



PREPARING FOR AN EXHIBITION

FAQ FOR VISUAL ARTISTS

PREPARED BY THE HAMILTON ARTS COUNCIL VISUAL ARTS COMMITTEE
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HOW CAN I FUND A PROJECT OR RESEARCH?

The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) and the Canada Council of Art (CC) offer several funding categories for professional artists. They provide grants specific to education projects, media projects, and grants for artists within different stages of their careers. You may also want to consider further opportunities offered through the OAC and CC to fund your practice such as the OAC's Chalmers Arts Fellowships or travel grants and international residencies offered by the Canada Council.

Additionally, there are always new and emerging funding opportunities. A good example is the "War of 1812 Grant" recently distributed through the City of Hamilton. Some artists are using Kickstarter ([HTTP://WWW.KICKSTARTER.COM](http://www.kickstarter.com)) and Indiegogo ([HTTPS://WWW.INDIEGOGO.COM/](https://www.indiegogo.com/)) to raise funds for art projects. People donate to your project to show their support.

If you are looking for help with the costs of mounting an exhibition – such as framing, plinths and promotional materials – you can apply for an OAC Exhibition Assistance grant through a local Third Party Recommender. These grants are usually available beginning in June-July, with deadlines determined by each recommending organization. Check with Third Party Recommenders directly to ask about their process for receiving applications for Exhibition Assistance.

HOW DO I BEGIN TO SHOW MY WORK?

You can begin to show your artwork by responding to calls for submissions, finding local venues, or creating pop-up spaces for short-term exhibitions or projects. Artist-Run Centres are a great place to begin to show your work, meet other artists, and learn of new opportunities.

For information specific to Public Galleries please follow the CARFAC link below. The process for developing an exhibit (pg. 1): [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_1_PubGalleries_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_BP_1_PubGalleries_WEB_1.pdf)

For information specific to Commercial Galleries please follow the CARFAC link below, Commercial Galleries (pg. 1): [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_1_ComMGalleries_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_BP_1_ComMGalleries_WEB_1.pdf)

HOW DO I PREPARE A SUBMISSION?

1. Prepare your artist statement, exhibition proposal and your artist biography with reference to the gallery's specific guidelines on word/page limits if provided. Your artist statement is an opportunity to explain your general artistic philosophy and the processes in your art practice. The artist statement should be clearly written and not exceed one page – the Hamilton Arts Council has advice on how to write an artist statement on their blog ([HTTP://HAMILTON-ARTSCOUNCIL.CA/BLOG/ARTISTS-STATEMENT](http://hamiltonartscouncil.ca/blog/artists-statement)). Your proposal specifically refers to the exhibition that you are applying for (often the artwork is already created). The proposal discusses the thematic connections, etc., in this body of work.
2. Prepare your Curriculum Vitae or CV: essentially an artist's résumé, giving your mailing and email address and phone contact, and outlining your education, previous exhibitions, any grants or art awards, publications and press. The Hamilton Arts Council offers advice and templates for preparing your CV ([HTTP://HAMILTONARTSCOUNCIL.CA/BLOG/WRITING-YOUR-ARTIST-CURRICULUM-VITAE](http://hamiltonartscouncil.ca/blog/writing-your-artist-curriculum-vitae)).
3. Prepare a numbered image list for artwork being presented, stating Title, Medium, Year, Dimensions, and Retail Sale Value.
4. Have your work photographed and then prepare JPEG images for digital submissions. Label the JPEGs with your last name, and number the images to match the numbers on your image list.

While these steps are common to most open calls for artist proposals, be sure to carefully review the gallery's call for submissions before assembling a submission package to ensure you are including all items requested. The number of images each gallery will review also varies so you may need to select a larger or smaller number of images for different calls. When preparing a submission package, also make note of the application deadline, which may or may not be a postmark deadline; some galleries may also accept or prefer submissions by email.

While some commercial galleries will issue open calls for group shows and special projects, a gallerist will typically invite an artist to exhibit their work based on sustained knowledge about the artist's work and career. Artists seeking to work with a commercial gallery should visit the gallery for several

months to see what type of art the gallery is exhibiting to ensure the gallery is a good fit to presenting your work. These visits can be a good opportunity to introduce yourself to the gallery owner and their artists provided the focus of the conversation is on the gallery and the exhibition; it is generally considered impolite to use another artist's opening to promote your own work. Once an appropriate gallery is identified, you should book an appointment with the gallery requesting a review of your portfolio. It is important to be respectful of their busy schedules and realize there will be a time before a response is received.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED?

