

APPROACHING ART GALLERIES

Advice from *The Working Artist* Alumni



the
WORKING
artist™

Introduction from Crista Cloutier

Do you struggle to find a gallery to represent your work?

Or maybe you keep hoping for better galleries to show your stuff?

I've spent my career in the art business and I can tell you this: Gallery representation, like most things in life, is all about relationships.

But how do you build those relationships?

You do it by respecting the fact that galleries are a business.

Gallerists don't want to hold your hand. They don't have time to teach you how it's done. They do want to know that you understand the profession and its practices.

Gallery representation is difficult, yes. Their doors are crowded with artists struggling to get in. The competition is fierce.

But that doesn't mean that the doors are closed to you.

It does mean that knowledge and preparation will serve you well in moving to the front of the line.

Our community of Working Artists have created this eBook of tips + strategies to help you navigate the gallery scene and open those doors.

This is their advice to you
– from one artist to another.



Judi Wild

It's good to research the gallery to make sure it's the right "fit" for you.

Does your art compliment and connect with the other art on display? Also it's a good idea to talk with other participating artists to make sure that the gallery owner is going to work hard and pay you on time.

Gallery owners are very busy and appreciate making an appointment. Your work must be organized and your presentation professional.



Don't be afraid to show the "real" you. The gallery owner is interested in you, and will be selling you as well as your art.

www.judiwildartist.com

“ My biggest regret was that The Working Artist wasn't available 25 years ago. At that time I had made the decision to leave a well-paying job and become a full-time professional artist. I knew what “starving artist” meant.

After taking The Working Artist and looking back, I now realize that I made so many mistakes through the years.

The best advice I can give anyone who is either contemplating a career in the arts or even the more seasoned professionals, is to take The Working Artist course.

Crista is a marvelous mentor and a great instructor, with experience in every aspect of the arts. She'll guide you through all the pitfalls that you'll undoubtedly encounter in your creative career. Even after completion of the training, she will not forget you and is always there to encourage you.”

Judi Wild
www.judiwildartist.com



Kym O'Donnell

Never be discouraged or offended if you apply or submit and aren't accepted or don't receive a response.

So frequently we feel stung or rejected; I've even envisioned curators looking disgustedly at my work and passing it over. It can be really disheartening.

Luckily, I've also been on the other side and run a few grass-roots exhibition spaces and a collective. We frequently receive unsolicited proposals from artists who wanted to show with us and oftentimes they're really, really good. Unfortunately, we were really, really overextended.

We never got back to a lot of them (I admit this with embarrassment); but we thought about them a lot.

We always had a long wish list of shows we wanted to put together, and were always thinking of different ways to incorporate the people who had submitted interesting work. Even years later.

Try to keep this in mind whenever you're not accepted for something you apply for. It's so easy to feel disappointed in the moment, but remember that a gallerist may love your work but feel it's not right for a particular show. Don't stop applying; you may be perfect for the next one.

www.kymodonnell.com

“One of my favorite aspects of The Working Artist is the way Crista managed to reintroduce so many bits of information that I'd forgotten or never properly learned in the first place. It was incredibly helpful to be reminded about studio visit etiquette, how to mirror language back in a grant proposal, and the most effective ways to approach galleries. Her information about pricing was invaluable.”

I made notes during the sessions and kept them in one section of a sketchbook; this may be more valuable to me than the workbooks themselves.

I applied for and received a grant shortly after taking the course and the grant writing process was so much easier when I could refer back to my notes. It gave me a lot of confidence.”

Kym O'Donnell
www.kymodonnell.com

Tom Waters

Build a relationship with a gallery first. Do this by attending their shows. Ask questions about what they show without pushing your work.

If you submit to their calls to artists, follow all the rules, do all the paperwork, get everything in on time. Don't be that artist that is remembered for being extra work or having an attitude.

