



## *A Chat with Felix Lu*



### An Interview with Felix Lu of Felix Comic Art

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Today we sit down and chat with **Felix Lu**, of [Felix Comic Art](#). Felix has become a well-regarded art rep in recent years and has built up an [impressive clientele of creators](#) including the likes of EOC-favorite **Skottie Young** and the legendary **Paul Pope**. As many of our show's listeners know, I'm a passionate art collector and have

gotten to know most of the art dealers in the industry fairly well. Felix is absolutely one of the "good guys" in that he cultivates great artists, is fair (to both his artists and his customers), and has impeccable customer service. Enjoy the chat!

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**Jason Wood (JW):** Felix, thanks for taking the time to chat today.

**Felix Lu (FL):** You're welcome! It's my pleasure, I've become a real fan of the [11 O'Clock Comics Podcast!](#) I hope we can do each other's podcasts this year!

**JW:** Absolutely! I know you like to do your show in person, so that means we'll need to try to connect at a con this year. We do our show via the interwebs (Skype) so it'll be much easier to have you on at some point.

In what seems like a short time, you've become one of my favorite original art dealers on the planet. What's your origin story? When did Felix Lu – comic and art fan – decide to become a professional rep?

**FL:** Wow, thanks!

I started off as (of course) a comics fan. Many years later, I became a comic art collector. Many years after that, I became a rep.

That happened almost by accident. In late 2012, I was surfing eBay, when a piece of art caught my eye. It was a page from [THE MANHATTAN PROJECTS](#). Which I hadn't read yet. Now, I usually only collect art from books I've read and loved. Up to that point, I don't believe I'd ever bought published art from something I hadn't read before. In this case, though, the art was being sold by the artist of *THE MANHATTAN PROJECTS*, **Nick Pitarra**.

I recognized Nick's name as someone I had tried to commission in the mid-2000s, but who never got around to it. But I had always liked his art. So I threw in an impulse bid. And I ended up winning! I think by just one bid increment.

When I got the art, I loved it (art always looks better in person!). I then bought the first *THE MANHATTAN PROJECTS* trade to find out what it was all about. It was the best comic I'd read in years. Of course, this meant I had to get more of the art!

And over the next year or so, I did.

**JW:** That makes so much sense. I actually remember first meeting you years ago at C2E2 in Chicago at Nick's table. I was chatting with him while he drew something on a jam piece of mine. I had **recently bought a page from him** and he was telling me that he regretted letting it go and would happily buy it back if I ever wanted to sell it. You were at the table too and were curious about me, and asked to look through my portfolio. That must have been right about when you started thinking of becoming a rep as you weren't yet working with him directly.

**FL:** Yes, that's exactly right. Anyway, I ended up talking to Nick a lot as a result. He was still new in his career, and was hungry. Now that I had gotten to know him, I had a rooting interest in his success. I



### The Manhattan Projects Page in Question...

couldn't help him with his book, but I knew I could help him with selling his art. Which he'd been selling way too cheaply. I paid him more than he was asking, so he knew I was serious. But he didn't know how to promote himself to the collecting world at large. I told him "Nick, I'll build your market for you." He laughed and figured I was kidding around. I laughed, too, because it just came out of me. I really didn't know if I could...but I was reasonably sure I could, even if I only had theories about how to do it. Well, he gave me a shot, and I was able to put those theories into practice. And they worked. It didn't take long for me to get Nick 3X what he'd been getting before per page. **That's how I became a rep, with Nick as my first client.**

After that, I figured if I'm going to rep one guy, I might as well rep two! And so on.



Felix Art Crew, New York Comic-Con, 2015

**JW:** You've cultivated an impressive list of artists. What's your process for finding and signing new creators? Do you have to be a fan of their art personally? Is there a limit to the number of creators you can effectively manage and, if so, how close are you to hitting that limit?

**FL:** I find new guys mostly by staying on top of the new art coming out. I go to the comic shop nearly every week for "research" (haha!), but more importantly, I'm a daily visitor to CAF ([www.comicartfans.com](http://www.comicartfans.com)). I'll see new art that really speaks to me. Then I start to do more research.

I'll also come across guys just from surfing around. That's how I discovered **Daniel Warren Johnson**, from his webcomic, [SPACE-MULLET](#).

**JW:** DWJ is amazing, as is *SPACE-MULLET*. I'm so thrilled to see his rising success, and in particular his new series, *EXTREMITY*, launching from Image this year.

**FL:** As you know, it's impossible to see everything by myself, so getting referrals from my guys helps a ton, too. Nick (Pitarra) has been a big assist there, especially. Now, he's a big champion of young artists, and will want me to rep all of the ones he shows me, so I have to identify what speaks to me the most. And when I see someone like **James Harren**, who Nick introduced me to? That's a very easy decision.

