



## **WHEN YOU SEEK TO EXHIBIT ART**

### **Guidelines for Exhibition of Art in Non-Traditional Gallery Settings**

*by Robin Schwartz, Program Director*

Community Arts Partnership  
171 E. State St. PMB 107, Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-273-5072

Robin Schwartz, [programs@artspartner.org](mailto:programs@artspartner.org)  
CAP Web Site - [www.artspartner.org](http://www.artspartner.org)  
Event Listings - [www.ithacaevents.com](http://www.ithacaevents.com)  
Art Trail - [www.ArtTrail.com](http://www.ArtTrail.com)

A non-traditional gallery setting includes but is not limited to: restaurants, retail stores, offices and lobbies, hotels, private businesses, and so on. These are places that are not primarily in the business of showing and selling art.

These guidelines should serve as reference points and as a method by which the non-traditional gallery should consider hanging art.

Your interest and participation in an effort to bring the visual arts to the residents and visitors of Tompkins County solidifies a crucial link between the arts and the private sector. Please don't hesitate to call upon the Community Arts Partnership (CAP) for any assistance. Finally, many thanks from CAP, the artists and, in advance, from your patrons who will come to enjoy the art you have selected.

### **TO CONSIDER**

In a non-traditional venue, the first thing to consider is whether you wish to have an artist hang work in a decorative manner or whether you wish to invite an artist to have a gallery type show. The latter would involve more planning and perhaps a creative partnership. Read on for more details.

## **THE PROPOSED EXHIBIT SPACE**

Before making contact with an artist or agency through which you might contact artists, consider the space in which you wish to exhibit art.

### **Lighting:**

- Is there adequate lighting during the day and evening to show the work to its best advantage? Generally, lighting should be full-spectrum and within proper proximity to provide maximum and even illumination of the work without glare. Specific spotlights may be appropriate to lend dramatic or intended effect on a work. Restaurants in the evening are often dimly lit. In this case, the art should be independently lit.

### **Exhibit Space:**

- Is the exhibit space adequate to the size and number of works you wish to exhibit?
- Is the exhibit space or walls clear of other materials so that the artist's work is featured?
- Is the wall space visually accessible to give proper focus to the work? In the event you are considering sculpture, can the work be viewed adequately from the angles the artist wishes to have it viewed?
- Is there a way by which the work can be securely hung? (i.e. molding with hooks, nails, etc.)
- Will the work be hung in a place that is free of potential accidental damage? (i.e. from food, moisture, physical interference, children, excessive heat or cold, etc.)

## **WHAT TYPE OF ART?**

Choosing art requires you to make decisions based on your preference and on the space you have available. There are many types of visual art from which to choose. Use personal taste as a preliminary key but don't abandon a sense of adventure or curiosity when choosing. Beyond paintings, drawings, photography, graphics, collage, prints, mobiles, sculpture and other forms comes the questions of style and subject matter.

Know your customers or patrons. There have been rare instances where a patron or customer may object to art that you have in your space. Please anticipate how you will respond to these situations. Asking the artist to take down their work once it has been hung is not a viable option.

## **VIEWING ART**

Many local artists have websites! You can see art at the CAP Artist Registry at [www.Artspartner.org](http://www.Artspartner.org), at [www.ArtTrail.com](http://www.ArtTrail.com) (the Greater Ithaca Art Trail) or by calling Robin at the CAP office for suggestions and information.

## **MAKING CHOICES**

If you are selecting work for an exhibit in a space that will have a great deal of public access and which also serves as a work space for employees, we suggest you put together a group of people to help you in the selection process. (A small group is best!). It is advisable for a business to have one “art coordinator” who will see the process through and be the liaison person for the artist during the planning, hanging, duration and taking-down.

