



Things to Know When You Show

When you show your work you have a variety of possible venues. All venues should meet certain criteria to be worth showing at. There are other issues that are particular to certain types of venues such as business establishments like coffee shops and restaurants.

General Considerations

Have an agreement on paper

You should always have the terms of your show clear between you and the owner/operator of the venue. This is best done on paper, signed by both you and the person in charge at the venue. Having the agreement on paper saves questions later. Also, be sure to get a signed inventory (or send the inventory by email and have the owner acknowledge it is correct by replying back in the affirmative). Most of the points below are things that should be included in the agreement.

Know how you will be compensated

You can not show work with no expectation of compensation. Exposure is not compensation unless you can buy something with it at the venue. If the work will be for sale, then usually a commission is involved. Commissions should not exceed 50% even in well respected galleries. Without the artists work, they have nothing to sell. But venues do have the overhead of maintaining a physical location and, likely other things such as advertising, point of sale (POS) systems etc. If there is no expectation or possibility of sales then rental fees, hanging fees and curation fees should be involved. Artists' time is of value and when you work on a show or have your inventory tied up you should expect to be paid.

Know who is responsible for what costs

There may be costs associated with advertising, signage, hanging materials, wall preparation, supplies for openings, credit card processing, etc. Know what costs are involved and who is responsible for what share of those costs between you and the venue.

Know who is responsible for sales tax, sales processing, delivery etc.

Sales in most places incur sales tax liability. Someone must collect the tax and file it with the tax authority. It is illegal not to collect and file sales tax in most states (except in certain tax free zones). Be sure you know who is collecting the tax and filing the paperwork and paying the tax authority.

Who is responsible for sales is also important. In all but the rarest cases it should be the venue. They are presenting your art. It is decorating their space. Even if they are not a gallery they are usually set up to take money (e.g. a coffee shop or restaurant is set up to sell food and drink). So art on the walls should go through their POS. You are not there all the time. Art purchases are often impulse buys. If a person has to then contact you rather than buy the art right now, you are unlikely to make the sale. There is little cost to a business to add your art to their POS. Then they can collect and file the sales tax and pay you from the proceeds. Signage should make clear the work is for sale and the price of each piece.

You should expect to cover any credit card fees the venue incurs, unless they are taking a commission. Then it may, or may not be built into the commission.

Know who is responsible for delivery of purchased work. If the work can be taken immediately this should be clear. If the work can only be delivered after the show, be clear whether buyers will be picking up, you or the venue will deliver it or if it must be shipped. Buyers should be aware that if the piece has to be shipped then shipping costs will be billed separately.

Know who is responsible for the work while displayed

Be clear who is responsible for the art while it is in the venue. Have clarity as to who is responsible for loss or breakage and if you need to carry any insurance or if it is included in the venue's liability insurance.

Know who is responsible for hanging, wall prep, etc.

While this is self explanatory, the more you do wall prep, hanging, etc. the lower the venue's commission should be if there is a commission. If you are doing this work with little or no help from the venue, you should consider charging for the service. It is work and hanging services are not free.

Arrange for collecting contact info fo buyers or other interested parties.

Your email list is a valuable asset. You should be sure you will get email info for interested viewers (have an obvious email list or a clear way for people to get to your subscribe form on your web site) Also be sure that when they venue sells work you are able to access the buyer details the venue is able to collect. The ability to contact actual buyers of your work is important. You may have to follow up on this to get the info so be prepared to do so.

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