gallery."

Cloutier also ran an art publishing compa-

ny in the US for 10 years, before love brought her to Tunbridge Wells. This means she has seen the art world from the perspective of both a gallery owner and an art-seller, so she understands the need for artists to have business acumen.

"From what I understand, classes like this in the past have been subsidised, so people are not used to one-off workshops like this," she said. "People in the States are more likely to take these classes than in England. But we need to get people to take the leap and see it as an investment in their career."

Cloutier divides her time between the US and Tunbridge Wells, but the opening of the Wobblybridge Art Gallery earlier this year led to exciting new possibilities.

"I do the workshop in the States and when Paul Leeson opened the gallery, we started chatting about different ideas," she said. "He was excited about it and the idea of it becoming a regular thing, because there are so many artists in the area."

Artists who take part in the workshop will learn important skills like how to approach galleries, how to market their work to the public and how to reach their career goals.

"If this works, I would love to do more, because I just love connecting with artists and helping them to find their passion."

• **The Working Artist takes place on Saturday, August 28, and costs £125. To find out more, visit www.theworkingartist.co.uk or call 01892 548260.**