Most galleries are severely understaffed. Respect their time, or volunteer if that is a possibility. In the end a relationship gets you into a show if it comes down to you or someone else.

www.creativewatersart.com

“After taking The Working Artist, I was able to proceed more confidently in presenting and showing my work. I knew how to be prepared and had the confidence to approach new opportunities.

As a result I entered more shows, even winning awards, and I got my first-ever solo gallery show.

If you are on the fence about taking this course I suggest it may be the most important thing you do as an artist.

Building our toolset of skills for the business side of being an artist is probably the most neglected thing we artists do, and the most limiting to our success. Get over that hurdle with confidence. Take the class. ”

Tom Waters

www.creativewatersart.com



Natasha Zahn Pristas

Expand your definition of galleries depending on where you live.

I live on an island in the Gulf of Alaska. My definition of wall space is going to be very different from someone in New York City!

Gallery space here might be a coffee shop wall or museum front porch or portable walls in a national wildlife refuge building. I've also reached out to a successful gallery/store in another community in the state, but I packaged myself with 3 other artists well-known to the owner so I was able to get a group show for the 4 of us.

And I name-dropped a friend who's known to the owner. Did I sweat that phone call? You bet! But it's about letting people place you in a context they're familiar with so they'll give you a chance.

www.natashazahnpristas.com

“ The Working Artist was the homework I needed to get my art business moving again.

*My confidence has grown, my opportunities have grown,
and my style has grown.*

But not overnight!

*It's been two years since I took
The Masterclass, and it's been baby
steps and ah-ha moments. I tore my hair
out over assignments, and I'd wonder
why I had to do this kind of work
...but it's all paid off. ”*

Natasha Zahn Pristas
www.natashazahnpristas.com



Rochelle Johnson

Most galleries either have a waiting list or they want to feel like they've discovered you.

I recently got into a gallery with a two-year waiting list due to an artist friend who mentioned my name to the owner. I was able to send my portfolio directly to the gallery owner who liked my work and accepted me in right away.

After talking to many galleries owners I found that they like to follow artists on social media.

But it's important not to wait on galleries, or anyone for that matter, and take the bull by the horns. Since taking The Working Artist, I've curated a group show that was successful and then doors just started to open up!

www.rochellejohnsonstudio.com

“While in art school I was told to let the galleries come to you. I thought to myself “how will they know who I am? So I started talking to people in the art world, Crista being my first stop.

I learned so much from The Working Artist that I thought I knew – but really had no clue. ”



Rochelle Johnson
www.rochellejohnsonstudio.com

Lynne Tinley

I visit a gallery and study the genre of art that's exhibited. I speak with the staff, letting them know I'm an artist, and get a feel for the business and its market. Later I'll email the manager of the gallery and send her images of my work, my CV and a bio.

I follow up the email in a week or two, usually in person. If they're interested in my work, we'll talk about commissions and what the gallery will offer me in terms of exhibitions, publicity etc.

I have found that sometimes a gallery's sense of professionalism or elitism will conflict with my own creative process and we will not be able to work together.

www.boranupgallery.com

“ I've been creating and marketing art for over 50 years. I used to do quite well. I made a name for myself painting wild animals, birds and landscapes.

As I got older my work changed and no longer appealed to previous buyers. Not only that, but being nomadic, I no longer lived amongst my previous market.

I was finding it increasingly difficult to sell my work. I knew I had to change the way I was thinking and marketing my work!!

I signed up for the Working Artist Masterclass and Crista's magic started to work on me even before I completed the course.

My husband and I received a community arts commission for two organisations that focus on rehabilitating natural areas and biodiversity in Western Australia. It was an outstanding success and has been exhibited twice already.

Then I approached a gallery to represent me. The gallerist loved my work and we signed a contract for me to work 2 days a week in the gallery in exchange for hanging space and 10% commission for any works by other artists that I may sell.

I enjoy working in the gallery and it's helped me talk about my own work as well as about art in general. Crista is right - marketing is all about making relationships with people! I've become a good sales person!

