

# Working with Galleries

Dougherty Arts Center

Artist Resource Center Professional Development Workshop Series



# Working with Galleries

The best way to successfully sell your work is by building relationships with potential buyers and collectors over time.

In this workshop we will go over:

- How to get started
- Commercial Sales Galleries
- Wholesale
- Artist-run Galleries
- Non-Profit Galleries

## If you're just starting out...

If you're just starting to show your work, you may have to start at the very beginning and display your work wherever you can.

This can include:

- Coffee shops
- Restaurants
- Hair salons
- Fashion boutiques
- Commercial lobbies
- Anywhere you work will be seen by lots of people – word of good work travels fast and may reach a gallery

# How do I find galleries?

Immerse yourself in your local art scene.

- Attend gallery openings
- Join gallery mailing lists
- Attend artist talks
- Visit open studios

You'll see a lot of the same people and get to know them and they will know you and your art. You will figure out how to navigate the local art scene and gradually opportunities will begin to present themselves.

Many cities have gallery guides or local calendar listings of gallery events. Many art magazines also have an annual gallery guide issue.

# Types of Galleries

The most important thing is to figure out what type of gallery you want to work with.

- Commercial Sales Galleries
- Wholesale
- Cooperative (Artist-run) Galleries
- Non-profit or government run (Dougherty)

# Commercial Sales Gallery

“Commercial art galleries are professionally run businesses that derive their profit from sales of artwork, therefore take great care to select art and artists that they believe will sell and will enhance their gallery's reputation. They spend time and money cultivating collectors. If the artwork sells, the gallery makes a profit and the artist is then paid.” –*ArtSceneToday.com*

## Commercial Sales Gallery cont.

Commercial sales galleries tend to work on consignment and then take a commission. This means that you arrange for them to display your work and if a piece sells, they split the sales with you (generally 60/40 or 50/50).

The gallery's share goes to cover promotion, shipping to clients, and keeping the doors open.

Things to consider with sales galleries:

- Consignment agreement – who is responsible for what, how long will they display your work, what is the split?
- Inventory – be sure to keep your own inventory of your work that is in the gallery and keep it updated and hold the gallery responsible for giving you updates of what sells.
- Payout – galleries generally send out monthly checks for artists. Be sure to know the conditions for payout and how it works.

# Wholesale

Wholesale can work in a couple of ways. A gallery can flat out buy your work and then sell it for whatever price they want, or they can have examples of your work and take orders/commissions from their customers, that you then fulfill.

Your wholesale prices should be less than your retail prices. Generally this is in the 50-60% range.

The benefit to selling your work to a gallery at wholesale is that the transaction is over and done with. The gallery owns your work until they sell it. Your work doesn't just sit in a gallery, waiting to sell and for you to get paid, as it does with a consignment in a commercial sales gallery.



## Cooperative or Artist-Run Galleries

“A co-op gallery (also called artist-run initiatives) usually involves a group of artists who work together to show their work, promote the gallery, and sometimes offer community art classes or workshops. Some co-op galleries will even have studio space available for their members to create artwork on site.

The co-op gallery will require a membership fee, which will go towards gallery maintenance, rent, promotion, etc. You may have to pay a commission to the gallery as well, upon the sale of your artwork.”

*-ArtSceneToday.com*

# Non-Profit or Government Galleries

- Non-profit galleries generally receive public funding that help to cover operational costs, which means they may charge less of a fee (or no fee) to the artist if a piece sells.
- These galleries also tend to display work as limited exhibitions, rather than a constant display of work for sale like a commercial gallery.
- They may determine their gallery exhibition season through an annual call for artists, where artists submit their work and exhibit proposals to be juried.
- The Dougherty Arts Center is such a gallery. We are funded through the City of Austin. We hold an annual call for entry, and do not take fees for application or for sales from the artist.

# How do I get my work in a gallery?

Occasionally you might just be seen by the right person at the right time, such as a gallery curator, and you will be offered a show. This is not generally the case though. So how do you approach galleries?

Many galleries will have an application process that is usually listed on their websites. The process could be an annual call for artists or they may take submission packages at a certain time of year or year-round.

If they don't readily list how they would like to receive submissions, respectfully contact them to ask the process.

**NEVER** show up on a whim to a gallery and expect to talk to them about your work!

# Things to have ready to submit to a gallery

- Artist statement
- Artist resume
- Artist bio
- Exhibition proposal (if applicable)
- Images of your work

# Things to beware of with galleries

- Who covers breakage and at what point?
- When does the gallery pay out?
- Who does the promotion?
- Who covers shipping to and from the gallery?

# How galleries can be good to you

- They are active in the promotion and marketing of your work
- They build long-term relationships with their artists and collectors
- They provide a clear agreement
- They pay out artists on a regular, established basis

# How to be a good gallery artist

- Do your research. Contact galleries that exhibit the kind of work you make.
- Be respectful of their time, whether it be while you are submitting your work or if they represent you already.
- Help to promote your work.