Review and sign a contract or exhibition agreement; this should include information about dates to drop off and pick up your work, insurance and responsibilities for promoting the exhibition. If you have any questions or concerns about any component of your exhibition, you should discuss these with the organizer before signing an agreement to ensure these are addressed and understood by both the organizer and yourself.

Prepare appropriate framing or installation hardware as per any unique requirements of the specific exhibition space.

Package the artwork and arrange for transporting and unloading at the exhibition site.

HOW DO I PREPARE MY WORK FOR AN EXHIBITION?

This will depend upon whether the type of art that you create is two-dimensional work for wall display, sculptural or a site-specific installation. Ideally, you should have a conversation with the gallery or institution prior to your exhibition on how the work should be prepared for showing and how many pieces you will be bringing so that wall space, pedestals and other requirements can be addressed in advance. Wall-mounted art is often expected to be framed with easy hanging fixtures already attached to the frame; if it is a solo exhibition or several pieces, you may want to present it with uniform framing and matting to create unity of presentation. The artist should document the work before submitting it to the gallery so that the initial condition of the work is recorded. As well, you should provide the gallery with images of the work and request the gallery complete a condition report upon receipt.

Also see: How do I best ship my work (p.7) Depending upon how you are transporting your artwork, you may need to prepare packaging such as bubble wrap and shipping crates that may be reused by the gallery when returning your work.

HOW DO I SELECT WORK THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE EXHIBITION?

The artist needs to consider the theme of the exhibition. Most artists have a theme for a solo exhibition and plan how each piece speaks to that theme. Unity of presentation is important. If the work is framed, the artist will generally want the same framing and matting for a uniform presentation. The artist should reflect on the running footage and floor plan of the gallery so that the presentation of the artwork will fit the space but not be overcrowded. Advanced planning and placement of the artwork is important; it is better to have one piece left over than have to remove one. Once you arrive on-site you may have to adjust your plans; however, it is important to have an idea as to what pieces you want to focus on presenting.

COMMERCIAL GALLERIES: The artist should select work that they plan to sell. It is important to maintain a good relationship with a commercial gallery and these relationships are most successful when they are long-term. Good communication with the gallery and your Written Agreement are both key components. What the gallery is looking for and what particularly they would like to consign from the artist should be outlined in the Written Agreement. It is also important to maintain current visual content for promotional purposes. For more information regarding appropriate work to display in a Commercial Gallery setting please follow this CARFAC link: [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_1_COMMGALLERIES_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_bp_1_comm_galleries_web_1.pdf)

PUBLIC GALLERIES: The artist will choose the artwork that addresses the theme of the exhibition they were selected for as determined by the curator or organizer. This information is often found in the Call for Submissions or letter of invitation; in the case of a solo exhibition, the artist will select the work that suits their proposal, sometimes with input from the gallery's curator. Please follow the CARFAC link below for more information: [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_1_PUBGALLERIES_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_bp_1_pub_galleries_web_1.pdf)

PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS: These are either permanent or temporary works of art created for site-specific installation in a public place. The artist will typically develop a proposal for a new work to meet the listed requirements and specifications of the buyer and/or selection committee and will often be chosen on the basis of how it engages the public and whether it is socially appropriate for the chosen setting. Please follow the CARFAC link below for more information regarding Public Art Commissions: [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_4_PUBART-COMM_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_bp_4_pubart_comm_web_1.pdf)

JURIED GROUP EXHIBITIONS: The work must meet the requirements found in the Call for Submissions. Some juried exhibitions ask artists to submit a small number of works for consideration; the curator (if there is one) or the jury's representative will contact those artists to indicate which of their works, if any, were selected for inclusion. Other juried group shows will seek more general proposals from artists and invite them to select their own work or create new work for inclusion if chosen to participate. Please follow the CARFAC link below for further information regarding appropriate work for Juried Group Exhibitions and Artists' Responsibilities (#6): [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESSTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_1_JURIEDEXHIBITIONS_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticesstandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_bp_1_juriedexhibitions_web_1.pdf)

HOW DO I SHIP MY WORK?

