



2009 Artist Professional Development Workshop Summer Series

Session Two: Alternative Spaces in a Changing Art Scene with the IDADA Ethics and Fair Practices Committee

Presented by the Arts Council of Indianapolis and Primary Colours

This information and more will be posted on-line at www.ArtsCouncilofIndianapolis.org under the Resources section.

The IDADA Ethics and Fair Practices Committee are:

Dan Cooper – artist and committee chairperson
Shannon Linker – arts administrator and artist advocate
Mark Ruschman – gallerist
Ellie Siskind – artist
Cindy Wingo – artist
Jason Zickler – artist and current president of IDADA

Tips for showing in an alternative space

Compiled from members of Primary Colours, IDADA and ACI.

Once you have evaluated the space, visited during regular business hours, seen the current or past exhibitions and decided that this space is a good opportunity for you and your work, here is a checklist of things to consider for your show.

First, Negotiate with the Owner to Show Your Work

- Insurance? Will the owner offer this or are you, the artist, responsible for supplying your own liability insurance? Determine who is liable for damage or theft of your work while it is being shown at the location. Will the owner be willing to reimburse you for damaged or stolen work?
- Establish beforehand who will be responsible for hanging your work. The owner may or may not be familiar with hanging work.
- Check to see whether the business owner has a system already set up to hang your work.
- Work out your sales agreement ahead of time. This includes deciding whether you or the shop will handle sales. It's often easier to let the shop handle sales, but be prepared to compensate the business for running credit cards, usually 3.5%. (You can find a sample contract at <http://www.idada.org/commissions.aspx>.)
- Work out your commission agreement. Most alternative spaces do not expect to receive a commission as they see having the rotating artwork in their space as their benefit, but if they do require a commission, it should be no more than 10% – 15%. (see the IDADA Ethics guidelines for details.)

- Will there be an opening reception? Who will pay for it? Ask the owners if they are willing to provide discounts, especially if you expect a big crowd. Consider holding your reception on a night other than a First Friday.
- Who will publicize the show? Work out an agreement. If the owner regularly advertises, see if you can get your show mentioned or featured.
- Ask whether you will have to repair the space after showing your work. If so, you may need to ask the owner to supply matching paint for touchups.
- Contract or Agreement: You should **always** have a signed agreement anytime you show your work. It can be created by you or the business owner, but both should sign it so there are no surprises in the end. The agreement should include many of the topics above including insurance, sales, commission, who installs, dates for openings and install/de-install, etc.

Essentials

- Presentation and professionalism are the cornerstones to showcasing your work. Badly presented pieces can contribute to a perceived devaluing of your work: It can make it look cheap. Sometimes you don't have a choice, but presenting your work gallery style is much more preferable to booth or salon-style. Give each piece enough breathing room to look comfortable. When a piece sells, be ready to replace it with a new piece.
- Provide Title Cards for each of your pieces. Each card should provide the title, medium, name of artist, price, and size. While size is optional because the viewer is right there, you never know. It's like the customer asking Bazbeaux, "How big is your 12-inch pizza?"
- If you are handling sales instead of the business owner, be sure to include your e-mail and website on each title card. You can never get your name/e-mail/website out there too much! The cards should be consistent, clean and free from fancy or wacky fonts – just the facts.
- Posting your artist statement is always a good idea. "My work speaks for itself" is a cop out. Most people don't know you personally, and a well-worded artist statement provides a point of departure, a context for presenting your work. An artist statement doesn't need to be comprehensive (i.e. "When I was a child...") and if done right, you shouldn't have to change it drastically from show to show. In one sense, it's like your personal mission statement.
- When deciding which pieces to show, continuity of theme is much more preferable to diversity. Your work presents itself stronger if it relates to the other pieces, rather than a "greatest hits."
- Supply business cards, postcards or other contact information. Many times, you won't be present at your showing all the time. Also, make sure to check in periodically to replenish cards and supplies.
- Respect the owner. Say someone sees your work at a coffee house and, knowing that the owner gets a cut, offers to buy it after the show. Don't try to circumvent your agreement. You might not get a future show or worse yet, you might spoil it for others trying to show in that space.
- Red dots. Don't assume the owner has these readily available. Seeing red dots by some of your pieces lets patrons know others are interested in purchasing your work and can be the best advertisement for your work.

Hanging Your Work in an Existing Business

- Often, you'll want to be responsible for hanging your own work, especially if the business owner doesn't have experience showing art.
- You'll need to bring hardware, a level, nails, screws, and wire.

- Make sure the space has lighting that is available and adjustable to show off your work.
- If it's an open space, show it in a gallery style, centered on 60 inches.
- Make adjustments for any fixtures on the walls.
- If someone else is hanging your show, be sure to have hanging hardware (wire or saw tooth hanger) on the back of all your pieces.

Showing Your Work in a Vacant Space

- Make sure you have the basics: electricity and restrooms.
- Obviously, you need permission from the owner. Often, it's good to get this in writing.
- An owner may require you to get event or liability insurance.
- Make sure the space is as clean as possible! Unfinished spaces can be dusty and dirty, so you want to make sure that the space you show in is clean, presentable, and professional.
- Clamp lights with floodlight bulbs provide decent lighting to any piece.

Publicize Your Showing

Write a press release about your show. Include all details, including a brief bio or artist statement and your contact information in case someone wants to interview you. You should also include the hours of the business. Don't forget to e-mail a high resolution, professional-quality image of your work or a gallery shot for publication as well. A partial list of outlets for sending your press releases includes the following:

- On the Cusp, scottgrowstudio@gmail.com
- David Hoppe, *NUVO*, dhoppe@nuvo.net
- Lou Harry, *IBJ*, lharry@ibj.com
- Konrad Marshall, *Indianapolis Star*, Konrad.Marshall@indystar.com
- *Broad Ripple Gazette*, info@BroadRippleGazette.com
- *Urban Times*, news@brookspublications.com

FREE CALENDAR LISTINGS:

- The Arts Council of Indianapolis – Fill in the form on www.indyarts.org under “submit an event”
- NUVO calendar – Fill in form on www.nuvo.net/submit-event and submit images to calendar@nuvo.net
- Utilize social media, including Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and SmallerIndiana. On Facebook, especially, you can create an event listing and send messages to those who attend.
- Send an e-vite to everyone who has purchased your work before and those who have shown interest. Encourage them to pass it along to their friends who might be interested as well.