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The Artsource Exhibition Kit is designed to assist in all areas of staging an exhibition. It is a highly informative and valuable reference that will help you save time and money when planning an exhibition. The Artsource Exhibition Kit has been designed for artist initiated shows with a focus on the organisation and marketing aspects of exhibiting work.

**Fremantle Office**

Administration, Exchange, Studios, Membership,  
Regional & Indigenous Development  
9am - 5pm Monday to Friday  
Level 1, 8 Phillimore St, Fremantle, WA, 6160  
PO Box 999 Fremantle, WA, 6959  
T (08) 9335 8366 F (08) 9335 3886

**Perth Office**

Employment & Referral Agency, Client Services  
9am - 5pm Monday to Friday  
King Street Arts Centre  
Level 1, 357 Murray St, Perth, WA, 6000  
T (08) 9226 2122 F (08) 9226 2180

**[www.artsource.net.au](http://www.artsource.net.au)**

# Exhibition Kit

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# Planning for an exhibition

## Why exhibit?

The first question you should be asking yourself is “Why exhibit?”

What is your reason for showing your work in the public realm - why will people want to view it?

There are many good reasons to exhibit work, and some bad ones.

Undertaking an exhibition can be an expensive enterprise, and a bad show will be remembered for a long time. Before booking in an exhibition, ask yourself:

### *Why do I want to exhibit?*

What do you hope to achieve through your exhibition?

Do you want the show to be an artistic success, or a commercial one?

Although the obvious answer is “both” this is not always the case.

Many artists book a show to give themselves a deadline to work toward, and to force them to focus on their practice.

This can be a valid reason to exhibit, but should not be the only one.

### *How long has it been since my last exhibition?*

Do you feel that you been out of the public eye for too long?

It can make sense to put your work out there at least once every couple of years, but this in itself is not reason enough to book a show.

Exhibiting every few months is not likely to do you any good - if you hope to sell work, the WA market is unlikely to support frequent showings, and few artists can keep up this momentum whilst maintaining resolution and quality in their work.

Take a look at some commercial gallery programs - generally a commercially-represented artist will hold a solo show every eighteen months to two years, but will also enter art prizes and group shows in the meantime.

As a result, they allow themselves time to create quality work that people want to buy.

### *Do I have a new body of work that I feel is particularly interesting or successful?*

Do other people share this view? It is always worth seeking an outside opinion, rather than listening to friends who may not be objective in their praise. Of course you are going to find your own work interesting - will anyone else?

### *Is my exhibition about something?*

Too many artists think an exhibition can be a mixed collection of unrelated works. Generally, a strong show will have a cohesive feel - perhaps you are looking at a number of issues and have produced several works on a similar theme? Perhaps you are creating a single installation about one idea? Simply saying that “this work reveals how I see the world around me” may not be enough to warrant a public showing. If you are in a group show, think about the other people you are showing with - why do you want to exhibit with them? What do your works have in common? Simply showing with other people to cut down on the cost of your exhibition is likely to result in an unresolved show.

### *When should I exhibit?*

Is there an event such as a festival that your exhibition would fit within? Being included in a festival such as artopia, Artrage, Awesome or Pride may allow you to access funding or promotional resources and may guarantee a larger or more interested audience for your work. If your exhibition is not part of a festival, but is showing at the same time as one, you may miss out on press coverage and critical attention.

### *Do I hope to make money by selling work?*

If so, how realistic is this goal? Which type of gallery is likely to attract an audience interested in your style of work? Is your work well-made? How long will it last? If you are a painter, do you know the correct priming techniques to ensure your work will still be looking good in a few years? No buyer wants to purchase something that will have disappeared in 5 years time. If you work in ephemeral media, or installation, you generally have a much smaller chance of selling something.

Once you've made the decision to exhibit your work to the rest of the world, your initial steps should include spending some time planning and budgeting for the big event.

## Planning ahead

Although often tedious and sometimes time consuming, planning ahead will save you precious time and money - especially for artists staging an exhibition in an independent space where you may be managing the promotional and financial aspects of the show in addition to producing the artworks.

This initial phase involves considering all possible financial expenditure required in the exhibition process. This could include costs of materials and research, rental of space and documentation, as well as marketing and promoting the exhibition.

In addition to helping ease stress in the final stages of the event, planning enables realistic identification of opportunities for sponsorship and promotion of the show.

It is essential to put together a project timeline outlining major dates, deadlines and weekly goals - refer to this continually and update it as necessary to ensure you are on target and have not forgotten anything important. Once caught up in the stress of planning a show, it is all too easy to forget media deadlines, or to put off sending your invitations to print. A timeline is the most effective way to ensure you are in control of your exhibition.

## Income and expenditure

All possible sources of income should be considered. This includes funding from government organisations such as ArtWA and the Australia Council, cash and in-kind sponsorship and potential sales. Note however that you should not depend on these calculations unless confirmed in writing by the provider, or you could find yourself short of cash. It is an unfortunate fact of life (especially for emerging artists) that you are unlikely to make a profit from a solo exhibition. Even if you receive substantial funding, expect to contribute your own money to the project, and remember that even a sell-out show may not return money equivalent to the time and effort you have put in to creating the work.

## Being creative

Anticipated expenditure can vary widely and often creative solutions can be found to save money.

Take the time to talk to the people involved in providing the necessary products and services - they may provide you with invaluable advice on cost saving. For example, graphic designers can make suggestions on the cheapest way to provide artwork to a printer and printers may advise you to share a print run with other print jobs to save money. It is good business practice to get at least three quotes for all aspects of the exhibition, to ensure the best price and quality.

