

AbaF

Commercial galleries and dealers

What is a commercial gallery?

- Commercial galleries are primarily small businesses interested in long term, ongoing relationships with artists that provide an income to both parties.
- The gallery is usually responsible for all aspects of arranging exhibitions including their frequency.
- The gallery will arrange the hanging of the work, as well as promotion and media.
- Commercial galleries have a developed client base.
- Commercial galleries often hold artists' work in 'stock', or on commission for a set period after the exhibition.

The Australian Commercial Galleries Association (ACGA), the Australia Council for the Arts and National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) have produced a '*Code of Practice for Australian Commercial Galleries and the Artists they Represent.*' This provides a thorough description of the artist – gallery relationship and the obligations of both parties. Download a copy of the Code of Practice from www.acga.com.au.

It is suggested you read the ACGA Code prior to approaching commercial galleries, and it is essential reading if you are entering into a relationship with a commercial gallery.

Approaching a commercial gallery

- Commercial galleries are interested in professional artists who are committed to making and selling their artworks as a career.
- The capacity for commercial galleries to take on new artists is limited and artists need to be aware that relatively few artists become part of a commercial gallery 'stable'.
- Commercial galleries are approached by many artists. So in order for you to make your approach worthwhile it is best you research galleries prior to approaching them.
- Usually a gallery will have a website that provides information on who owns or manages it, their objectives and/or mission, who the gallery represents, some idea of the architecture of the gallery and its style, the location and nature of the gallery's exhibitions and exhibition openings.
- If you are interested in a gallery it is advisable for you:
 - visit the space,
 - attend an opening and
 - be put on their mailing list.
- Be aware that even if a gallery likes your work it is unlikely they will be able to exhibit your work quickly. Most have exhibition schedules booked six months to a year, or more, in advance.

There are four key things you need to have in place when approaching a commercial gallery:

1. Your curriculum vitae (C.V.)
2. Documentation of your work
3. A proposal
4. A realistic idea of the price you want to sell your works for

How do I find the right gallery for my work?

- Research galleries to ascertain what sort of business they run, what their reputation is with other artists, their clients and the general public
- Visit gallery websites
- Visit galleries
- Talk to other artists
- You are looking for a gallery that will represent, promote and sell your work

- You are also looking for a person or people with whom you can have a mutually beneficial, long term partnership
- It is important you can work with gallery staff and that, like all good relationships, there is trust, good communication and a desire to leverage or grow a relationship that is flexible
- A relationship with a commercial gallery is not only an opportunity for you but also for the gallery. It is a partnership.
- You need to be sure they are reliable partners who will serve your best interests.
- If gallerists are unable to take your work at present, or if your work is not suited to their 'stable', they may still be able to give you valuable advice about your work or the next step you should take. It is worth asking them who else to approach or whether they know another gallery that may be interested in your work.

Resources:

The Arts Law Centre of Australia

The Arts Law Centre of Australia produces a number of sample contracts and agreements for visual artists. These sample documents include:

- Artist-Gallery Agreement (Long Term)
- Artist-Gallery Checklist
- Contracts: An introduction

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National Association of Visual Artists (NAVA)

NAVA's chapter on "Exhibiting, Selling and Collection Art and Craft" in their *Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector* provides useful information.

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Australian Commercial Galleries Association (ACGA)

The ACGA lists their members by state as well as the objectives and services of the organisation. The '*Code of Practice for Australian Commercial Galleries and the Artists they Represent*' can be downloaded from this website.

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References and further reading:

- Arts Law Centre of Australia, *Artist – Gallery Exhibition Agreement Checklist*, (2nd edition), Arts Law Centre of Australia, Woolloomooloo, 2006
- Arts Law Centre of Australia, *Consignment Agreement*, Arts Law Centre of Australia, Woolloomooloo, 2006.
- Arts Law Centre of Australia, *Sale of Artwork*, (4th edition), Arts Law Centre of Australia, Woolloomooloo, 2006
- NAVA , “Exhibiting, Selling and Collecting Art and Craft”, *The Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts Craft Sector*, (2nd edition), NAVA, Sydney, 2004.
- Stokes, James “The artist-gallery relationship”, *Earning a living in the visual arts and crafts*, (3rd edition), Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1997.

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