Before packing your work for shipment, inspect and note the condition of each piece. Remove any loose hardware that may still be attached to the work from previous shows; if you're using a shipping company, you will also want to remove glass from any frames, secure with tape and ship separately to prevent excess damage. Use protective backing boards to protect paintings from behind from accidental impact or punctures.

Create an inventory list that lists the artist's name, work titles, medium, dimensions and condition of work prior to shipping. Ideally, a recent image of the work should be included to verify this condition in case of insurance disputes. Include a printed copy of this inventory in the shipment; the artist should also retain a copy of this list to verify any claims should the work be lost or damaged in transit.

The packing of your artwork will depend on your method of transportation. Artists transporting the work themselves in a temperature controlled vehicle can use low-cost padding to protect the work, while shipping with a courier company will require a sturdy, water-proof crate that can withstand rough handling. The weight of your shipping container is also a significant cost factor if sending artwork by air. Choosing your shipping method will depend on the destination you are shipping to, the weight of the artwork, and the delivery date required. Some of your shipping options include:

CARRY BY HAND: Many artists prefer to carry their work with them if travelling to the exhibition as this is the cheapest mode of transport and generally guarantees safe delivery. A portable and properly padded carrying case can protect small works in transit, though make sure to refer to weight and size regulations for baggage if travelling by plane, train or bus. Oversized work may need to be

stowed in baggage compartments for your journey, in which case you should package your work to withstand baggage handling. For transporting exceptionally large work or a complete exhibition, hiring a van can be a cost-effective solution, though this also exposes your work to the dangers of highway driving and the lack of insulation and temperature control in the truck body.

COURIER: Courier companies such as Purolator, UPS or FedEx offer a fast, economical door-to-door service for transporting relatively small and securely packed shipments of moderate value. Liability is limited if you don't declare the value of your shipment, though Purolator offers extra coverage at an additional rate relative to the work's declared value.

FINE ART TRANSPORT: A reputable, specialized fine art carrier is among the most costly options for shipping your work but offer professional handling, customs brokerage for international shipments and insurance rates relative to the work's declared value. More minimal packing is needed to prepare your work for shipping by truck using one of these carriers, and most offer crating services as needed to secure your work for more rigorous travel conditions.

AIR FREIGHT: This option is best suited to shipments of 250 pounds or less than are able to withstand extreme temperatures and atmospheric changes in transit. Air freight will incur lower insurance rates than transporting your work by sea.

OCEAN FREIGHT: Exceptionally large shipments over 250 pounds are most affordably sent by ocean freight, bearing in mind the longer time needed to send a shipment. Crating needs to be especially sturdy and waterproof to withstand the elements during transit.

Shipping of artwork should be prepaid and insured by the artist; while the exhibiting gallery should be responsible for insuring the work at the exhibition venue, it is the artist's responsibility to insure work in transit and make claims against the insurer in case of damage in transit.

Upon delivery of your work, the gallery and/or institution is expected to professionally unpack, handle and repackage artwork in its original containers. The gallery should notify the artist immediately of any damaged containers and offer to return the damaged shipment; work received in damaged containers should not be unpacked unless with the artist's express permission, after which the gallery cannot be held responsible for any resulting damage to the artwork.

HOW DO I PRICE MY WORK?

There are a variety of different approaches for pricing artwork. Options to consider:

WHAT THE MARKET WILL BEAR: This is a market led approach to pricing which tries to find the price which ensures a piece will sell. This usually involves testing out different price points to find the one that will maximize sales.

IN COMPARISON TO THE LOCAL MARKET: The artist reviews various prices that are displayed in local galleries and/or institutions and other places where art is sold. The artist should identify comparable artists' works in terms of media, scale and/or subject matter and determine the price of their own work in relation to this.

A COST INCLUSION FORMULA: This considers the labour cost plus the materials cost plus a markup. The artist determines an hourly rate for the artwork's completion, adds in the cost of materials (and matting and framing if applicable) and then add a flat rate or a percentage as a mark-up to ensure that the work's sale returns a profit to the artist.

A MATHEMATICAL FORMULA- PRICE PER SQUARE INCH/CM: The artist determines a standard rate per square inch or centimeter and applies this to all artwork.

THE NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT ON THE ARTWORK: The price is determined by a calculated hourly rate based on the concept that materials costs are incidental and the crucial cost driver is the number of hours required to complete the work.