There are also many hidden costs that often catch people by surprise, such as: purchase of envelopes and postage; scanning of images and graphic artwork for invitations; hire of equipment on opening night; and documentation of the exhibition. Account for these in the early stages and you will find the process infinitely less stressful.

An extensive budgeting checklist is provided in the back of this kit. This budget is not definitive: it is designed to assist you in identifying possible income and expenditure.

Artsource has a directory of businesses that offer discounts to artsource members for services such as framing, advertising, printing and photography. Call artsource to receive a copy of this list, and check the quarterly artsource newsletter and artsource website for updates.

## Insurance

Insuring your artwork for theft or damage can be expensive – especially for exhibitions involving audio-visual equipment. Consult your gallery regarding this matter – most galleries already have public liability insurance, but expect exhibitors to pay for additional coverage.

If your exhibition is in a secure venue you may decide to risk going without - contemporary artworks are generally not desirable to a thief who wants to make a quick buck selling stolen goods, but expensive equipment is. It is not unheard of for the occasional work to be nabbed by a casual visitor to the gallery who doesn't want to pay for it, so always monitor gallery spaces when they are open to the public.

Few insurance agencies are interested in dealing with artists, and many will only cover artworks for their replacement value, rather than retail price (which is generally significantly higher). Call artsource for further advice.

## Working in a group exhibition

Working with other people can result in a fantastic exhibition and is a great way to save money. However, it does require careful planning, cooperation and dedication to make it a success.

From the first meeting, try and define the roles of all participants. It is imperative that each exhibiting artist is aware of their responsibilities in addition to providing artwork for the show. Some people are stronger in promotion, others are good at budgeting or curating – appoint according to strengths and capabilities if possible, to avoid resentment and confusion in the long run.

It is essential to produce an exhibition timeline and distribute it as early as possible. Outline all the major dates such as the print deadline for invitations, the installation period, opening night and bump-out. It is also a good idea to include important information such as:

- Participating Artists Details - addresses, phone and fax numbers and availability (to avoid phone calls during inconvenient times).
- Exhibition name.
- Exhibition venue and contact details.
- Set up and bump-out dates eg: at least two days before opening for curating and set up; at least one day to remove the work and tidy the gallery at the end of the show).
- Exhibition dates and opening times, specifying opening night details.
- Participants' responsibilities for the exhibition and beyond.

Regular meetings in the months leading up to the show are recommended, as is appointing someone (reliable!) to take notes and distribute them amongst participants for action after each meeting. Regular reporting ensures that all elements are being looked after and allows for everyone to provide input into the exhibition's progress.

## Communicate with your gallery

If the venue you are using has staff, set up a meeting at the earliest possible date to pick their brains and use their expertise and contacts where possible. For example, your gallery may already have agreements with local caterers or printers that can save you money and time.

They will often be able to help you in estimating printing numbers for invitations, crowd estimates for opening night and other venue requirements. As a part of professional art practice it is necessary to maintain administrative records. This need not be a complicated process - a simple filing system and a card index can be used to record important information.

You should be looking at maintaining records of the following types of information:

- Contracts / Letters / General correspondence.
- Important contacts, including the media, printers, photographers, arts organisations and curators.
- Expenses including all expenditure on materials, framing, photography, and exhibitions for tax purposes. You may find that you have actually spent more than you have earned, in which case you can claim for expenses and receive a higher tax rebate.
- Up-to-date photographic slides of your work. Make sure you keep the master copies and send out duplicates only.
- Digital images of your work, saved to CD. Many funding bodies and galleries now accept CD Roms as support material for proposals, and digital files can be printed as slides by many photographic studios.
- A detailed catalogue of all artworks you have produced.

Each piece can be described on an individual index card and should include the following types of information:

- Title of work - date produced - materials used - price - size - type of work.
- What types of documentation you have of the piece (photos / slides / digital scans).
- Titles and dates of any exhibitions the work has been in.
- Whether or not it has been sold and to whom.

# Administration

## Buyers list

A detailed buyers list will be one of your greatest assets. Every person who has purchased your work should be recorded, including the following information:

- Name of buyer.
- Address and telephone number.
- Type of buyer (professional buyer for a collection / private collector / investment collector).
- What piece was bought, when it was purchased and at what price.

The buyers information is the most important section of your invitation mailing list.

Make sure you keep the information up-to-date by contacting these people at least once a year with a courtesy call. Keep these buyers informed of your progress and encourage them to bring friends and acquaintances to your openings.

## The GST

From 1999, Australian artists have had the option to register as a private business by applying for an Australian Business Number (ABN).

They can then also opt to register for the Goods and Services Tax, or GST. Many artists are unsure of the benefits of doing this.

Artsource encourage artists to apply for an ABN, to legitimise their profession, but it is not essential to do so. Artists without an ABN can earn money as an artist if they fill in a 'Statement By Supplier' form downloaded from the ATO web site or available from newsagents stating that they are a "hobbyist" for tax purposes.

However, if you hope to apply for government funding, not having an ABN can make you ineligible.

It is not essential to register for the GST unless you are making over \$50,000 annually.

However, registering does allow you to claim back the 10% GST charged on goods and services such as materials, gallery rent, printing and documentation.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of registering to pay GST is the regular calculation schedule (either quarterly, biannually or annually) that forces you to keep your accounts in order.

This can be a useful annoyance for many artistic minds, to force them to acquire sound accounting skills.

The Australian Tax Office has many useful guides and downloadable programs to assist with the bookkeeping of GST visit [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)

Artsource holds an annual tax seminar for artists that demystifies bookkeeping and income tax requirements.

Contact artsource for further details.

# Exhibition Promotion and Marketing

It is important to recognise that marketing is not about selling out.

