

The Artist's Marketing Plan

6: ASSESS AND IMPROVE YOUR EXHIBITION AND SALES OPPORTUNITIES

Where are you placing your work so that people have the opportunity to see and to buy it?

Where are you actually making sales? Would you like to continue selling in this manner or would you like to move into new selling venues?

When determining where to show your work, think seriously about your long-range goals.

At the beginning of your career you are focused on building your resume and exhibition record. As you begin to get more comfortable and are thinking more about sales, you may narrow your choices and decide, for instance, that you no longer need to show at coffee shops. Then there comes a point when you cease entering juried shows and dedicate your energy to curated exhibits and gallery dealings.

If you want to increase your sales, consider the foot traffic at a venue. For example, if you are asked to purchase a booth at the local arts festival, ask the organizers what the average attendance is and what the average booth sales are. It is also very helpful to find another artist who has participated in the same event and get their feedback. Some arts festivals are better for lower-end prices, while others have a wide variety and even shoppers who come looking for high-end items. The same is true for galleries and juried exhibitions. You simply have to do your research and know what you're getting into.

You must take into consideration where you are in your career and be realistic about the possibilities, but you must also have a goal that forces you to stretch your abilities.

approaching galleries

As part of your marketing efforts, you may send your portfolio to galleries because you are looking for possible exhibitions and/or representation by that gallery. The reasons to seek gallery representation are many, but among them are: increased exposure (critics review galleries, museum curators visit them), prestige, and the knowledge that someone else is working to help sell your art.

You are ready to approach galleries when you have:

- a recognizable style.
- a large body of work (at least two exhibitions' worth).
- done your homework and understand the artist-gallery relationship.
- researched appropriate galleries where your work might fit in.
- completed some sales on your own.
- built up a résumé you are proud of.

Before you send your presentation materials to a gallery, do your homework. Make sure you are sending it to a gallery in which you can envision your work. It is best if you can visit the gallery in person and check things out. Do not send your materials to anyone and everyone. Dealers have a lot of packets to wade through. They will only become annoyed with you if your materials clearly do not fit into their gallery.

After deciding on appropriate galleries for your work, call and ask for their guidelines for reviewing portfolios. Introduce yourself and begin the process of name recognition. Your professionalism and courtesy will impress them! The gallery's guidelines should help you organize your materials in the best format for that specific gallery. NEVER send unsolicited digital images as attachments to your e-mail. NEVER send unsolicited e-mail to a gallery or dealer that says "Please look at my work . . . Here is a link to my website" or some such thing.

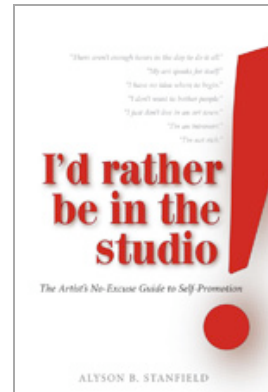
The #1 way to get into a gallery (by a landslide!) is to know someone who will make the introduction for you, such as other artists or collectors. Solution? Meet more people!

The contents of your portfolio for gallery dealers will differ depending on your reason for sending.

To help you with this section, you'll find these pages in *I'd Rather Be in the Studio!*:

Create a portfolio, pages 71-93

Save money and generate buzz, pages 213-223



don't forget about . . .

Locations where you show or sell your art might include:

- coffee shops
- bookstores
- churches
- corporate spaces
- libraries
- juried exhibitions at non-profit spaces
- commercial galleries
- retail shops
- art fairs and festivals
- open studios
- web site(s)
- niche markets (e.g. garden centers if you photograph flowers)

List all of the places you have shown your art in the last two years.

List the places you think you have outgrown or have moved beyond.

Where do most of your sales occur?

assessment of current exhibition and sales venues

Make an honest assessment of exhibition venues using the chart below. I have provided only fictional examples, but note that yours should be as specific as mine. Delete, alter, and assess the opportunities for showing your work.

Consider: location, foot traffic, parking, clientele, safety/security, insurance, personnel/staff, commission, exposure (will the right people see it?), other.

Sample

venue	advantages	disadvantages
Corner Coffee Shop		I've shown here a lot. I think it's time to graduate and move on to more prestigious locations.
Municipal Art Center	More prestigious than my other venues.	
Bank IV, downtown branch	Foot traffic.	Does anyone really look at the art?
Mountain Art Festival		My health prevents me from sitting outside all day, so I no longer think this is a viable venue for me to exhibit.
Open Studio	No commission to sellers.	Liability insurance concerns.
State Biennial	They print a catalogue.	My work could get lost in the sea of so many artists.

Your Turn

venue	advantages	disadvantages

goals for exhibition and sales venues

After thinking about the chart you completed above, organize your opportunities in the order in which you think they should be approached. Dream! Go for it! Get rid of those opportunities that lead to dead ends.

Sample

opportunity	timeline for showing work at this venue	notes / action plan / deadlines
Municipal Art Center	I would like to have an exhibit here by 2007.	I need to meet the curator and begin attending events. I will become a member and volunteer by 04/03.
Bank IV, downtown branch	I think I could have a show here in 2004.	I know the exhibit organizer/curator for Bank IV. I will let him know of my interest by 03/03.
Open Studio	I would like to have at least one open studio each year beginning in 2003.	Build up my mailing list and decide on a theme that would bring people in by 12/02.
State Biennial	Send slide entries in 2004.	Get 2002 catalog and study entries, juror's comments, and award winners by 06/03.

Your Turn

opportunity	timeline for showing work at this venue	notes / action plan / deadlines

While you are at it, make sure you think of at least three places where you could show & sell your work immediately:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three places where you would like to show & sell your work in the next two years:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three dreams you have for selling your work:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

next session: promote yourself and your work
What one thing do you want to accomplish before the next meeting?