## **MAKING PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE ARTIST**

Call or e-mail those artists whose work you would like to consider and arrange a studio visit, or if appropriate and practical, ask that specific pieces be brought to you. The first option is advised. It gives you an opportunity to meet the artist in his or her setting and to see other work which might better suit your intentions. The artist will very likely want to come to you at some point to see the setting in which their work will be exhibited. If you wish to display an artist’s work, you must be in complete agreement with the artist as to which pieces you wish to display to avoid displaying work you feel may be inappropriate for your space. Be sure to discuss the points listed at the end of this handout so that there are no misunderstandings.

## **NEGOTIATING WITH THE ARTIST**

You have the benefit of the art to enhance your space and to make the space attractive to visitors. The artist has the benefit of public exposure

In a traditional gallery setting, it is understood that the work on exhibit is for sale. In a non-traditional setting, another set of circumstances comes into play. Most artists realize that such venues do not traditionally generate sales. While exposure is always welcome, patrons in a restaurant, for example, come to dine and not to buy art. The same applies to banks, offices, etc. A patron enters for a particular service not related to art but enjoys the interior enhancement the art provides. Since non-traditional venues are not in the business of marketing and selling art, it is inappropriate to take a commission for the sale of work.

For many artists, public exposure may not be sufficient to justify the expense incurred in setting up the exhibit in a non-traditional setting. The artist is faced with such fixed costs as framing (very expensive) or the purchase of materials with which the art is made (not to mention the time involved.)

There are a number of ways that this circumstance can be addressed. The point here is to achieve the recognition of value given with value returned.

## **SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER**

- Offer to publicize the exhibit in your press ads, mailing list, newsletter, etc.
- Offer to host a reception and to print up and mail out invitations.
- Offer your service in barter (meals, legal assistance, dental check-up... whatever is appropriate in your line of business.)
- Offer to buy a piece.
- Offer to pay a rental fee. This is not an uncommon arrangement.

## **A CHECK-LIST OF MUST DO'S FOR THE NON-TRADITIONAL VENUE AND THE ARTIST**

### **1. DRAFT A WRITTEN AGREEMENT:**

The best and easiest way to set expectations for both sides of an arrangement is to have all the subsequent MUST DO'S detailed in a written agreement that both parties sign and date before any art is hung. Sample agreements are available from CAP, but artists and businesses are encouraged to make their agreements as specific as possible for each installation of art.

### **2. TIMEFRAME:**

Discuss the timeframe of the exhibit with the artist. Keep to that timeframe.

- a. What date does the show open?
- b. What is the closing date?
- c. By what date should the art be ready and available to hang?
- d. When should the art be picked up after the end of the show

### **3. HANGING:**

Discuss the hanging or placement arrangements

- a. The site should supply materials and tools (hanging wire, nails, hooks, tape, etc.) appropriate for the display of the work.
- b. Discuss the delivery of the work. If the piece is large and requires special freight treatment, who will cover the cost to deliver/to pick up?
- c. Decide who will actually hang or place the work.
- d. Who will provide title cards for each piece?  
Each piece should have a title card with title, artist's name, medium, price.
- e. Discuss where to place contact information for the artist.

### **4. NEGOTIATE SERVICE EXCHANGE (see previous page)**

5. **SALES:**

Discuss how sales will be handed. It is feasible that the non-traditional venue will not handle sales at all and direct interested parties to the artist's contact information. Please make sure that all of your staff knows how to direct people's attention to the artists contact information. It would be great if your staff knew a bit about the artist if they are asked questions. Since many purchase of art are impulse buys, can someone write a check made out to the artist for a piece? If so, can the piece be given to the patron immediately or at the end of the show? If you would be so kind as to accept checks, discuss whether the artist would like you to add sales tax or whether sales tax is already included in their price.

6. **LIABILITY:**

You should definitely have a written agreement with the artists that not only outlines the points above, but specifies what happens in case of calamities such as fire, flood, water damage, patron damage, severe weather, public disaster, or any other cause beyond your control. Discuss the possibility of theft of art work. Will your insurance cover the value of the work? Discuss with the artist whether their work is covered by their homeowner's insurance.