It is about the way in which you approach the show and how you promote it, in order to appeal to the people to whom you wish to sell your art or appreciate your work.

When planning the marketing of your show, it is often helpful to spend some time contemplating the following:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • What kind of work do you produce and why?      | <i>your 'product'</i>                      |
| • Who do you want to buy (or view) your work?    | <i>your target market</i>                  |
| • Who actually buys (or appreciates!) your work? | <i>possibly your target market!</i>        |
| • Where do you want to exhibit?                  | <i>your distribution/location strategy</i> |
| • What price do you want for your work?          | <i>your pricing and sales strategy</i>     |
| • Where are you going to advertise, if at all?   | <i>your promotional strategy</i>           |
| • Are you going to seek sponsorship?             | <i>budgeting for your event</i>            |
| • What media do you plan to target?              | <i>media strategy</i>                      |
| • Are you planning on having a catalogue?        | <i>pricing and sales strategy</i>          |
| • What's the plan for opening night?             | <i>promotional strategy/target markets</i> |

## Target markets

Whether you decide to go all out with colour catalogues, invites and posters, or just post home-made invitations to a personal mailing list, it is imperative you consider your target markets, ie: those people with an interest in you, your work/career and/or the event. Your target market may often include people who don't necessarily buy your work. For example, consider the following groups of people:

- Curators of public and private collections
- Private purchasers
- Family and friends
- The arts industry
- Funding bodies
- Current/potential sponsors
- Art schools and students
- Media & critical writers
- Commercial galleries
- State galleries

### **Target markets may change with each event.**

Consider elements such as the theme of the show, the medium, the venue and the location.

Each time it may be slightly different. For example, an exhibition with a specific cultural reference may appeal to certain ethnic demographics, which opens up an entirely new market for potential audience and buyers. Consider advertising in local community press, sending invitations through consulate mailing lists, or theming your opening night refreshments appropriately. Once you have considered the above questions, you can start planning the marketing of your event. The marketing tools adopted for an exhibition may include:

- Sponsorship and funding - addressed in next chapter.
- Opening Night - a major marketing tool!
- Printed material and distribution - invitations, posters, fliers, and catalogues.
- Media campaign.
- Advertising.
- Presentation of work - how you hang the work, display price tags, catalogues, artist profiles.
- Location of exhibition - eg: the image of the gallery in the community, access to buyers, tourists.
- Timing of the event - eg: part of a festival, not holding opening on same day as another major show.

- Signage - letting people know where and when the show is on.
- Theming - adopting elements of the exhibition theme in promotional material.
- Internet promotion - some institutions produce regular e-newsletters to a large and varied mailing list and are happy to include information they feel is relevant to their readers, free of charge. Simply call or email them to inquire - remember, this method of promotion is perhaps the most cost-effective of all.

## Printed material

Printed materials such as invitations and fliers are often the most effective way to promote your event. It is important that they accurately reflect the nature and style of the exhibition, and clearly communicate your message.

Always consider how you are going to distribute printed matter - this can often be a greater cost in terms of time and money, than the printing itself. Producing 500 A3 posters for example, means that you have to find 500 locations for them (fewer and fewer businesses are allowing posters to be placed on their premises) - you may be better off putting your money into a paid advertisement in the newspaper or an arts publication.

## Working with printers

When producing printed material, consult with printers and graphic designers where possible.

Find out their requirements, particularly if you choose to create your own artwork and design, as each business has its own equipment and needs.

Before placing a printing order, you should have a clear idea of what you want your layout to look like, and perhaps draw up a rough layout/sketch noting text and photo positions that can be supplied when ordering. This reduces the chance of printing mistakes occurring at a later stage.

You will be provided with a proof of your job before it goes to print – ALWAYS check it in close detail and run it past as many other people as you can.

It is incredibly easy for typos to go undetected. In particular, double check the dates, times, opening hours and locations of your exhibition and ensure any sponsors' acknowledgements have been included.

It may be worth running the proof past your sponsors, if you have time, to make sure they are happy with their representation.

## Distribution

The text in an invitation should be fairly simple and eye catching and should include the following information:

- Name of the exhibition.
- Name of the artist/s.
- A line that states that the person is being invited to an exhibition opening including the type of artform (painting, sculpture, printmaking).
- Time and date of opening.
- Acknowledgement of guest/opening speaker/s, if any.
- Sponsors logos and acknowledgment - compulsory for some galleries such as the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.
- Gallery or space name and address - include a small directional map if necessary.
- Length of exhibition, and opening hours.
- Contact phone number for RSVPs if you choose this option, or general queries.

RSVPs are no longer common for general exhibition openings, making estimates for catering and beverages somewhat tricky. Generally speaking, around one third of a mail-out will respond to an invite.

## Distributing invitations

Artsource has an extensive exhibition invitation list of names on labels at a reasonable cost for individual artist members. Envelopes and postage are an extra cost to be considered - and can add up to several hundred dollars.

In addition to this, you will want to send invites to personal contacts (family and friends), previous purchasers of your work and people who may have a particular interest in this show. Again, consider the theme, medium, venue and talk to your gallery. Look beyond the art going audience - for example, a show with a marine theme may appeal to environmental groups and conservationists. Australia Post offer a 20% discount on bulk mailing (500+ mail-outs). Mailouts must be arranged at least 24 hours before mailing and material sorted into specific post-codes. For more information contact your local Post Office.

## Advertising

Although not always possible due to budget constraints, advertising can be a powerful tool if used correctly. When preparing your budget, talk to the chosen media about possible options and make sure you account for costs such as photography, artwork and any discounts for up-front payment or for artists. Sometimes a classified listing can serve as a reminder to other promotional material such as the invite and is available at a small cost. If nothing else, you should try and include a listing in the Big Weekend Arts Directory, of The West Australian.

