

# AMPLIFY ARTS

## Exhibition Opportunities Resource Guide

### **How do I start showing my work?**

The first step on your way to sustaining a long and productive career that includes a robust exhibitions schedule is making the work. An active studio practice in which you engage with your peers, critics, curators, and other artists will help you feel prepared when exhibition opportunities arise. Consistently soliciting honest feedback and asking for studio visits will help you create more thoughtful, sensitized work that's ready to travel out into the world. A few things to consider before making the deciding that a particular work or body of work is exhibition ready:

1. How will the work be displayed?
2. How will presentation affect the content of the work?
3. How will the context of the exhibition inform the way the work is perceived?
4. How will you respond to public criticism of your work?

Once you're ready to take work from the studio to an exhibition space, there are a number of avenues you can travel and a wide variety of opportunities you may want to pursue. Open calls for curated and juried exhibitions; curated solo, two and three person, and larger group shows; self-organized exhibitions; artist registries; and "pay to play" opportunities are all options for artists working to build their exhibition history.

### **Open calls for curated and juried exhibitions**

Submitting work to open calls or calls for entries is one of the best ways to continually refine the quality of your artist statement, worksample, CV or resume, and documentation of your work. Open calls for both curated and juried exhibitions will typically ask for all of the above as part of an application. Some open calls are more competitive than others; some are more selective than others. There is a big difference however between juried shows and curated shows with open calls that can greatly affect your chances of being included. The two terms are sometimes conflated and often confused, but it's important to remember that a curated show is usually organized by a curator or group of curators who conceptualize the theme of the show, select work, determine how the exhibition will be installed, and program public events attached to the exhibition.

In a juried show, the sponsor selects the theme and invites guest jurors to select work that best describes that theme. Juried shows sometimes offer a monetary award to artists whose work the jury selects but may also charge a submission fee. The format can easily reinforce critical hierarchies of good, better, best; bad, worse, worst rather than encourage balanced evaluations based on thoughtful assessments of subject matter, style, medium, and form. Juried exhibitions are often less selective than curated shows and can be a good way for some artists to begin building an exhibition history.

### **Curated exhibitions**

Curated exhibitions that are organized without an open call function similarly in the sense that one curator or a group of curators conceptualize the exhibition's theme, select artists whose work speaks in one way or another to that theme, and determine how the final show will look and what public programs will happen in conjunction with it. The selection process however is quite a bit different. Rather than review submissions solicited from open calls, curated exhibitions will often include artists with whom the curator is already familiar. Those relationships could have been established in a lot of different ways. The curator may have seen an artist's work in another exhibition, they may have read a review that included a critical discussion of that artist's work, or they may have seen the work in person during a studio visit. For that reason and because curated exhibitions often take place in galleries or institutions, they are more of a closed system. It can easily open up through making connections and establishing strong working and personal relationships.

Curated shows generally have more of an academic bent and an exhibition history that includes multiple curated shows can legitimize an artist's career in a substantial way. There's a strong likelihood that other curators might visit an exhibition organized by a colleague. If other curators are seeing your work, your chances of being included in future exhibitions can only get better. Being included in curated group shows, solo shows, or two and three person shows is a great way to increase your visibility within your community and communities tangentially connected to your immediate networks--just one more reason to build meaningful relationships with peers, curators, critics, and other artists.

### **Self-organized exhibitions**

One of the best ways to build an exhibition history is through self-organizing. Organizing exhibitions outside of an institutional or curatorial context allows artists to work together and form strong ties within their communities. Most movements included in the art historical canon started as a bunch of artists who shared a conceptual or aesthetic affinity organizing to exhibit, perform, or demonstrate without the formal support of a museum or gallery. Artists who made up the Dada, Fluxus, and Zero movements, just to name a few, worked together to organize exhibitions and happenings that critiqued museum and gallery industrial complexes while politicizing the nature of exhibitions in the process. Self-organizing offers artists more freedom to determine the form and content of an exhibition without institutional baggage or oversight.

