

# Love to Have Your Work on Our Gallery Walls? A How-To Primer on Craft Council Gallery Shows



CRAFT COUNCIL  
OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

## Benefits

Having an exhibition at one of the Craft Council's two galleries can have many benefits for a craftsperson's career: important exposure, a formal opening, invitations to several hundred guests, media coverage, and access to a major market. It can also be a means to reach new levels in your work, a chance to focus, experiment, explore and, above all, to pull a coherent body of work together within a set time frame.

## Schedule

Who and what is exhibited in the Galleries – and when – is decided by a committee. The schedule for the six to eight Main Gallery shows per year is planned at least a year ahead. The first thing to be aware of: it takes time. Most artists spend two years preparing for a show – less if they are able to break large chunks of time free from their regular work schedules. Planning for the Annex Gallery is more flexible and has a shorter lead-time. The Gallery Committee plans with an eye to balance over time: a mix of solo and group shows, of artists from here and away, of curated and call-for-entry shows, and of different media.

## The Main Gallery

The Main Gallery exhibits artists far enough along in their career that they have – or can produce – a body of work that is cohesive, either in technique or content. The work can be an exploration – an experiment or new departure in form, idea, medium – or a consolidation, a bringing together of established techniques or themes. The important thing is that the pieces, approx 20-40 work together as a group and make a coherent statement.

Artists can request assistance in finding a “partner” for a show, or can apply ensemble. Artists can apply to other sources for funding and these sources might include the Craft Industry Development Fund, the Newfoundland & Labrador Arts Council, or the Canada Council, if appropriate.

The Gallery is happy to discuss ideas, and help plan. It also handles promotion, assists with supplemental promotional materials such as a brochure or catalogue (if funding is available), does the installation and take-down (with support from the artists), designs the promotional material, arranges for labeling and mailing, coordinates the Gallery opening, looks after the Gallery space, and provides limited insurance for the exhibit while on display.

## The Annex Gallery

The Annex gallery, which has one-third the space, has more flexible criteria: shows can be educational projects, more exploratory or experimental work. They are also necessarily smaller in scope and the exhibitor provides installation of the work with support from the gallery if necessary. For Annex gallery exhibits the promotion and the opening reception are generally held in conjunction with the Main gallery exhibit.

## Not All Proposals Are Accepted

What does it mean if you apply for a show at the Craft Council and you're turned down?

It could be one of several things. Possibly it's because your proposal doesn't fit the Gallery schedule: perhaps we did a show in your medium last year, or already have one planned. Or maybe the Committee feels your body of work is not quite substantial enough yet, or that you might not be able to pull together what you are proposing. In a few cases, work just hasn't fit with the artistic aims of the Craft Council, though it would work in a different type of gallery.

## **Writing The Proposal and Artist Responsibilities**

Here are some specific tips on what the Craft Council Galleries require from those proposing a show:

1. A clear, complete idea of your focus or concept. Go easy on the art-speak; specific details and concrete statements are more useful to the Committee.
2. Assurance you will produce the show on time. This can come from experience with previous shows, a record of consistently producing work, or a letter of reference. At least a year ahead of opening some work should be completed; this way you can gauge how long preparing for the show will take and organize your time accordingly. You should also make a few extra pieces, so you can make last-minute adjustments in the look of your show.
3. Regular contact with the Gallery during the working stages.
4. A clear statement of special requirements or expectations. Both artist and Gallery should entertain suggestions and discussion, and should strive to keep communication open.
5. Professional high resolution images for exhibition promotion. Two images are better than one. The Gallery will need images, title and short show description at least a year ahead to plan a calendar for the upcoming year. Images and information should be updated as the show gets closer.
6. Timely delivery of work. The target? Work should be ready two weeks ahead of the opening – with installation generally the week before. You pay for packing, materials, and shipping to the Gallery and return shipping. Based on shipping needs from the Gallery it is possible that the Gallery may contribute a maximum of \$150 for show. Shipping should also be discussed before an exhibit, as large or fragile works need special consideration. The artist should ensure that all packaging is “two-way” – reusable for the return trip. Whenever possible works should be picked up.
7. Information (biography, artist’s statement) for publicity, at least a month ahead of opening. Normally a short statement about the show and the artist is sufficient; more (including c.v.) is optional. These handouts and promotional materials beyond the Gallery invitations and normal Craft Council publicity efforts (details on request) are the artist’s responsibility.
8. Your cooperation with distributing promotional information in particular an email invitation.
9. Availability to help with installation or special displays. Installation takes approximately two to four days, depending on the art. Takedown is a one-day job. The Craft Council is unable to assist financially with transportation costs or accommodation in St. John’s for out-of town artists. The final responsibility for installation decisions is the Gallery’s.
10. Availability for the opening, for media interviews, and for presentations, and attendance at the openings. Interviews can be done by phone, though some interviewers prefer to do it at the show.
11. Packing and pick-up of work after the show. There is less risk if the artist is present. Alternate arrangements can be made for out-of-town artists.
12. Ultimate responsibility for the show. If you have concerns about fulfilling your obligations at any point in the process you must let the gallery know. Talk to us if there is a problem. Please keep in touch.