Advertising is also worth considering, as some publications may actually look at whether you are advertising with them before they consider writing an article on your event.

Many galleries pay for regular advertising listings, so make sure to find out before you fork out!

## Signage

This will depend on the show and the location. If you are in a high traffic location (ie: lots of people coming through), signage is not as important. You may be able to make use of available space managed by the gallery, or access a sandwich board to place near the entrance. Please note that these are illegal in some areas. Signage is also a useful tool for acknowledging sponsors.

## Sponsorship

Sponsorship can significantly cut the costs of your exhibition. Whilst securing large sums of money from one sponsor isn't always possible, in-kind support (the donation of goods and services – such as opening night refreshments) can be of huge assistance, so breaking down your requirements and approaching a number of potential supporters is a good strategy.

Sponsorship can be sought for cash or contra (in-kind) deals (such as printing invitations and catalogues, providing wine or catering for the opening, advertising support or framing). Consider aspects of your exhibition such as the theme, materials used, people attending and event location, to identify companies likely to be interested in providing support. Look for commonalities, especially in target markets, ie: who do you aim to reach with your work, and identify what products and services in the marketplace are accessed by these people. Look at their marketing activities: Where are they advertising? Who are they aiming promotions at? Where are they located? Alternatively, what companies would like to increase their access to your market/s and how can you help them achieve this? Look at who is already supporting the arts - consider the kind of events they support and see if there is a link to your work.

# Sourcing Sponsorship

## Preparing a sponsorship proposal

Present your potential sponsors with a solution - not a problem. Although you may see the support as a donation, what you are actually providing is a promotional opportunity for that company. Remember this in your approach - you are proposing a promotional partnership. Companies receive endless requests for support - the easier you make it for them to determine what you require and what benefits they can gain, the better your chances and the quicker you will receive a response.

### *You're an artist, be creative!*

Let the proposal reflect the event and be professional.

Ensure the application is neatly and logically set out and avoid artspeak.

Assume the receiver knows nothing about you or the event, even if you have a personal contact in the organisation, you never know who else will be assessing your request.

Include a personally addressed cover letter to introduce yourself and your event. Find out to whom you need to address the application: full name, title, organisation. Take the time to find this out - and spell it correctly!! It will be seen as an indication of your professionalism and ability to deliver 'Return on Investment' for the sponsor. If you make a call to find out these details, be prepared to discuss the proposal 'off the cuff', as you may find the sponsorship person asking questions without warning.

Provide background information addressing the following questions:

- What is the event - Who involved? What? When (dates and times)? Where? How? Why?
  - Target Market/s - who are you targeting in your promotions - age, sex, socio-economic background, industry. This helps the sponsors to identify commonalities.
  - Expected attendance - how many people will experience your event - on opening night and then for the remaining time.
  - Is it part of a larger event or festival?
  - The marketing and promotional strategy - how are you promoting your event - invitations, posters distributed to cafes and venues; colour catalogues; comprehensive media campaign; advertising via radio and press; direct mail; signage at the venue? This can be incorporated into the Sponsorship Benefits section below.
- Don't be afraid to show off previous achievements! If you can demonstrate that you are a viable investment, through previous achievements or awards, use this to your advantage.

## **Sponsorship request**

Present this as a promotional opportunity for the company. Clearly state what is required and what it will be used for, including benefits: this should be up to a page long, sometimes two (depending on the scale of your event). Make it as easy as possible for them to assess the request. If you want wine, state what type, how much and for how many people. If it is printing, state what you want, how many, by what date and whether or not it will be provided as artwork ready for printing.

## **Sponsorship benefits**

What will they receive in return for their investment? List intangible benefits, as well as tangibles. For example, exposure to shared or potential markets, prestige of association with the event or artist. Benefits could include:

- Verbal acknowledgment in opening night speeches and during radio interviews.
- Written acknowledgment in media releases and advertising.
- Invitation to attend for staff, and for a representative to speak on opening night.
- Signage. eg: sign of wine company behind the bar.
- Mail-out of promotional material with invitations.
- Advertisement in exhibition catalogue.
- Gift of artwork at the opening night (good for printmakers and editionable work)
- Free tickets for paying entry events or discount on artwork.
- Giveaways of their promotional material at the event. eg: Healthway produce numerous promotional items such as hats, T-shirts, caps, stickers, bookmarks, stress balls, fridge magnets and information booklets.
- Hyper links to their web page (make sure yours is good!).
- Logo acknowledgment (invitations, posters, catalogues, signage, price lists, web page and advertising).

Talk in figures where appropriate, this helps assess the amount of exposure the sponsor will receive eg: 1000 invitations posted, 400 expected at opening night, 40 press releases distributed. Attach dollar values (eg: postage to 500 people in a mailout), especially if you can prove they will be getting substantial exposure from their contribution. If you can, extend the time they will receive acknowledgment.

For example, for major sponsors, a nomination for the WA State Arts Sponsorship Scheme annual awards will allow them to receive recognition well after the event has taken place. Make sure you can deliver what the sponsor requires of you. If you're unsure about securing funds for a poster print run, don't say you will do it. Instead, offer it as a bonus when the money/sponsorship comes through. Never pre-spend money unless absolutely sure it will come through, or you could end up out of pocket!

## **Other support**

List confirmed sponsors and the nature of sponsorship, especially if they lend credibility to your proposal. Aim for industry exclusivity eg: one wine company, one caterer and one printer.

## **Attachments**

If available, attach quality samples of your work (previous invitations, copies of media coverage from previous exhibitions). This demonstrates professionalism and knowledge of the process. Other attachments can include letters of support and support material from a larger event (eg: Artrage program and statistics).