Most artists know other artists. Most artists feel an affinity for other artists' work. If you're actively visiting other artists' studios and having ongoing conversations, why not organize an exhibition that shows the results of those conversations? Inviting other artists, friends, and members of your community through social media and word of mouth can help the news spread quickly to people outside your immediate network. Apartments, basements, garages, underutilized commercial and industrial spaces are all potential venue options. Working with real estate developers to revitalize vacant spaces through exhibitions can be a win-win for everybody; artists have the opportunity to exhibit their work in a nontraditional space and the developer generates interest and gets bodies into a space they're trying to lease.

### **Curated artist registries**

Curated artist registries are too often bypassed when searching for exhibition opportunities. They essentially act as a database that other artists and curators can access when organizing exhibitions to help streamline and refine the selection process. Having your work represented in an artist registry or multiple registries doesn't necessarily guarantee that requests to show your work in curated exhibitions will immediately come rolling in but it couldn't hurt! A lot of curators look to registries, especially when organizing shows that include emerging, less established artists or artists who may not live in a cultural hub like Los Angeles or New York.

Be wary of registries that ask for a fee. Most reputable registries do not charge artists to submit work. The submission procedure for registries is similar to that of open calls with a review process and subsequent notification that lets you know whether or not your work has been accepted. Like with open calls, the more frequently you apply and reapply, the better your chances of getting in. Rejections are likely to come from applying to both open calls for exhibitions and artist registries. Take those rejections as an opportunity to reassess and reevaluate your working practice, artist statement, and worksample. Readjust after each "no" and tailor every new application to the specific opportunity for which you're applying in the hopes of getting a "yes."

### **"Pay to play" exhibition opportunities**

For artists who haven't yet established an exhibition history or for those who haven't shown in a while, "pay to play" exhibitions can help add a few extra lines to your CV. These exhibitions will generally charge a fee for each individual artwork submitted and have a juried component as part of the show. Commercial galleries don't charge artists a fee to exhibit work because they hope to sell and make a commission. Alternative and nonprofit spaces don't charge artists a fee to exhibit because selling is not their focus; funding comes from other sources. "Pay to play" opportunities are less selective but also lack the legitimacy of a curated show. If you make the decision that paying a small fee to get your work out there and build your CV's exhibition history, then as your career progresses, think about replacing "pay to play" entries with more reputable curated shows or self-organized shows.

### **Which opportunities are right for me?**

Finding the right exhibition opportunities really boils down to honestly assessing where you are currently in your career and where you would like to go in the future. If your goal is to show in academic and museum spaces, look for open call and curated exhibition opportunities in nonprofit and alternative spaces. If you hope to show in commercial galleries and sell a ton of work, consider establishing your market by submitting work to juried shows and arranging studio visits with gallerists. If you want to bypass institutional and gallery systems all together and make your own opportunities, get your friends together and get organized. There are as many different art worlds out there as there are artists. For every discipline and stage of career development, there are suitable opportunities. Look for those that match your interests, and more importantly, those that will ultimately help you find your footing when establishing a long and productive career.

### **What is an artist residency?**

An artist residency is usually an application based award that provides artists with additional time and a dedicated space to make their work. Many residencies allow artists complete freedom to engage as little or as much as they would like with fellow residents or community members but that varies depending on the residency. Some programs are well funded and offer artist stipends to cover living expenses during the residency, in addition to housing and sometimes even meals. Others function more like paid retreats where artists pay for space time to dedicate to their practice. The most reputable residency programs in the country like Yaddo, The MacDowell Colony, Fine Arts Work

Center, and the Bemis Center provide ample support and do not require artists to pay a fee. However, if you're new to residencies, a paid program could be a less selective route to dip your feet in and test the waters. Keep in mind, residencies can last anywhere from two weeks to two years and oftentimes don't allow partners, children, or pets. It's important to look for residencies that will work for you.

