

# ARTIST CHECKLIST: EXHIBITIONS

## INTRODUCTION

When artwork is exhibited, what are the responsibilities of the exhibitor? What are the responsibilities of the artist? What is fixed and what is negotiable? An artist should know the answers to certain questions regarding an exhibition before agreeing to participate.

In a well-organized juried exhibition, most of these questions should be answered in the prospectus. If not, the artist can ask the sponsor directly. In the case of a gallery or museum exhibition, these questions can be asked and answered early in the discussion. Important points can be incorporated into a signed contract.

These are questions, not requirements. The questions should be asked politely without making demands. Not all of the items on the Artist Checklist may be important to you - this list is simply for your consideration as an artist. Don't neglect to ask just because you are uncomfortable, or think it will appear excessively demanding. To the contrary, asking these questions will make you appear to be an experienced professional and avoid potential misunderstandings. Remember, these are not demands, but inquiries.

If you do call an exhibition organizer or a gallery, write down your list of questions first. This will avoid the need for making several calls.

## PARAMETERS OF AN EXHIBITION

These are issues that are usually determined by the exhibition organizers. In some areas, like shipping expenses, artists are frequently asked to bear part of the costs. In other areas, like insurance, the exhibition organizer should take full responsibility. However, it's always good to know the answers to these questions before agreeing to participate

### I. Exhibition Dates

How long is the exhibition? What are the opening and closing dates?

### II. Gallery

Which galleries in the exhibition space will be used for the exhibition?

### III. Insurance

What insurance coverage is provided?

#### **A. Will insurance for the wholesale value of work be provided by the exhibition organizer?**

Insurance should be EVERY artist's minimum requirement. However, artists and exhibition sponsors should know that some states have laws that dictate that a sponsor of an exhibition is responsible for damages to work regardless of whether they have insurance or not. Thus, stating in the prospectus that they are not liable (often described by lawyers as a "chill factor") does not excuse their liability.

Insurance is an essential requirement for any exhibition. The Professional Guidelines Committee recommends that artists refuse to participate in uninsured exhibitions.

**B. When does the sponsor's insurance begin and end?** Generally, exhibitors will assume responsibility for insurance from the moment work is delivered to the exhibition space, until it is delivered back to the artist. If artists are asked to bear the cost of shipping to the exhibition venue, it can be assumed that the artist will also be responsible for insuring their work during shipping.

**C. If this is a traveling exhibition, will work be insured at every venue?** Will one policy be in effect for the entire exhibition tour, or does each venue have its own insurance?

**D. If work is damaged or lost at an exhibition venue or during transit, and if there is a deductible, who pays the deductible?** (The "deductible" is the amount of money that a person buying the insurance pays first as an out-of-pocket expense if there is a claim for damages.) Note that insurance for work in transit is often purchased from the shipper, and this may be different from the insurance covering the exhibition space. Generally, shipper's insurance does not require a deductible.

#### **IV. Contracts**

**A. Does the exhibition venue have a loan form or consignment contract?** Or would they like you to send a copy of a contract that you are accustomed to using? Generally, exhibition organizers will have a standard loan form or consignment contract that they use with all artists. If the organizer does not have any loan form or contract, you cannot be assured of proper legal protection. In this case, send two signed copies of your own contract to the exhibition sponsor with a self-addressed stamped envelope. They should sign one copy and return it in the return envelope.

**B. If the show is traveling, does the exhibition sponsor have one loan form or consignment contract that will represent all venues?** This is very important. Multiple loan forms or contracts can be confusing. If an exhibition requires more than one loan form or contract, make sure you read each one carefully, and that you understand the differences between each venue's conditions.

#### **V. Shipping**

The most common arrangement is for the artist to pay for shipping to the exhibition. If the show will travel after the first venue, the exhibition organizers typically pay all shipping costs after the first show, including returning work to the artist. Costs for shipping should always cover insurance for the wholesale price of the work.

**A.** Who is paying for shipping to the exhibition?

**B.** Who is paying for return shipping to the artist?

**C.** When should work arrive for the exhibition?

**D.** How soon will work be returned after the exhibition closes?

**E.** Will the work be handled and installed by experienced professionals?

**F.** Will the organizer store your boxes? Work should be returned in the original shipping boxes with the original packing materials in good condition. Artists should send their work in reusable packing material, with packing and shipping instructions enclosed.

#### **VI. Security**

What are the arrangements for security of the objects in the exhibition? Are there guards or gallery monitors? Are there after-hours alarm systems? Are there secure exhibition cases?

## VII. Invitations

- A. Who pays for the invitations?** Most reputable galleries will not ask artists to pay for this expense.
- B. Will the artists receive announcements/invitations?** If so, how many?
- C. Will the exhibition organizer mail invitations to people on the artist's mailing list?** How many invitations will the organizer mail for the artist?
- D. Or, if this is a solo show,** can the artist pay an additional fee for extra postcards without the show announcement text? (This allows the artist to use the postcards long after the exhibition is over.)