## Timing

Timing is essential. It depends on the amount and type of sponsorship, but start looking for sponsorship at least six months ahead of time. Let them know when you require sponsorship to be confirmed and allow breathing space in case it takes longer than anticipated. Consider your promotional material print runs, media campaign and invitation mailouts. Find out when the deadlines for targeted company's sponsorships are and adhere to them. Some companies have application forms - ask for these in your initial research. Be prepared to negotiate.

## Post application and pre-event

Should you arrange a meeting?

Sometimes it helps to make contact with the sponsor, just to reconfirm your requirements and answer any queries.

## Thanks for your request, but...

A negative response can be followed up with a phone call to see if there is room for negotiation. Don't be afraid to ask why the company could not help out. Regardless of response, a quick letter to thank them for considering your request is suggested, as this will help them to remember you next time. Send invites to these companies as well, just to let them see what they missed out on!

## Success!

If you get a yes, write or meet to clarify the terms of the sponsorship to agree exactly what is required of the sponsor and what will be given in return. This avoids confusion and possible disappointment on either side. Follow up with a simple contract or letter of agreement. A yes is just the beginning - you also need to demonstrate that you deserve the support! Deliver what you promised and if you come across a problem, address it as soon as possible, rather than trying to hide it. Treat your sponsors with respect and single them out for acknowledgement and special treatment eg: invite them to attend your floor talk, acknowledge individual representatives on opening night (even if they aren't speaking). Keep in contact throughout the planning stages, as well as during and after the event.

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## Post event

Thank your sponsors, they are all important, even the smallest. A letter is good - maybe even a small gift. It is good business practice to attach a brief written report including copies of all acknowledgment they received as a result of their sponsorship, such as invitations, news releases, media coverage mentioning their name, posters etc.... You never know when you will require support again, and if you have already established a relationship, it will make a new approach that much easier. Sometimes they may request a post-event report.

## Conclusion

This article is merely a scratch on the surface of sponsorship. Be confident - BELIEVE in your project as your enthusiasm and conviction will be a major selling point. Sponsorship takes practice - don't be disheartened by a knockback. Remember that if your timing or approach is out for one company, it may be just right for another.

A media release is a basic publicity tool and an effective way of making an announcement or informing your target markets about your exhibition. The following information describes the basic format for writing a media release and is taken from Robert Hailstone's *'The Australian Media Handbook'* (1990), available from artsource resource library.

A comprehensive listing of media contacts is also available from artsource for a modest fee. Call artsource for details.

# The Media Release

## Media release format

See appendice for an example of a media release.

- The information should be type written.
- It should normally not run for more than one page - two is the absolute limit. If they want more information, they will ask you for it, so always include a contact number.
- List the important information in clear, bold writing at the top of the page: exhibition title; artists' names; dates; address.
- Write a by-line that should be one or two brief lines, three or four words to each line. Such a heading should pick up the most essential information in the release. The editor may not use it as submitted, but it is helpful in giving the release a focus, and providing all the basic information at a glance.
- The first paragraph is called 'the lead'. It functions to outline the who, what, why, where and how of the event in clear, basic language. The following paragraphs expand upon this information to provide interesting angle/s on the show.
- Each page should be numbered.
- Write the word "more" at the bottom centre of each page except the last one.
- The heading should be repeated on each page.
- State the full name of any organisation mentioned in the release in the first instance with the initials in brackets, from then it is acceptable to use the initials alone.
- It is always good to include some brief, informative quotes. Attribute statements to a particular person and not to an anonymous spokesperson and use quotation marks as reporters look for interesting quotations.
- Check and double check facts, times, dates and places.
- The media release must conclude with the name and contact number of a person who can be contacted for further information. This should include work and after hours numbers.
- Don't make the mistake of sending one news release to every media outlet. Try to tailor your story to suit the requirements of each different outlet.
- When writing a media release try to take the perspective of an outsider such as a journalist or the reader of the article and consider what they would want to read rather than what you think is interesting.
- If additional information needs to be included, such as biographies, factsheets or photographs, they may be enclosed. The whole package then becomes a media kit.

## The message

Remember that the reason you are sending out a media release is that you want to communicate your message. This message is the one that has been thought through after looking at the general community, the particular groups the message is for and the image of you or your organisation. Consider the key concepts contained in the messages that you wish to send to the community through the media release.

Ask yourself the questions:

- Can the key messages be translated into a news story?
- Are they better suited to a columnist?
- Can they be given exposure as a community announcement (on radio or TV)?
- Can they be connected to any contemporary issue, festival or like minded events?

## Budgeting for publicity

Even the simplest marketing plans can involve sending 20 or 30 news releases. When budgeting, incorporate costs of paper, envelopes, postage and printing / photocopying, as well as QUALITY photographs to accompany the release.

## Hiring a publicist

Some artists feel uncomfortable promoting their work and achievements. You may want to consider contracting an experienced professional to do this for you. You'll need to undertake some preliminary work in order to help them understand you and the exhibition and promote it effectively, but it can save hours of valuable time for you.

There are a number of affordable and accomplished freelance publicists who maybe interested in working for your exhibition - ask around or call artsources for suggestions. These people can also assist in searching for sponsorship, and will charge a fee for service.

## Freelance writers

Some publications have contributing writers, and often payment is borne by the exhibitor/s, not the magazine. Again, artsource can help you access these writers and the publications they are attached to, and you will need to budget for this, as you would for a publicist.

