

Working with a gallery

Manual and checklist

Sooner or later visual artists come into contact with a gallery. There they can show and sell their artwork to an audience. But what do you as an artist need to take into account? This manual and checklist will help you make the most important considerations. Looking for general information about exhibitions? Then be sure to check out the general checklist, which summarises the basic information.

What is a gallery?

A gallery displays and sells the artist's artwork. Just as there are different types of artists, there are also different types of galleries, each with its own style. For example, some galleries mainly exhibit figurative work, others show abstract work, ceramics or only paintings or photos. There are galleries with an international clientele that represent important artists, as well as small or recently started galleries. The gallery has its own clientele that matches its style and profile. Usually a distinction is made between a promotion gallery and a hired gallery:

- ✓ A promotion gallery not only exhibits, but also actively promotes the artist by means of exhibitions at home and abroad, publications and catalogues, preparation and maintenance of dossiers, and presentations of the artworks to purchase committees of museums and governments. A promotion gallery usually works on the basis of exclusivity. This means that the gallery is the only one allowed to represent the artist (for a specific period or on a specific territory).
- ✓ A hired gallery only organises exhibitions, which are in line with the style of the gallery.

Which gallery?

As a visual artist it is important to determine what kind of artist you are or want to be, and which things are important to you (for example profit and sales, the freedom to do your own thing, international fame, being recognised as an important artist, exhibiting often ...). Try to work with a gallery that suits you.

It's possible that as an artist you'll be approached by a gallery and thus be given an opportunity to exhibit. If that doesn't happen, you can take the initiative yourself and contact a number of galleries. Take the initiative and search and compile a list of interesting galleries.

Do not randomly contact all galleries and bombard these with e-mails, but try to make personal contact with the gallery owner and start a conversation about your art. If the contact feels right, you can, for example, leave documentary material or invite the gallery owner to your studio. It is also helpful to invite gallery owners to one of your exhibitions.

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If contact with the gallery goes well and there is mutual interest, as an artist you can decide to collaborate and make an appointment for a period to exhibit. Optionally, the artist can agree with the gallery owner to schedule a trial period.

It is important to make clear arrangements with the gallery. Many galleries prefer verbal agreements. However, it's better that you put the agreements on paper. It doesn't take much effort, and you are protected if something goes wrong later. In the case of misunderstandings or if a party does not respect the arrangements made, the agreement provides something to hold on to. Both the artist and the gallery can then refer to the agreement and point out to the other party his or her responsibility. Before you sign, play it safe and have the agreement read by someone who knows something about such matters. For example, you can contact the [NICC](#) or [Cultuurloket](#).

Which arrangements should you make?

Commission

A gallery is a business that pursues profit by selling artworks. The gallery owner asks a commission from the artist if he sells a work. Clearly agree on the commission that will be asked. If the gallery does a lot of work to promote an artist, it can charge a high commission. If it does little, the artist can negotiate a lower commission. Usually 40 or 50% is asked. The commission is lower for expensive works (made of bronze, for example). This system of commissions has the advantage that the gallery owner assumes responsibility. It only earns money when it makes a sale.

Also discuss in advance how you will pay each other. If you as artist work as a self-employed person, you can work with invoices. If you work with a social bureau for artists (SBK), the SBK will send an invoice to the gallery.

Exclusivity

Some galleries demand exclusivity. This means that the gallery is the only one that can represent the artist and sell his/her artwork. This exclusivity can preferably be delimited in time (a specific period) or place (a specific territory). Before you as artist agree to this

exclusivity, you should verify that the gallery is able to deliver on its promises and determine its reputation.

Optionally, the artist can agree with the gallery owner to schedule a trial period. After all, entrusting exclusivity to a gallery is an important decision. It is therefore advisable to consider the matter carefully.