

Salon Leader Version: Discussion questions in dark blue. My comments to you, the leader, are in *[italics]*.

The Artist's Marketing Plan

6: ASSESS AND IMPROVE YOUR EXHIBITION AND SALES OPPORTUNITIES

[To prepare for this meeting, remind everyone to come with their 10-second introduction and an assessment of their exhibition and sales venues.]

WELCOME!

I will remind everyone of our focus and then we'll go over the agenda for the day. Please help me keep us on schedule and adjourn by the time we agreed upon.

The tenets that will guide our discussions are that we should:

- Be serious about marketing our art. Everyone should come prepared to discuss the subject at hand, bring the materials requested, and share thoughts and ideas.
- Attend all nine sessions (three months of bi-weekly meetings, plus a follow-up meeting one month later). Irregularities in participation will create disharmony and some frustration from other members.
- Participate with positive feedback and support other group members in their endeavors.
- Commit to complete confidentiality when requested. The group must be a safe place for members to feel they can be open, honest, and trusting.

It is very important we're all on the same page here!

As the salon leader, it is my job to lead and facilitate discussion in a democratic fashion, keeping the needs of every member in mind. That means I will try to keep us on task. If we have time, we can tackle other issues, but we must take care of business first and respect one another's schedules.

Today's agenda is this: *[Insert agenda here.]*

Then, at the end of the meeting, I'll have us go around and say one thing we'd like to accomplish before our next meeting. We do this to make a promise to ourselves and to have the support of the group.

Let's start today's topic by talking about where we are showing our work. Then we'll move into where we *want* to be showing our work.

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.

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This is really important: Know when it's time to move on. Know when you've outgrown a place or when it isn't doing you good anymore. It's continuing to show in these types of venues (the types we've moved beyond) that zaps our energy and dampens our spirits. It doesn't do much to enhance our professional reputations either.

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.

Here are some other things to consider when selecting a venue:

- Rental fees
- Foot traffic / Parking / Convenience
- Other business
- Physical space: Security & Insurance
- Physical space: Appearance
- Staff
- Sales commission
- Advertising
- Contacts
- Media coverage

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

Let's talk about everyone's experience with galleries. What is good about them? And what is not so good?

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.

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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.

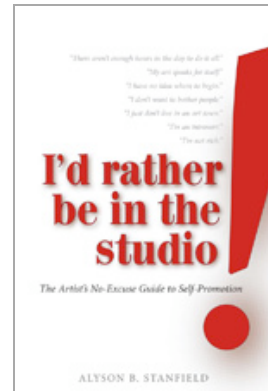
The #1 way to get into a gallery (by a landslide!) is to know someone who will make the introduction for you, such as other artists or collectors. Solution? Meet more people!

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.

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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

[Take the time to discuss where everyone has been showing their work and what the advantages and disadvantages of each venue are.

Try to make sure that there are no personal attacks on staff people at these venues and that criticism remains constructive.]

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You have ultimate control over your careers. You need to have the right contracts and make sure everything is in writing with your venues. It's up to you to clarify all the specifics before the work is installed.

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.

[Again, just a good place for overall discussion.]

Remember, you're part of this salon in order to stretch yourself and have us hold you accountable. We won't be of much help until we know how to support you.

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:

This is especially important for anyone who hasn't shown his or her artwork recently. The idea is to dip your toes in, to keep getting out there and testing the waters.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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

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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What can you do to make this happen? What do you need to be doing every week or every day in order to make this happen?

Three dreams you have for selling your work:

In your perfect world, what will it be? Or, where will it be? Imagine 10, 15, 20 years down the road.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What one thing do you want to accomplish before the next meeting?

BEFORE WE GO

I'd like to take the last 10 minutes and have each of us go around the room. What one marketing project do you want to accomplish before we see each other again?

Remember, it can be anything related to your marketing: visiting two galleries you've never entered before; calling the coffee shop and asking what you need to do to hang your work there; or sending in an entry to a juried show.

What's it going to be?

next session: promote yourself and your work

Be sure to download this section and go over it before our next meeting.
Everyone should come prepared to talk about self-promotions.
Please bring your promotional materials to the next meeting!

[Alternative idea: The ArtBizCoach.com e-class entitled "Shameless Self-Promotion" is intended to provide a lot of ideas for your marketing plan. If your salon members wish to take this class as a group before you move forward, I can offer a group discount. Read about the class at www.artbizcoach.com/classes/self-promo.shtml and email me if you're interested.]