

TIPS FOR APPROACHING A GALLERY

There are two types of galleries: for-profit and not-for-profit. Artists can sell their work at not-for-profit galleries, but the primary purpose for many to show at these types of galleries is for the exposure it can provide rather than the sales that can be generated. Be sure that you know which type of gallery you are applying to before you submit your work.

First, it might be wise to establish yourself in your hometown/city before tackling New York. That will give you experience, confidence, and hopefully income.

Visit as many galleries as possible. Keep a log of your impressions of each one. Get on the mailing list of the ones you like and attend their receptions often. Meet the people who run the galleries and who own them (they might be different people). You are there to network and to show your support for the gallery. When you feel comfortable approaching the owner or director, ask if it would be possible to show your work to them. Offer any one or combination of these options: a studio visit, a portfolio review, or to bring a few pieces to their gallery.

Ideally, you want the gallery owner/director to visit your studio. It does not have to be a studio setting in which the work is viewed, it could be in your Aunt May's living room. The point is to display the work in the best way possible. If you want to present your portfolio, the best way to do so is on a laptop or tablet using a slideshow format. Don't talk while the slide show is in progress but do offer answers to any questions the owner/director has. Better yet, anticipate

the questions and have pithy answers ready. Another way is to show high quality 8.5x11" prints. Do not shower the owner/director with images, a judgement will probably be made after the first one or two images are seen. Present 12 images and have 12 more or so as back up that can be shown if requested.

If you are ready and you have galleries in mind, do a thorough job of researching them. Look at their web sites, read their literature and reviews. Most importantly, make sure that your work fits the style of the gallery.

You are a young artist, so more than likely you do not have a lot of work. Most professionals have a great deal of work from which they can present the very best, and if they make it big, they have a large inventory. Show only the work you feel is the most successful and you are the most proud of.

When approaching a gallery, you are in effect, offering to be in a type of partnership with the gallery. It is a professional relationship. You must convince the gallery that you would like them to represent you. You must understand what that means. You will never, under any circumstances, sell your work from your own studio. Only the gallery will sell your work, even if it is to your friends and relatives. Many artists do fine selling from their studio, but if you want to show at a gallery, you must be honest about this and trusted.

FAQs

Should you call and make appointments?

Forget it. Although there are always exceptions, the best is the hands on approach and to present yourself in person either at an opening or upon visiting the gallery. Galleries are run on the basis of trust, so the first thing you need to do is establish a relationship with the people at the gallery.

When are you ready to approach galleries?

First, you have to be confident about the quality of your work. It might be wise to get the opinion of other working artists about the work you are planning to present to a gallery before you do so. Some artists bloom early while others take time. There is no set time-table, and you should not rush the process due to impatience.