PERCENTAGE INCREASE EACH YEAR: This approach is used by an artist who wants to grow sales income over time and plans accordingly.

AN IDEA PLUCKED FROM THE AIR: This is the "it feels like a \$500 painting to me" approach. This rationale relies on the "gut feeling" of the artist in determining the price.

COMMERCIAL VENUE: WHAT SORT/TYPE OF PROMOTION SHOULD I EXPECT?

Promotional materials for work shown in Commercial Galleries will be outlined in your agreement. Both the Gallery and the artist should agree and sign to the specifications of the contract. Some of these materials may include media releases, promotional cards, magazine ads, or online promotions (Gallery's website, Gallery's newsletter, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter etc.).

WHAT IS A REASONABLE COMMISSION FOR A COMMERCIAL GALLERY TO TAKE?

The commission charged should be clearly outlined in the artist contract. A reasonable commission will vary depending upon the city or location and success of the gallery and/or institution in making sales.

Some well-established galleries and/or institution may retain as much as 50-60% of a work's sale price; this is often common in larger cities. If a gallery and/or institution commission is more than 40%, you may want to look into their track record making sales by observing how many works are sold at their openings over several months as well as returning near the end of the show's run to see how many more pieces were sold since then. If this is a gallery and/or institution you are interested in working with closely you may want to repeat this for various exhibitions at different times of the year before signing a contract.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T RECEIVE YOUR ARTIST FEE OR PAYMENT FROM WORK SOLD?

Review your contract carefully to check the language regarding when you should receive payment. In some instances, the artist fees are paid on the opening day while others will wait until the end of the exhibition to pay fees to artists. When working with commercial galleries, it is advisable to look into their reputation for promptness of payment with past and current artists before exhibiting with them.

If your artist fee has not been paid by the end of the exhibition or according to the terms outlined in your contract, you should contact the gallery to request clarification on when they intend to issue this payment. Sometimes delayed payments can be resolved between the artist and the gallery; however, if the gallery does not respond, you may need to take further action. Members of CARFAC should contact their office for advice. If the gallery is receiving funding from the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) or Canada Council (CC), you may also wish to contact the funders to let them know that you have not received your artist fee.

Obtaining payment for work sold in a commercial gallery and/or institution may be difficult at times. CARFAC Ontario has advice on how to navigate Small Claims Court proceedings ([HTTP://WWW.CARFACONTARIO.CA/PAGE/SMALL-CLAIMS-COURT_59/](http://www.carfacontario.ca/page/small-claims-court_59/)) but note that this is a time-consuming process and that collecting payment owed is still a challenge. It is advised that you consider contacting a lawyer if you are unable to negotiate payment on your own behalf.

WHAT IF YOUR ART IS MOVED OR REMOVED DURING AN EXHIBITION?

As a preventive measure, a contract or written agreement should contain a clause to address the responsibilities of the gallery and/or institution on the handling, display and care of your work. The gallery and/or institution that is presenting your work should never move your work within an exhibition without consulting you and receiving your permission.

If the gallery and/or institution moves or removes your work without your permission, ask for an explanation. Even if this is not covered in your contract, this is poor practice. If you are not satisfied with the reason, you may want to advise them that you plan to inform other artists of their practice. You may then decide to inform the local artist-run centre and your community arts council of their practice. It is important to be reasonable as this may impact your reputation as an artist; therefore, make sure that you have good grounds to consider the reason given as poor practice.

WHAT COURSE OF ACTION CAN I TAKE IF MY CONTRACT IS BREACHED?

Members of CARFAC are able to access free legal counsel through VALCO. Please contact CARFAC to discuss your situation so they can advise you appropriately.

HOW DO I GET MY ARTWORK APPRAISED?

Art appraisers are licensed professionals who have undergone training to assess the value of a work of art. When researching and identifying the value of a work of art, the appraiser considers a number of factors, such as:

1. Sale prices of your work
2. Insurance values assigned to your work as part of exhibition and loan agreements
3. Prices for your work listed in art dealer and auction catalogues
4. The economic state of the art market
5. Your current standing and reputation as a professional artist

There are local art appraisers that may be able to assist you with this process.

* It is important to keep record of your sales that include the size of the piece and medium in order to prove fair market value. This information will assist the appraiser in pricing the piece.

