



Craft business resource

How to work with galleries

Do your research

1. Prepare

Every gallery has their own curation style and particular audience, so making sure you find the right gallery to showcase your work is crucial.

- Visit the gallery if possible, to get a feel for the space and whether it will suit your work.
- Find out if you fit within their price range.
- Check where the gallery is located - how far are you prepared to travel or how much will you spend on delivery?
- Ask if the gallery specialises in a particular specialism, e.g. applied arts, craft, fine art, sculpture.
- Look into past exhibitions - are you in suitable company?
- Reach out to anyone you know that has been represented by the same gallery. You should ask about their experience and what made their approach successful.

Image:

Gallery Interior,
Gill Wing



Decide your pricing

Take some time to calculate your prices accurately and honestly. Ensure you include your overheads, your direct costs, your time and your profit, to work out the wholesale/artist's price; then recommended retail price (RRP).

Use our resource [How to price your work](#) to help you to calculate your prices accurately. You should also research similar makers' prices to ensure your rates are comparable - especially those shown at the galleries that interest you.

Price consistency is incredibly important. Retail prices should be the same or as close as possible on a designer's own webshop as the price in a gallery. This means the wholesale price should allow for a retail mark-up which is essential for a sustainable business for both maker and gallery.

Jade Mellor, Gill Wing Gallery

Image:
Craft exhibition
at Gallery 57



Understand commission rates

Galleries may seem to charge high commission rates but remember that they are running a business and need to cover their overheads including business rates, running costs (water/gas/electricity), tax, exhibition costs and staff costs, whilst trying to make a profit on top.

Working with galleries can be a fruitful business arrangement for both parties, their business model aims to build audiences and generate sales for you the artists and makers. Try to avoid undercutting, as this puts the gallery business at risk.

Present your work online

Invest in a professional looking website with high resolution images of your work. A website does not need to be complicated, just easy to navigate. Include a concise bio or artist statement on an 'About' page, plus contact information and past exhibitions and projects.

Make sure the social media links you provide showcase your practice not your personal life. Keep content professional!

When approaching galleries do not underestimate the power of beautiful photography of your work.

Yvonna Demczynska, Flow Gallery

Practice presentation

If you can talk articulately and enthusiastically about your work, you'll find a strong advantage. Writing an artist statement is the best place to start putting language to ideas.

Use our resource [Hone your writing skills](#) to get started. Think about what makes your work unique and how you can discuss your inspirations, materials, and techniques with passion.

Time your approach

Image:

Anne-Laure Cano
Ussade: The
Longing to Belong

2. Approach

Consider the timing of your approach, avoid busy times for galleries by checking their websites for the opening week of exhibitions and art fairs. Possible approaches are:

- Send a personal letter or email. Find out who is the right person to contact and present how your work is a good fit for their gallery.
- Connect up via social media.
- Look for open applications that galleries offer, sign up to their newsletters to stay informed.
- Attend private views.
- Do not simply walk into a gallery with your work in hand.



A well thought through and executed approach has impact. Email approaches are quick and can be an easy option so an original approach will be appreciated. I was impressed and delighted by one such approach and immediately invited the artist to show her work.

Ann Symes, Gallery57

Send a letter or email

A letter or email should include:

- Covering letter introducing yourself and why your work fits with the gallery's aesthetic.
- CV / resume
- Artist statement
- Pricing list - wholesale (artist price) and RRP.
- 5 high quality images, under 1MB each.
- Your contact details – include links to your website and social media.

Often first impressions are made online, so take stock of your social media presence to gain attention from gallery curators and content teams.

Use social media

Remember to:

- Take clear high resolution photos of your final works and document the process of producing them.
- Follow the accounts of curators and galleries you admire.
- Like and comment on their relevant posts.
- Make contact via comment or direct message when appropriate.
- State why you are contacting them and why you think your work is relevant to their business.

Note not all galleries like to be approached via social media, so if they do not respond, do not chase. Change tact and send an email or letter instead.

Make your CV stand out

For galleries, a CV provides insight into your creative career pathway to date. It's not a test, it is evidence. They know that many talented artists and makers are just starting out and their CV might be sparse.

