

## AbaF

# Artist-run initiatives and community access galleries

### **What is an Artist-run initiative?**

- Artist-run initiatives and collectives provide exhibition spaces and some assistance in mounting an exhibition. Some Artist-run initiatives have a formal application process with exhibitions selected by a committee. If an artist is selected to exhibit, in some instances a hire fee is paid to the Artist-run initiative.
- An Artist-run initiative does not act as an agent for the artists it exhibits, and is not responsible for representing an artist on an ongoing basis; nor does an Artist-run initiative manage an artist's career. The role of full gallery representation is usually undertaken by commercial galleries.
- Work exhibited in an Artist-run initiative may be made available for sale to visitors, but the management of related transactions usually remains the artist's responsibility.

### **What is a community or access gallery?**

- Many public art galleries, museums and other government funded arts spaces have an exhibition space that is available to artists - particularly those from the local area or community.
- These spaces are not curated by the gallery. Artists apply to have exhibitions held in these spaces, similar to the process for Artist-run initiatives.
- Terms and conditions usually apply along with a hire fee. The gallery director, or a selection committee, will make a decision about which artists will have the opportunity to exhibit.

### **How do I find the right gallery for my work?**

Deciding on the right space to exhibit your work is an important step in ensuring the success of your exhibition and the development of your career.

- It is valuable to research a number of galleries in your region or state and create a short list of galleries that you consider to be suitable for the exhibition of your work.
- Most galleries have websites that will provide helpful information on their business, such as, the type of work they exhibit, the gallery's selection criteria and process, as well as terms, conditions and associated costs.
- Visit the galleries to ensure they are suitable spaces to exhibit your work. You may need to re-consider your shortlist after visiting the gallery spaces, as some may not suit your needs.
- Visit the galleries to see how they operate from a visitor's perspective – is the gallery accessible, easy to find, close to public transport?
- Once you have finalised your shortlist of Artist-run initiatives and or Community Access Galleries, you need to determine how you will apply for an exhibition. Some galleries will have a formal application process usually available on a website, while others may require an appointment with a gallery staff member.
- Remember, if you intend to meet a staff member at the gallery, telephone first and make an appointment, as the appropriate person may work part-time or may not be available if you just drop in.

### **The proposal and approach**

- Most Artist-run initiatives have a selection criteria and application forms.
- It is important that you read the forms and requirements carefully. Fill them in and provide the items/support material requested.
- Only give the information that is required.
- The process is similar to a job application or funding application so you need to ensure that you give the selectors the information they require in the format they ask for. If in doubt about information, ring the gallery for clarification.

## **Considerations when choosing an Artist-run apace or community access gallery**

These are some of the things you need to consider when choosing a space to exhibit in.

### Gallery management

- How is the gallery managed – what is its management structure – is it a committee of management or a board?
- Is it incorporated?
- Who is on the management committee?
- How is the management team selected?
- How are decisions made and who selects the artists to exhibit – is it the entire committee or a selection committee?
- What is the selection process?
- What are the mission/objectives/goals of the gallery?
- Who has the gallery exhibited in the past?
- How do they represent their artists?

### Gallery Space

- Is it well managed?
- Does it have a good reputation?
- Is it well known?
- Is it included in gallery directories and/or tourist information brochures, websites or other promotional material?
- Where is the gallery located – is it a high profile site?
- Is it easy to find and easy to get to?
- Is it near good public transport?
- Does it have good parking?
- Are there other galleries nearby?
- Is it near cafés or a shopping strip?
- Is there disabled access?
- What are the operating days and hours?
- Is there good signage?
- Is the security good?
- Does the gallery have storage space for your works prior to or after the exhibition?
- Does it have appropriate fire exits and fire prevention systems?

### Exhibiting

- Is there a hire fee and, if so, what is it and what are the terms of payment?
- Is there a bond as well as a hire fee?
- How is the gallery set up?
- Do you need to become a member or pay a membership fee to exhibit in the space?
- If you pay a hire fee what services are provided?
- What display equipment is provided - hanging systems, lighting, plinths, display cabinets, labels?
- If you have specific technical requirements such as a DVD player, data projector, screens or other equipment are they provided by the gallery or by you?
- If the gallery provides the equipment are you charged a fee or is it part of the gallery's service?
- What are the insurance arrangements?
- What are the public liability arrangements?
- What are the Occupational, Health and Safety (OH&S) arrangements?
- Who staffs the exhibition – you or someone from the gallery?
- If you are required to sit the exhibition have you got the time to do this?
- What are the access arrangements if you are required to sit the gallery?

