

Upon writing this factsheet about developing an exhibition it was amusing to read some of the advice that came from a simple Google search on the topic.

**One such pearl of wisdom was:
"If you want a theme, ask your artists to dress according to the theme. If the event is classy, dress classy. If the theme is Victorian, dress in elegant Victorian clothes. Play the host as much as possible, introduce artists potential buyers to spark conversations. Flit about like a social butterfly."**

Although not as entertaining as the previous inter-web suggestion, below is a nuts and bolts checklist that will help you to plan and present your next exhibition.

Developing Your Idea

- 1 What is your exhibition about?
Develop a conceptual framework that is the blueprint for your exhibition. Are you responding to a philosophical idea, a conversation with an artist, a current event, a new movement of art making that you have witnessed? Research this idea thoroughly to create a multilayered concept and to understand where it sits historically and within contemporary art making.
- 2 Who is involved?
Invite artists to participate in your exhibition. Meet up with artists in their studio space to discuss your ideas and whether they will be making a new work or contributing an existing work. Do you want to show international or interstate artists alongside local artists? If so think about what kind of work they make and if you can afford to freight it or facilitate its fabrication locally.

- 3 Where will your exhibition be held?
Secure a location for your exhibition. This could be at an artist-run space (ARI), a gallery that accepts open call outs, a non-gallery location, or in a public space. Look out for programs run by local councils to utilise existing non-gallery spaces. If you are using a non-gallery location, make sure that you secure relevant permissions and any appropriate insurance before going ahead.
- 4 How will you use the space?
Get a floor plan of your space. Plan where you will place each work and think about the spatial relationship between works. Consider whether or not you will stick to museum hanging standards or experiment with more unconventional display methods. Some potential questions to ask yourself: Are the relationships between the works dynamic and conversational? Does the space feel balanced? How is the audience building layers or meaning as they walk through the show?
- 5 Will you have an accompanying publication?
A publication offers another layer of meaning for audiences in addition to being a great promotional and archival tool after the exhibition has finished. They can range in scale from a single photocopied page to a colour printed publication with multiple texts and images. Generally publications start with an introductory text on the curatorial concept followed by analysis and contextualisation of individual artists works. This is usually accompanied by images of each individual work in the show.
- 6 Will you initiate any public programming?
Public programming held throughout the show can also allow for a greater depth of understanding of the curatorial concept and individual works. It could take the form of artist and curator talks, performances, film screenings or community events.

Kim Fasher

Copyright NAVA and the author 2014.
Information in this factsheet is presented as general information only and should not be relied on as legal or financial advice. Legal advice should be sought on specific legal issues.

 (02) 9368 1900

 nava@visualarts.net.au

 visualarts.net.au

 facebook.com/NAVA.VisualArt

 twitter.com/NAVAvisualarts

 instagram.com/nava_visualarts

Planning And Presenting The Exhibition

1 Scheduling

Draw up a schedule of important dates including

- exhibition install and de-install dates
- relevant funding application dates
- studio visit/artist liaison dates
- marketing dates
- writing, design layout and printing of publication dates

2 Budgeting

Draw up a budget so you have an idea of how much the exhibition will cost. Think about potential spending areas such as:

- artist fees
- exhibition space rental
- exhibition infrastructure and equipment hire (e.g.: plinths, projectors, screens, DVD and media players, headphones)
- framing
- publication design and printing
- installer/technical assistant fees
- insurance
- freight
- opening costs

3 Funding

Research any potential grants from the Australia Council, State government, NAVA and any other philanthropic bodies you could apply to. Have you thought about attaining private sponsorship or in kind assistance for things such as equipment, printing, paper stock, exhibition space and opening drinks? Email proposals to potential companies and follow up with a friendly phone call. Other funding avenues include fundraisers, online crowd funding as well as drink and publication sales at the opening.

4 Marketing and Publicity

How are you going to maximise audience numbers at the opening and attendance throughout the show?

Write a press release to email out with the name of the show, artists involved, a short description of the curatorial concept, dates/opening hours, location, strong image with image credit and any funding credits. Think about whether you want to pay for advertising in art-listing journals such as The Art Guide and Art Almanac. Create a Facebook event page with your artists and email exhibition invitations out to your collective mailing lists. Try to get publicity throughout the show by targeting your community radio station or state newspaper. Talk to emerging writers to see if anyone is keen to review the exhibition for art press such as The Artlife or Runway.

5 Installation and Risk Management

Talk to the artists to work out if they can install their own work or if you need to hire installers/technicians. Make sure you have all the correct installation tools at your disposal - hammer, drill, tape measure, ladder and level are usually handy.

Think about Work Health and Safety (WHS) and risk management strategies. Does the gallery have public liability insurance? Do any works pose specific risks or hazards such as being flammable etc. Are your artists and helpers safe whilst installing the works? Are audiences safe to move in and around works?

6 Wall texts and floor sheets

Think about how you will identify each work. You could have wall texts or a room sheet listing the artist, name of work, year made and possibly scale, materials, edition number and price. Will you have additional text on each individual work to contextualise it within the artist's broader practice and the exhibition framework? If so, use simple concrete language and keep it short at roughly 200 words per work.

7 Start up and shut down instructions

Write an easy to follow start up and shut down sheet for gallery staff or volunteers with instructions of how to operate new media works such as sound installations and video works. Include contact details of artists in case works stop functioning properly throughout the show.

8 Documentation

Hire or borrow the services of a good photographer to document your show professionally. The images can be used online and in print for publicity, archiving purposes and future funding applications.

Kim Fasher

Copyright NAVA and the author 2014.

Information in this factsheet is presented as general information only and should not be relied on as legal or financial advice. Legal advice should be sought on specific legal issues.



(02) 9368 1900



nava@visualarts.net.au



visualarts.net.au



facebook.com/NAVA.VisualArt



twitter.com/NAVAvisualarts



instagram.com/nava_visualarts