## Be an attention seeker!

Be creative in your approach, but don't forget the basics. Don't alienate the reader with complicated theory, unless you know they will be interested – this may increase your chances of coverage in an art journal, but is unlikely to get you a listing in the local paper. You can always attach information on the artist/exhibition and if the receiver is interested, they will read on. A gimmick can make your media kit stand out from the pack. For example one artist placed a plastic animal in a clip bag filled with beach sand for media invites to an exhibition called Sandcastle Zoo.

## Tailoring

If you have the time, tailor your release to specific media — create a story for them. For example:

- Community newspapers like a community angle – call your own local paper and invite them to feature you and your work.
- The West Australian and Sunday Times appeal across the board, but include numerous sections within the paper that can provide exposure (Today Liftout, Habitat, Home).
- Keep a story for the Sunday Times different from The West Australian.
- Try and extend your exhibition's appeal beyond the arts pages and approach the media on different levels.

## The amazing value of a great image

When researching your media, check to see if they accept images and, if so, what they require. Ensure that digital, slides or photograph images are of high quality. Many media outlets will make use of a great image, especially if it is high quality and appeals to their readership. When sending images, be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope to ensure return, and be sure to place as much detail as possible on the back of the photograph, including:

- Caption.
- Name of artist/s.
- Name of artworks/title.
- When it was created.
- Date of exhibition.
- What the artwork is for - eg: exhibition, work in progress.
- Return address and contact details.

## Working with radio

Radio stations often have community service announcements, but prefer a briefer version of your release, to assist them in editing and help them determine the key points of the release. Read your brief release aloud to see what it sounds like, then edit accordingly.

## Media's perspective

Not every exhibition you hold will generate media coverage, and there is no sure way to ensure you are written about, so don't be too disappointed if nothing goes to print. A lot will depend on what else is happening in the world - for example, if your exhibition is competing with an established event such as the Artrage Festival, you are less likely to be covered. Community press and community radio (your local paper and University newspapers and stations - such as RTR fm) is often the surest bet to generate some exposure, but bear in mind that they will want to take a community angle on the work.

Even if you are lucky enough to be featured, always remember that you cannot dictate how you will be represented - even an interview situation is unlikely to result in you being portrayed exactly how you would like to be. Journalists work to tight deadlines and unfortunately many simply do not have the time to check every detail. They also write for target audiences so will take whatever angle they feel is most appropriate to their demographic - an article in the community newspapers is unlikely to delve into the theoretical background of your work, for example.

Unfortunately arts journalism in Western Australia tends to cater toward a fairly uninformed demographic, and sometimes the most inane angle on your exhibition is what will appeal to the press - journalists love portraying artists

as eccentric individuals, which can be frustrating.

The best strategy to get around is to begin by outlining your exhibition in relatively simple terminology, and then expand. Prepare a few brief, informative quotes that sum up your work in easily digestible language and dictate them to the writer, or even type them out in advance. This makes their job easier, and can help ensure that your own words are printed, rather than those of someone who may have little knowledge of your practice.

## **The Media**

### **The review**

There are so few writers dealing with the visual arts in WA that any review is a privilege - even a bad one. If you get a good write-up, keep a copy in the gallery for your audience to read. If your work gets slated, try not to take it too personally - generally speaking if a reviewer absolutely hates your work, they will not mention it at all. A bad review can be a sign that the writer actually sees a lot of potential in what you do, but feels it has not been fully realised this time. They may end up praising your next exhibition, so do not immediately scratch them from your mailing list! A letter of complaint to the editor is likely to make you look foolish, and is likely to ensure you are never written about again - always remember that once you get over the initial sting, a bad review can actually form valuable constructive criticism. Look at it objectively in a few months.

### **Working with press photographers**

No matter how good your own documentation is, some newspapers will only print images they have taken themselves, so be prepared to work with photographers who do not know anything about art. A lot of artists feel uncomfortable being photographed, but it is an unfortunate fact that most newspapers will only include a photograph of an artwork if the artist is also in the shot. Photographers may ask you to do something that you don't want to do - such as recline next to a sculpture, wield a paintbrush or even stand next to a work that someone else has made! This can get tricky, because if you absolutely refuse to be photographed - or will not do what they ask - they may not print the shot. Remember, press photographers often see themselves as artists too, whether or not you share their vision - and offending their artistic sensibilities will not do you any favours.

If you feel uncomfortable, weigh up the pros and cons of the situation – an article without a photograph is simply not eye-catching and is far less likely to be read, but an inappropriate photograph can misrepresent you and your work, and may be remembered for a long time. Try to negotiate a compromise that you both feel comfortable with.

## **Presenting your work**

### **General do's and don'ts**

- If you are working on paper always use archival paper materials, as this preserves the image over a long period of time and doesn't yellow or disintegrate with age.
- Use museum matt board on original artwork: it is double the price of regular matt board, but will not damage the works.
- Use an acid-free backing board.
- Use hinges to mount work so that it is removable.
- Don't stick down artwork with double-sided tape.
- Don't use wood backings without an acid-free barrier card as they tend to absorb moisture, can rot and are acidic, leading to damage to the artwork.

## Frames

Frames generally come in three basic options of aluminum, plastic and wood. Be cautious with wood and plastic frames if your artwork will also be framed with glass. Unless properly sealed, the combination of tannins and gases produced by these media along with the glass can create a “greenhouse effect” within the picture frame, which in the long run will cause damage to the work.

Don't be afraid to explore alternative framing ideas. Sometimes this can be an exciting way to present your work (eg: cardboard, recycled materials, pegs). Also, give prices for work framed and unframed if you are working in multiples (ie: prints / photographs).

## Glass

Glass can be either clear or non-reflecting glass (NRG). Some framers recommend clear glass as a better option than the non-reflecting kind, as colour and crispness of the image are lost with NRG. NRG is also more expensive and is only suitable for works that are subject to a lot of reflective light.