Anyway, yes, I have to be a fan myself. I have to want to collect their art myself. So when I tell you I think a guy is great, I'm putting my money where my mouth is! The guys I rep reflect my personal taste in comics quite a bit. I generally favor creator-owned books, for example, over the Big 2.

**JW:** Well, you know that we've got similar tastes from how often I send you a page request! [Ha ha]. At last count, I own art from 15 of your artists.

**FL:** When there's someone I want to add, I just need the chance to make my pitch. Which I believe is fairly persuasive, especially since I have the track record now to back it up.

These days, the word-of-mouth has been fantastic, and I'm very grateful for it. I do get approached often by artists to rep them. I wish I could take them all, but yes, I am aware that there is a limit to what I can manage. I built my roster up slowly; I don't hand out spots easily. I'm not interested in accumulating the most names and having the biggest roster. When I bring a guy on, I like to think that means something. As opposed to someone who will add anyone and everyone. That means nothing.

**JW:** What would you say are the keys to your success? Speaking as a customer, I've found your professionalism both in terms of communication, fairness with pricing, and expeditious handling of orders and shipping as major reasons why I'm a frequent, return customer.

**FL:** Thank you again!

I'm a collector, first and foremost. I know how I like to be treated. As a collector, my experiences with buying from reps have been a mixed bag. So I know the difference.

Along those lines...there's a LOT of art out there. There are a lot of artists selling their art, either by themselves or through reps. I don't expect everyone to only want art from my guys. But if someone likes the work of two artists equally, one repped by me, and the other repped by someone else? I want my



**James Harren, Rumble, Issue 15, Page 12**

service to be the tiebreaker. I want what I can offer to be the reason that buyer chooses my guy's art, over the other artist's.

I've practiced this from day one. I've heard that some other reps are now responding by trying to do better, and that's great. I'm glad for their artists and I'm glad for collectors who buy from them. But habits are hard to break, so I don't want to ever be in a position where I have to change my behavior that dramatically.

**JW:** Long before you were a rep, you were an avid original art collector. When did you first start collecting art? How does your history as a collector serve your efforts as a rep?

**FL:** I first started collecting art seriously in 2005. Prior to that, I had been aware of it, and even gotten a couple of pieces, but it wasn't until 2005 that the bug got me good. Then it was all over. And now I'm a rep, which should serve as a cautionary tale for everyone else!

But now that I am a rep, [my history as a collector](#) has been crucial to how I approach this business. As a collector, my experience has run the spectrum of freebie sketches to high-end vintage art. I know the collectors, I know the hobby, I know the market. I've been lucky to make many, many friends in the hobby. Those relationships with fellow collectors have also been enormously beneficial.

**JW:** We've seen exponential increases in the price of original art in recent years, do you expect price inflation to persist? If not, do you envision a major crash/correction or more of a leveling off?

**FL:** You're the finance pro, so I'm sure you could tell us about how all the cheap money being printed non-stop these last few years has had an effect on asset values. So there's that. Specific to the comic art hobby, it all starts at the top, with high-end vintage art. Public sales, especially auction results, create confidence in values, and then that trickles down. To a degree, we're all complicit. We all want to believe.

**In the short term, I'm sorry to say that yes, I do believe prices will continue to climb.** We are not at the inflection point yet. When we do get there, I don't see a crash, but a slow decline. At the very least, a plateau. I ask even the most bullish comic art "investors", do you really expect this to keep going up forever?

On the other hand, a friend of mine posed this question to me: If you were to go in a time machine that took you 100 years into the future, which would you take with you (you can only choose one): One million dollars? Or one million dollars worth of comic art (presumably well-chosen, quality art)?

Of course, we know that \$1M will be worth less 100 years from now, due to inflation (assuming the currency even still exists...I still have French francs in my drawer from a trip I took in the '90s, thinking I'd go back!). I'm sure the original question was about gold or some other hard asset, and comic art is the substitute here to make it relevant to our hobby...but regardless, it *\*almost\** makes sense to gamble with the art. Crazy!

**JW:** You're articulating an argument for hard assets of any kind. They tend to be solid inflation hedges. But I do think we can't underestimate the role that generational wealth cycles play on certain types of art,

particularly nostalgic art like comic book work. Twenty years ago no one thought bronze age comic books would ever fetch the high prices of gold and silver age books. Yet, as the people who grew up in the bronze age reached a point in their lives where they had wealth, the bronze age books skyrocketed in price. The same holds true for art. Will *DARK KNIGHT* and *WATCHMEN* pages always fetch higher prices? Probably. But will a book that was “hot” for readers now but will be a forgotten apostrophe in twenty years hold its value? I’m dubious.