Earl's Court Gallery in Hamilton is a licensed art appraiser; there is no charge for an initial consultation to determine whether a full appraisal is necessary. Contact them directly to make an appointment for art appraisal services. ([HTTP://WWW.EARLSCOURTGALLERY.CA](http://www.earlscourtgallery.ca)).

Westdale Gallery conducts Appraisals for Fine Art. The owner works out of her house so call to book an appointment ([HTTP://WWW.WESTDALEGALLERY.COM/SERVICES.HTM](http://www.westdalegallery.com/services.htm)).

There is also a company called Stuart Simpson Fine Art Appraisals that will conduct appraisals for private clients. Stuart can be contacted by email. ([HTTP://HAMILTONARTAPPRAISALS.COM/](http://hamiltonartappraisals.com/))

HOW CAN I PERSONALLY INSURE MY WORK?

In some cases, you may consider having your work insured under an insurance policy specifically designed for artists. This should be investigated thoroughly as it can be a complex process if you are attempting to obtain a rider on to your property insurance. Replacement value insurance is the most likely form of insurance that you may get.

WHAT IF MY WORK BECOMES DAMAGED?

If the work has been damaged while on display the gallery and/or institution has neglected their duty of care over the work. The sale price of the piece is a good indicator of the insurance value the artist should receive in full, if the work cannot be repaired.

Some insurers and galleries only insure the “replacement value” which is different from the “sales retail price”. Shipping companies also may do this. Replacement value is based on the material cost to create the work and labour. The insurer may dispute the labour cost. It is suggested you verify the terms of the insurance policy held by the gallery and/or institution before exhibiting.

It is also worth noting that commission agreements between a gallery and/or institution and the artist apply only to the sale of work. Since work itself remains the sole property of the artist until it is sold and paid in full, the gallery and/or institution should not receive compensation paid by insurance for the damage.

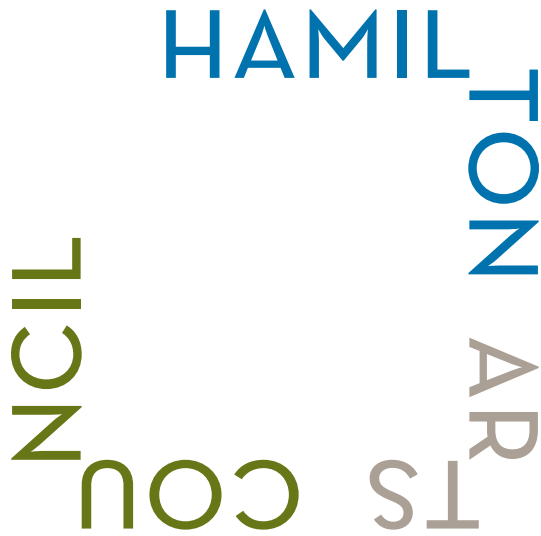
GALLERIES: The gallery is responsible for maintaining suitable insurance for work that they house. The various types of insurance that are provided and the process that they follow when work is damaged in the gallery’s care should be outlined in your agreement.

Please follow this link for more information about the Duty of Care as it applies to Commercial Galleries and Artists:

[HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_1_COMMGALLERIES_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_bp_1_comm_galleries_web_1.pdf)

Please follow this link for more information about the Duty of Care as it applies to Public Galleries and Artists: [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_1_PUBGALLERIES_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_bp_1_pub_galleries_web_1.pdf)

PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS: When taking on a public art commission, the contract should specify responsibility for insuring the work and the site during production, installation and after the work is completed. Please follow this link for more information about Public Art Commissions and Artists, Risk and Insurance (#13): [HTTP://WWW.BESTPRACTICESTANDARDS.CA/DOCS/1_STANDARDSDRAFTS/CARFAC_BP_4_PUBARTCOMM_WEB_1.PDF](http://www.bestpracticestandards.ca/docs/1_standardsdrafts/carfac_bp_4_pubartcomm_web_1.pdf)



WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

The Hamilton Arts Council is happy to answer any further questions about preparing for an exhibition or any other issues related to your practice as a visual artist. Connect with us by phone or email with your questions or to make an appointment.

PHONE: 905-481-3218
EMAIL: INFO@HAMILTONARTSCOUNCIL.CA
WEB: WWW.HAMILTONARTSCOUNCIL.CA
FACEBOOK: WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/HAMILTONARTS.COUNCIL
TWITTER: @HAMARTSCOUNCIL