- Who is responsible for hanging and dismantling the show?
- Is there storage space available, if you cannot get your works offsite the day the works come down and, if so, are you charged a fee for storage?
- If the gallery is hanging the show do you have input into how the works are hung?
- Can you exhibit as a solo artist or are you required to exhibit with others?
- If you are required to show with others, is it a group show – exhibiting with a large number of other artists - or a shared show - with just one or two others?
- If you are exhibiting with one or two others in a shared exhibition, do you have a say as to who will be exhibited with you?
- Will you have input into how the works are hung in a shared exhibition?
- How will the costs be shared between exhibitors?
- What costs, if any, will I be required to cover for an opening, i.e. postage, invitation printing etc?
- Will there be labels for each work and/or a list of works?
- Is there a catalogue and, if so, what format is it in? Who pays for it?
- Who is the catalogue sent and given to?
- What are the sales arrangements – is there a commission and, if so, what is it?
- Who is selling your work and how are they representing you? Do they know much about you and your work?
- Do they have your permission to negotiate the price and terms of sale?
- What are the gallery's arrangements for people to collect sold works?
- What are their arrangements/policies in relation to theft or damage of a work?

*NB. Commission is usually taken if the gallery is providing services such as hosting the exhibition, providing marketing support such as advertising and actively promoting your work. It is not usually taken if you are hiring the venue for a fee.*

#### Other things to consider

- Does the gallery have a marketing plan or strategy and, if so, what is it?
- How do they market their exhibitions – website, information sheets, newsletter, invitations, media?
- What is the website like? Who do they have links with?
- Who is invited from public and commercial galleries?
- Who is invited to the opening from the media?
- Who does the gallery send media releases to and what is the format and content?
- Does it have media packs and, if so, what do they contain and who are they sent to?
- Do they have paid advertising and, if so, from whom and what does it consist of?
- Does the gallery have free listings and, if so, with whom and what do they consist of?
- Who pays for the advertising?
- Will they be actively promoting you to the media and establishing speaking opportunities and interviews?
- Do you have access to the names and contact details recorded in the visitors' book during your exhibition?
- Does the gallery have partners and, if so, who are they?
- How are these partners represented? What benefits are provided to them?
- Are you comfortable with the gallery's partners – do they sit well with your brand, image and philosophies?
- Are the gallery's partners compatible with your exhibition partners or potential partners?

#### Resources:

One of the best resources is feedback from other artists who have exhibited at the space. It is valuable to ask them about their experience - what worked, what didn't, and why. Galleries keep a list of artists who have exhibited with them, and whilst privacy laws prevent staff from giving out

contact details, they may assist you in making contact with other artists. Exhibitions and artists are also listed in a range of guides so you can also attend relevant exhibitions and meet the artists.

*The Arts Law Centre of Australia*

Provides a range of checklists and guides such as:

- Artist-Gallery Checklist
- Sponsorship Agreements Guide
- Contracts: An introduction

The Gunnery

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T: 02 9356 2566 or 1800 221 457

F: 02 9358 6475

E: [artslaw@artslaw.com.au](mailto:artslaw@artslaw.com.au)

W: [www.artslaw.com.au](http://www.artslaw.com.au)

*National Association of Visual Artists (NAVA)*

Has brief information on the following topics:

- Finding a Commercial Gallery or Agent
- Establishing a Professional Relationship
- Developing a Contract or Agreement
- “Exhibiting, Selling and Collecting Art and Craft” from *The Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), NAVA, Sydney 2004.

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W: [www.visualarts.net.au](http://www.visualarts.net.au)

*The Australia Council for the Arts*

Provides a list of exhibition spaces and galleries across Australia

372 Elizabeth Street

Surry Hill NSW 2010

T: 02 9215 9000 or 1800 226 912

F: 02 9215 9111

E: [mail@australiacouncil.gov.au](mailto:mail@australiacouncil.gov.au)

W: [www.australiacouncil.gov.au](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au)

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