That’s why I NEVER buy art as an investment. I’m fortunate that many of my pieces have theoretically risen in value, but I’ve never sold a piece of art and don’t presume they’ll fetch more money in the future.

**My advice to friends getting into the hobby is simple – Buy art because you love it, and because it’s visually stunning. The rest will take care of itself.**

**FL:** I 100% agree. Run, run, fun far away from the guys trying to convince you to buy comic art as an investment!

**JW:** I remember you telling me once that you don’t think many comic readers understand there are original pieces of art associated with the work they’re reading in books. Do I remember that correctly?

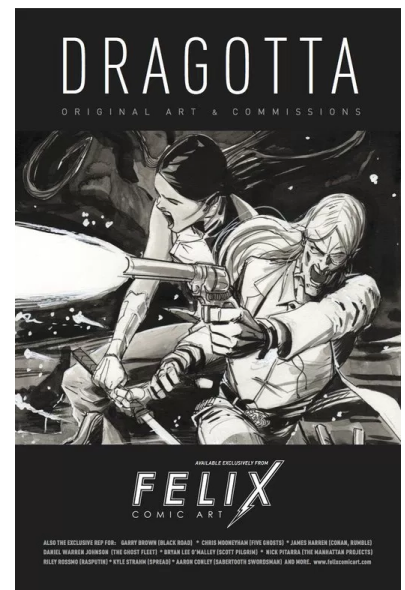
**FL:** Yes! With modern art, there are still fans/readers who don’t know about original art. That’s still an untapped market, believe it or not. Only a small percentage of active readers are aware that original art exists for the book they’re holding in their hands. I know because I **started a print ad campaign in 2015** to help expose the hobby to newbies, and I’ve met many who tell me that this is how they discovered original art! The podcast I host and our YouTube videos help, too. So I do believe there’s still growth potential for modern art. Which is great for artists, and not just the ones I rep. I have no idea what the future will bring, but for now I encourage everyone who loves this hobby to help spread the word!

**JW:** Any other advice for young, would-be collectors?

**FL:** Yeah, take your time. Learn and understand what motivates your desire to buy and collect. Refine your taste. Talk to other collectors.

**JW:** How much control do you have on how the art is priced? Do you find yourself making dynamic adjustments to art prices based on the perceived supply and demand? Do creators that work with you bristle at the idea of reducing their prices, even if you think it’s vital to help increase unit sales?

**FL:** Pricing is a collaborative process. The artists have ultimate control, of course, as they can simply choose not to sell...but I do influence the pricing strongly. It doesn’t take long for the artists to realize that I have a pretty decent handle on the market. And isn’t this knowledge what they’re paying me for?



**Nick Dragotta Ad Campaign**

There's no dynamic pricing with us because there doesn't need to be...I try to get pricing right from the start. I don't play the game of starting off with inflated prices, and then giving artificial discounts to trick buyers into thinking they got a "deal". There's one site in particular where the art seems like it's "on sale" more than it isn't. So what's the real price? Is someone who buys art from them when it's not on sale, a sucker? They've trained their buyers to wait for the sale. With us, the price is the price.

We sell a large volume of art from our site for all the artists. I suspect more than any other rep, even with a relatively small roster. That's mostly due to the quality of the art, but I also believe that knowing the market, along with a commitment to service, have been key, too.

**JW:** My accountant and wife can attest to the volumes you move! [Ha ha].

Thanks so much Felix, this was a true pleasure. What's the best way for people to get in contact with you?

**FL:** Prior to becoming a rep, I had close to zero online presence, but that's changed completely since starting Felix Comic Art. You can find me first and foremost at my website, [www.felixcomicart.com](http://www.felixcomicart.com), and can reach me via email at [comcart@felixcomicart.com](mailto:comcart@felixcomicart.com). All our social media links are located at the top of the page (that would include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, our YouTube channel, and our podcast page on Libsyn).

Thanks, Jason!

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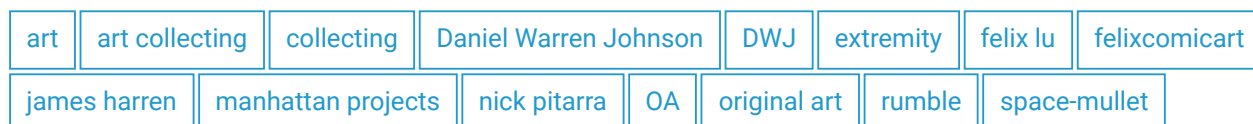
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