## VIII. Catalog

- A.** Will there be a catalog?
- B.** Who is paying for the cost of producing the catalog? Generally, it is the responsibility of the exhibition organizer to secure funding for a catalog of a group show.
- C.** Who will write the catalog essay?
- D.** Will the catalog contain a list of the artists, or biographical information about the artists?
- E.** Will every artist have a photo of exhibited work in the catalog?
- F.** Should the artist supply the photo(s) of the objects for the catalog, or will the work be photographed at the exhibition sponsor's expense? (Generally, having one professional photographer to photograph all the work gives the catalog a more uniform, quality appearance, but this is more expensive and time-consuming for the exhibition sponsor.)
- G.** Will there be artist statements in the catalog? How many words should the artist's statement be?
- H.** Will the artist get a copy of the catalog as a participant in the exhibition? How many? Generally, it is a standard courtesy for the group exhibition sponsors to send every artist at least one catalog, and preferably two.
- I.** Will additional catalogs be available for the artists to purchase at a reduced price?
- J.** What will be the size of the catalog? How many color or black & white photos will it include?
- K.** How will the catalog be distributed beyond the exhibition site?

## IX. Sales

- A.** How does the exhibition sponsor handle inquiries regarding sales? Will the exhibitor refer purchase inquiries to the artist, to the artist's recommended gallery, or will the exhibitor sell directly?
- B.** Will a price list be available to viewers?
- C.** Work should be sold at the retail price established by the artist. Artists should make every effort to keep their retail prices uniform wherever they exhibit.
- D.** What percent commission from the retail price does the venue expect?
- E.** Does the exhibition sponsor offer discounts? If so, ask questions:
  - 1. What percentage are the discounts off the retail price?
  - 2. Who absorbs the discount? The artist, the gallery, or both?
  - 3. For more information, see the Guideline on Discounts on this website.
- F.** Will work be removed from the exhibition if it is sold? (It is preferable that work remain for the entire exhibition, especially if a catalog documents the exhibition or the exhibition is traveling to another venue.)
- G.** What is the time frame for payment? Generally, artists should be paid in full within thirty days after the exhibition sponsor is paid.
- H.** Does the artist get the name(s) and complete address of collectors who purchased one-of-a-kind work?

I. If the exhibition is at a museum or art center, is there a retail space appropriate for selling production work, note cards, postcards, etc.? If so, who should the artist contact?

## X. Publicity

A. What type of publicity does the exhibition venue plan? The cost of advertising and publicity should be the responsibility of the exhibition venue.

B. Where and when shall the artist send images for publicity? Should the artist send black & white photos, slides, transparencies or electronic media? Artists can assure better publicity of their work by supplying excellent quality images as far in advance of the exhibition's opening as possible.

## XI. Traveling Exhibitions

A. Will the show be traveling?

B. What and where are the future venues?

C. What are the dates for every stop on the exhibition tour?

D. When will the tour end?

E. When will work be returned?

## CHECKLIST OF ARTIST RESPONSIBILITIES FOR AN EXHIBITION

These are actions that an artist should take to help assure better exposure for work in an exhibition, better handling of artworks, and the most positive outcome for any exhibition regardless of the venue. Many of the items listed below are also important for the artist to consider in an ongoing relationship with a gallery showing your work.

### I. Before the Exhibition

A. **Send superb quality slides** as early as possible.

B. **Send black & white prints** as far in advance as possible. Three months in advance is not too early. All images should be of work to be exhibited. Don't expect the prints or slides sent out for publicity to be returned.

C. **If the exhibition organizer has a website or prints out publicity materials from computer files, send image scans on disk.** Ask what resolution is preferred, and ask which system (PC or Mac) is used.

D. **Send an updated resume.** In an ongoing relationship with a gallery, do this once a year.

E. **Send an artist statement** specific to the work shown.

F. **Send copies of articles or recent publicity.**

G. **Pack your work in a reusable shipping box.** It is best to use new boxes.

1. Double-box all work that is the least bit delicate or fragile. Many jewelers use plastic or Tupperware® containers as a sturdy inner shipping box.

2. Artists should provide clean gloves in each box, if necessary, to avoid fingerprints on your work.

H. **Documentation** to be packed with your work:

1. Label box with your **name and contact information** inside and out.

2. **Unpacking and packing instructions** (as necessary) should be included in the box. It is a good idea to glue these to the inside of the shipping box so they are not lost.

3. **Packing List** (or Inventory) for work shipped, including both retail and wholesale prices.

**4. Condition Report** for work shipped to an exhibition, especially a traveling show. The Condition Report should note any scratches or irregularities.

**5. Display and assembly instructions** in the box as necessary.

**6. Care and maintenance instructions** should be glued to the inside of the shipping box. An additional copy should be included in the box for the gallery or collector to keep for their files.

**I. Consider sending an additional Packing List** (or Inventory) separate from the shipping box for valuable or one-of-a-kind work. This should indicate shipping date, shipping method, and both retail and wholesale prices. If work is not for sale, include the insurance value. This may be sent by mail, fax or e-mail.

**J. ALWAYS double-box** any work that is the least bit delicate or fragile to avoid damage during shipping. Adequate packing is extremely important. Packing should look professional before it leaves the artist's studio in the first place. Galleries and Exhibition sponsors should return work in original boxes and packing.

## **II. During the Exhibition**

**A. Send change of address** or contact information to exhibition sponsor or galleries.

**B.** If you will be out of town when work will be returned from a show, always inform the Exhibition Sponsor. The Sponsor would prefer to hold on to the work at their site and ship on a later date, than have it lost or damaged because you were out of town when the work was shipped back.

SNAG Professional Guidelines Committee  
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