It's important to evidence your creative development, this could include short courses; formal education; even portfolio development with a mentor.

When starting out, we recommend you build your CV through open competitions, studio events and fairs to gain some experience and to demonstrate your creative development pathway so far.

Remember, each gallery is selling to a different audience. For example:

- High calibre work to high network individuals
- Emerging artists alone or alongside work of more established talent to a variety of clients
- Work to buyers that are looking for a gift
- Work to buyers who simply appreciate the handmade

Where does your work fit within this picture?

"If you're a recent graduate look for opportunities to show your work, many galleries and fairs like GNCCF and Craft Festival and organisations like Green Grads feature emerging makers. There may be bursaries or support on offer in group studios so be proactive and seek out opportunities."

Samantha Rhodes, Bluecoat Display Centre

3. Collaborate

"Artists should understand that working with galleries is a long term relationship based on respect and trust" notes Yvonna Demczynska from Flow Gallery. Here are some considerations to get your partnership started on the right foot.

Image:

Textile artist Clare
Benn, Flow Gallery



Questions to ask

- When will your work be displayed and for how long?
- Is this a trial period or a longer term representation of your work?
- How will your work be promoted and what do you need to provide the gallery with?
- Is there any additional promotion expected of you?
- Will the gallery insure your works while they are in their care?
- Will they use branded packaging? Save your time and money if this is the case.
- Does the gallery expect total exclusivity over your works?
- How are selling prices calculated? Check whether these include VAT or sales taxes.
- When will you receive payment for sold works?

Share instructions

Provide display/handling/packaging instructions – don't assume gallery staff know how to handle or display your work the way you want.

It is a good idea to ask galleries for a written consignment note for your work, as many insurance companies require this.

Sign a contract

Ensuring you have a legally binding contract is a safeguard for both parties. Make yourself familiar with the various types of contracts and agreements that exist between gallerist and artist, the main types are:

- Sale or return (SOR): the gallery commits to sell or return the artwork within a set time. The artist maintains the creation until the final sale. The eventual revenue is distributed according to a percentage accepted between the two parties.
- Exclusive contract: the artist agrees to process all work and sales through the gallery.
- Purchase agreement: the purchase of an artist's creation by the gallery for exclusive ownership and resale.

Make sure your paperwork is complete, include bank details if your work is on exhibition or sale or return, mark your prices clearly as wholesale/artist price or retail if you're trying to keep a continuity across your outlets, and make sure you know what the gallery commission is and if this includes VAT.

Samantha Rhodes, Bluecoat Display Centre

Top tips!

Image:

Farnham Sculpture by
David Mayne, New Ashgate
Gallery .
Photo by Melia Klonou

Making an exhibition proposal

By Dr Outi Remes, New Ashgate Gallery

Working on a new exhibition is one of the most exciting tasks for both artists and gallerists. Curators and programmers often consider proposals in relation to a number of criteria, particularly the quality of ideas and how they relate to the gallery's remit.

A successful exhibition often encourages conversation (and sales if relevant) and communicates with audiences and clients. It's rewarding to represent recently created artwork as by bringing it from the studio to public domain, opportunities are presented to explore the work and the story behind it.



A successful proposal must fit with the gallery's mission, which is often included on their website. Many galleries also link with local and national events such as the coronation, Olympics, or the recent Year of Glass. At New Ashgate Gallery, we have multiple exhibition areas that have specific profiles for commercial or less commercial displays.

When submitting a proposal, you should present it in a format that is easily accessible to the selection panel. Some spaces may have a more relaxed criteria if you wish to hire a gallery space, thus often keeping sales profits. While there are several funding bodies, it is also worth contacting a local council and considering a business sponsorship that may cover equipment and materials.

In summary, when proposing an exhibition, consider the following:

- Know your venue, its audience, its exhibition policy, space and objectives.
- Make it clear why you have chosen this gallery / venue / curator.
- Consider how its audience and clients will benefit from the exhibition and your work.
- Show that you have considered practicalities such as timetable, funding, transport, equipment, administration, and marketing. While galleries will do most of the marketing, you will be asked to provide high resolution press images (also, essential for exhibition proposals).