### **What are the benefits of a residency?**

Aside from the obvious benefits of additional time and space to devote to your practice, residencies have other upsides as well; building a larger community of peers is one. Not only is meeting other artists a built-in part of the experience, but many residency programs will also bring in guest curators and critics for studio visits, talks, lectures, and other occasions that can provide valuable professional networking opportunities. You'll also find yourself in a new environment more than likely with new people who may or may not share your views and interests. Those new experiences and critical discussions with others who are less familiar with your work can become important touchstones when evaluating the conceptual framework of your practice, opening up to new ideas, and experimenting with different materials and working methods you may not have considered before.

### **What should I expect during my residency?**

No artist in residence program is going to be exactly the same. Even from year to year, a specific residency program can vary greatly depending on the mix of resident artists' needs, level of community or audience engagement, and individual personalities. You should expect to be accorded time and space for reflection, research, production, and presentation of your work. Aside from that, be flexible. Take time to investigate each residency you're interested in applying for and read about other artists' experiences. Many residency programs will list past participants on their website. If you're really unsure about what to expect, getting in touch with someone who's been through the residency before can help clear up any questions.

### **Is it possible to do multiple residencies one after the other?**

Yes. In fact, many artists make their living hopping from one residency to the next without a fixed home base. That lifestyle isn't for everyone and requires that an artist travel light in most cases, but it can be an amazing way to see different parts of the world and meet other artists, curators, and critics. Organization is key. Making spreadsheets or lists of the residencies for which you would like to apply, and their application deadlines, can help you get a better idea of when you'll have something lined up and when you might need to rely on friends, family, or look for temporary housing.

### **Where can I find more details about specific residencies and application deadlines?**

Here is a list of web-based resources that will allow you to search for residencies that work for you. Most listings will specify whether the residency is funded or if it requires the artist to pay a fee. They will also outline any expectations or special considerations particular to that residency.

1. <https://www.nyfa.org/Opportunities> (New York Foundation for the Arts-Opportunities)
2. <http://source.nyfa.org/content/search/search.aspx?SA=1> (New York Foundation for the Arts-NYFA Source searchable listings database)
3. <http://residencyunlimited.org/opportunities/> (Residency Unlimited-Opportunities)
4. <http://www.transartists.org/> (Transartists)
5. [http://www.resartis.org/en/residencies/list\\_of\\_residencies/](http://www.resartis.org/en/residencies/list_of_residencies/) (Resartis-Listings)
6. <http://cranbrookart.edu/library/research/residencies.htm> (Cranbrook Academy of Art Library-Residency Listings)

7. [www.artistcommunities.org](http://www.artistcommunities.org) (Alliance of Artist Communities)

**Where can I find listings for exhibition opportunities?**

1. <https://www.nyfa.org/Opportunities> (New York Foundation for the Arts-Opportunities)
2. [http://franklinfurnace.org/goings\\_on/index.php](http://franklinfurnace.org/goings_on/index.php) (Franklin Furnace-Goings on for Artists, *\*must subscribe to newsletter for listings*)
3. <http://www.collegeart.org/jobs-and-opportunities/opportunities/type/3/> (College Art Association-Opportunities)
4. <http://rhizome.org/community/> (Rhizome)
5. <https://www.maaa.org/professional-development/artist-inc/pushing-the-flywheel/> (Pushing the Flywheel)
6. <http://www.artsCouncil.nebraska.gov/opportunities/for-artists/fred-simon-gallery-exhibition.html> (Nebraska Arts Council-Fred Simon Gallery)
7. [https://omahalibrary.org/browse\\_program/michael-phipps-gallery/](https://omahalibrary.org/browse_program/michael-phipps-gallery/) (Omaha Public Library-Michael Phipps Gallery)
8. <http://registry.whitecolumns.org/> (White Columns Artist Registry)
9. <https://www.visualaids.org/artists> (Visual AIDS Artist Registry)
10. <http://culturehall.com/> (Culturehall Artist Registry)