## Mount and backing

Always use archival materials such as museum matt board, which has a 100% rag core. Standard matt boards made with a wood pulp core are not suitable due to the damaging effect of tannins released from the wood.

Framers providing discount to artsource members are available from artsource.

Having spent time and money on invitations, mailing lists, and press releases, it is important to ensure your exhibition opening is successful.

# 14 **Opening Night**

## Timing

When selecting the date and time of your opening event, consider other events that are happening at or around the same time. Generally, evening openings take place from around 6pm to 8pm. The day of the opening sometimes depends on the venue and its opening days. Talk to your venue for advice if you are unsure.

If there are other events taking place at the same time, it can work either against, or complement, your plan eg: two gallery openings on the same evening can result in a larger audience for both shows if they are nearby, or a smaller audience for one if the other is on the other side of town and is a bigger drawcard.

## Hospitality

To establish an environment where your guests can relax and enjoy the exhibition consider providing refreshments, as well as creating a desirable ambience through lighting, music, decor or the provision of serving staff. But always ensure these are complimentary to the content of your exhibition.

A choice of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages should be offered, if possible. Sponsorship of beverages can save a lot of money, although you may still need to provide for ice, ice tubs, carafes, glasses, tea-towels, corkscrews, serving staff and washing up. It is becoming increasingly difficult to arrange this type of support, but if you can demonstrate a direct link between your market and the target market of the provider, you will have a chance. Allow at least three months lead-time - sponsors need to budget too!

Food is not essential, but always goes down well. If your opening takes place early in the evening, hungry guests arriving straight from work may leave early to eat, if nothing is provided. Food doesn't need to be extravagant. Simple sandwiches, dips, crackers and finger food can be made easily and fairly cheaply. You might be able to obtain in-kind sponsorship for your catering.

Themed food can compliment the exhibition and make the event more memorable in the long term, as well as providing a celebratory atmosphere. Don't forget about crockery, cutlery, trays and napkins.

Music can add to the ambience of the evening, as a deadly silent room can be intimidating. However, inappropriate music can detract from the work. If your musical taste clashes with your guests' taste, they may leave early. If you have musically inclined friends that can provide their services at little or no cost and will complement the intended atmosphere of the event, consider including them in your program. This will obviously impact on the budget and should be considered well before opening night.

### **Staffing and facilities**

Staff can be hired, or friends asked to help out for the evening, an extra measure to ensure the comfort of your guests – and yourself. You don't want to spend the night serving drinks and chopping Turkish bread, so consider arranging assistance for the following tasks (if applicable):

I Front-of-house, if there is a front desk, to answer inquires and provide a friendly face as guests arrive.

I Sales – at least two people (one to collect the cash, the other to “red dot” the sold work or phone through for credit card clearance if required).

I Bar staff.

I Waiters – or someone to set up food tables and bar area.

I Clean up and washing up crew.

Venue facilities

Not all venues come fully equipped with catering equipment and bar facilities. Discuss this with your venue management well in advance to avoid last-minute panic. For example, there is little point in going to the expense of hiring glasses if you don't have a sink (and helpers!) available for collecting glasses and washing up throughout the evening.

### **Look after your sponsors**

Remember to acknowledge sponsors and supporters through verbal acknowledgment and/or signage. Check the terms of your sponsorship agreement before opening night and ensure everything you promised is being adhered to. If you can arrange it, make a point of singling them out to show them the artworks and answer any queries they may have - they might just buy something!

### **Sales**

Traditionally opening night is when you will make most of your sales; therefore it is important to have this aspect well organised. Organise a responsible friend to manage the sales desk on the opening night so that you can talk to your guests.

Try to provide for cash, cheque and credit card sales. Be sure to organise numbers or wall labels for artworks, a receipt book, sales catalogues and red dots before the opening function. Arranging a float that provides change for those buyers who want to pay in cash is important, especially if you have works for sale that are relatively cheap.

Receipt books and a buyer's information sheet are necessary for the buyer and for your own records. You will only want to record essential information on the receipts (although it is advisable to include the buyer's phone number in case you misplace the buyer's information sheet), so have a separate sales record handy that will give details such as buyers name, address and telephone number, whether they are buying for a public or private collection and the type of work they are interested in. This information will provide a good foundation for future mailing lists.

Cheques are usually reliable as long as you receive some identification such as a drivers license. If you want to be really sure, take down a drivers license number, as this is a common practice for most retailers. Beware of unknown people spending large amounts with cheques, especially if they do not live locally, although as artworks are not released until the end of the exhibition, you should have the time to clear cheques.

Master catalogue lists (ie: a record of sales marked on a main sheet at sales desk) are necessary so that you can mark in sales, deposits and people that are planning to come back and buy the work. Make sure a visitor doesn't take this by mistake (tape it to the desk on opening night)!

### **Meet the artist!**

Many buyers like to meet the artist and discuss the work they have just purchased, so all participating artists should be available on the night. Try not to get caught up with other tasks such as serving drinks. If this isn't possible, arrange for artist profiles to be either on the walls near the relevant artwork, or at front desk with the sales person.

## **Guest / opening speaker**

Having a guest speaker to open your exhibition is not essential. Keep in mind that they can add a sense of occasion and provide an ideal opportunity to thank sponsors - but always remember that pointless speeches can bore and irritate your guests. It is best if the person has a high profile in the arts or an area related to your exhibition (philosophy lecturer, historian, marine biologist etc.) and has some prior knowledge of your work.