Recently, my husband and I were accepted by Sustainable Housing for Artists and Creatives. We have a brand new apartment with working space plus a communal studio/gallery where I can exhibit and give workshops at low cost. Our housing and future art careers are secured! ”



Lynne Tinley
www.boranupgallery.com

Stephen Simmons

My first experience with a gallery was not good, but I only have myself to blame.

If only I had done Crista's Working Artist course before I tried to get in a gallery I would have saved myself a lot of pain. I should have had an up-to-date portfolio, business cards, references, pricing and I should have gone to a gallery more suited to my style of painting.

www.ssimmonsart.com

“ I have more confidence since doing the course because I have learnt valuable lessons about marketing myself and my work. New opportunities, such as, exhibition offers and free oil paints to promote a business came my way soon after the course.

My advice for other artists thinking of taking the course is “Go for it!”

This course is not long or as expensive as many others and is great value for money. Your confidence will grow because of the new skills you have acquired to sell your work and I still receive regular updates/ideas from Crista at no charge! So, do the course, you will not regret it. ”



Stephen Simmons
www.ssimmonsart.com



Monique Oliver

If you're already being represented by a gallery – it's SO much easier. Other galleries then seem to take you much more seriously. That first one is the hardest.

Without a doubt a professional website which showcases your work looking it's best is a MUST!

In the first instance I emailed a few photos of my work and then referred the gallery owner to my website. The images sparked their interest enough to take the time to look at my site. From there they asked to see samples of my work in person and I was in!

My website now generates at least one genuine enquiry a week from either a potential client and/or gallery interest both in the UK and overseas.

www.moniqueoliver.co.uk

“In the year or so since I took The Working Artist, my practice has changed beyond recognition. I'm in the studio of my dreams. I've received several artist grants, had solo shows in public buildings and a group exhibition in a museum. I'm currently represented by 2 physical galleries and a curated online gallery. I've also had numerous features both digitally and in print. I believe in my work more.

My art is like “Marmite” – you either love it or hate it – and that's fine with me now. I stopped trying to please everyone and decided to just please myself. The Working Artist gave me the confidence to do that and I no longer take artistic rejection so personally. I just pick myself up and go onto the next thing.

I've taken several other courses but can honestly say that The Working Artist taught me more than any other.”

Monique Oliver
www.moniqueoliver.co.uk

Karen Thurman

I'm an artist who also owns a gallery. So here's what I'm looking for in working with an artist:

First and foremost is integrity. There are a million great artists out there, but fewer who live by a deeply embedded ethical code of conduct. How they comport themselves in their daily lives is as important to me as the quality of their art.

Because of the nature of the gallery, I'm looking for artists who present well. I'm not referring to the clothes they wear, but artists who become part of my tribe are activist-artists who are willing to stand up for nature, as well as showing their work in the best light - whether that's doing talks and presenting workshops or volunteering on projects.

They represent the gallery out there in the real world. If they're not currently happy putting themselves out there, then at least they should be willing to learn. I'm more than willing to invest time and effort in helping these artists develop if they're willing to do the work.

It helps if they have a good following.

Obviously good art that suits the gallery's theme and purpose. We only sell nature-related art.

Openness to learning, developing and growing as people as well as artists.

www.thurmanovich.com



“ I signed up for the Working Artist not long after I decided to take up photography full-time.

I was filled with doubts about how to go about getting my work seen and the Working Artist gave my confidence a great boost.

When you join The Working Artist you're not just signing up for a course, you're joining a community of like-minded artists who, along with Crista, will continue to encourage and support you long after you've finished the assignments. You'll learn how to present yourself and your work professionally, how to price it, how to reach out to people, how to get seen, and much more.

It's worth every hour and every penny you're going to spend on it. ”

Karen Thurman
www.thurmanovich.com

To learn when the next session of
The Working Artist Masterclass is scheduled,
be sure you are signed up for our mailing list.



www.theworkingartist.com

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