Consider the following possible speakers:

- High profile buyers of your work from your mailing list.
- Other well known artists who have shown interest in your work previously.
- If you are a student, or just graduating, a respected lecturer or department head may be an appropriate choice.
- Other advocates of your work such as curators/managers/board members of arts organisations.
- If you have contacts with high profile business people, or have a major sponsoring company, invite them to open the exhibition.

You may need to organise a lectern, PA and microphone for the opening, especially if it is to be a large opening. If you opt for speeches **TRY TO KEEP THEM BRIEF** - no one wants to listen to endless speeches, no matter how interesting the content is, and your audience is likely to get restless or talk over the top of the speaker, which is excruciatingly embarrassing.

The day after your opening you will need to ensure the gallery is tidied up in time to open the doors to the public. Many artists prefer to do the clean-up immediately following the opening (if they are not too exhausted) to get it over and done with. Otherwise, remember to allow yourself ample time the next day.

Whilst the exhibition is open to the public it is important to adhere to your advertised opening times - especially in a rented space with standard hours. Your gallery will not be impressed if they get phone calls from members of the public who turned up at the advertised time and found the doors locked (especially if they have paid for the advertising!), and they may forfeit your bond. Many galleries require you to gallery-sit your own show, this is the time to plan your bump-out, and documentation - and always remember you have a better chance of selling work during the run of the show if you are there to chat to your public.

## ***The morning after... and beyond***

### **Photographic documentation**

It is easy to forget about documenting your work after all the excitement (and stress) of the installation and opening, but it is always best to get onto this as soon as possible - nothing is worse than leaving it to the last minute and rushing things. Taking slides and photographs of your work during the first few days of the exhibition will ensure that you have time for a re-shoot if you are not happy with the results. You will always regret it if your documentation is not successful and the show has already closed.

Consider the costs of hiring a professional photographer, purchasing film, obtaining slides and copies of photographs, videoing (and editing) your work/performance. The onset of cheap digital photography and the capacity of Photoshop or similar image editing programs to manipulate poor images can seduce you into thinking anyone can take a good enough image. Don't be fooled: a good professional photographer can be a worthwhile investment.

A list of professional photographers experienced in documentation of artworks and providing artist discounts are available from [artsource](#).

Plan for documentation for long term career benefits – take detail and full-view pictures and make sure you get a few installation shots of the exhibition as a whole. Slides can be expensive, but this expense is worth it in the long run, especially if it will improve your future chances of making successful funding applications for the continuation of your work. To save money, see if you can arrange to share costs with another artist in your exhibition, or someone who needs work documented at the same time.

Professionally taken slides or digital photographs are essential for:

- Applying for grants;
- Approaching new galleries;
- Entry into slide directories, like [artSource](#);

- Advertising and promotion;
- Copyright records;
- Career records; and
- Insurance purposes. Slide and digital images are the most acceptable way of visually documenting your work and should carry the following information:
- Name of artist/s;
- Name of artwork;
- Materials and medium used;
- Location (if applicable eg: public artworks);
- When it was created/took place; and
- A directional arrow showing which way is 'Up' on the slide, and an appropriately named file if digital

### Other documentation

In addition to images, you should keep multiple copies of all exhibition catalogues, invitations and other promotional material, your news release and any reviews and media coverage as a result of the event. You may want to keep a file or folder for each exhibition you take part in.

### Bump-out

Remember to allow yourself adequate time to take the show down. The golden rule is to leave the space exactly as you found it - including removing all rubbish and removing (and filling) any nails or screws. Leaving things in the space "in case the next exhibitor can use them" is lazy. This will not go down well with the gallery and you may lose your bond.

Artsource quarterly newsletter

Artsource newsletter is a quarterly publication, focusing on current artsource projects, events & issues in the visual arts. The distribution of 1,300 is read by practicing professional artists and craftspeople, arts professionals, organisations & businesses and government departments. You can advertise your exhibition in the artsource newsletter through an advertisement or flier insert. Members are eligible for discounted rates. Call artsource for further details.

## Template for a Media Release

1. Date the Release at top of the page, e.g.  
Media Release  
22 November 2005
2. Below include the words
  - a. "For Immediate Release" if it is ready and in advance of event
  - b. If the information should only be available after a certain date – write the release date "Embargoed until 30 November 05"
  - c. If the information is to call to action to invite media to something in the next couple of days write "Media Alert"
3. Headline / Title – summarise the event in a catchy way
4. First & Second paragraph – provide essential information (what is your event about?)
5. The following information paragraphs should include lots of story angles and encourage good news pictures – e.g. credentials, unique qualities, scale, topicality, rarity, celebrity, awesome aspects.
6. Write in the present tense and avoid using opinions, qualifying adjectives, or overly descriptive prose – only use these in punchy quotes.
7. Write "ENDS"
8. Repeat title of event with Salient info – who, what, where & when plus details e.g. ticket prices, where to buy tickets, website address, alcohol free, adults only
9. Contact info – name, email, phone number and if you or the talent is available for interview/photos – make sure you or someone else are available to respond quickly to enquiries.
10. Try to keep it short & sweet – preferably no more than one page.

<b>INCOME TOTAL \$</b>	
Earned	
Exhibition fees	
Artwork sales	
Catalogue sales	
Inkind support	
Self contribution	
Sponsorship	
Funding	
ArtsWA	
Australia Council	
TOTAL INCOME \$	

<b>EXPENDITURE TOTAL \$</b>	
Administration	
Phone / fax / postage	
Stationery / printing	
Insurance	
Marketing & promotion	
Advertising	
Print invitations & catalogue	
Documentation	
Opening night hospitality	
Production costs	
Venue & equipment hire	
Materials	
Freight	
Salaries, fees	
Artist fee	
Curator	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE \$	