

Preparing For The Summer Slump

A lot of people don't realize that the art world revolves around a seasonal schedule. Galleries begin their season in September, usually after Labor Day, often opening with their strongest artist and continue until about the middle of June. Many galleries use the summer months to mount group shows of gallery artists, or shows that they wouldn't consider during their "prime season." Generally, the magazines and gallery guides follow suit by issuing combined July/August issues. For artists, however, this is not a time to lay back. This represents one of the best times of the year for artists to "do their homework" i.e., planning gallery visits and doing the research to determine which galleries would be receptive to their work. Before you make any travel plans, however, be sure to check to make sure the galleries will be open. Many galleries are closed for a few weeks at various random times during the summer months. One advantage artists will discover, is it is a time of year when galleries are most receptive to new ideas and new artists, as they tend to have more time and are often finalizing their schedules. Most plan at least 2 years in advance, hence the rejection letters that I'm sure many of you have received that indicate "Sorry, we are booked for the next 20 years..." (Read "[Top 10 Reasons Why Galleries Reject Artists.](#)")

Following is an excerpt from a previous article "[How to Decide Which Galleries are Right for you to Approach.](#)" It describes a strategy for an artist that is particularly effective during the summer months when galleries mount group shows and artists are most likely to travel.

The first thing you will have to do is develop a set of criteria that meets your particular needs as an artist. Here are examples of some general questions that should be considered by all artists:

- Stylistically, how does the work in the gallery now compare to my own? Only abstract, only figurative, or conceptual?
- Is the artwork in the same general price range as my work? (Ask to see price list)
- Is this artist in the same general career range as I see myself? Does this gallery show just emerging artists, mid-career artists, or established artists? (Ask to see artist's biography.)
- Is this gallery large enough to accommodate my work? Small enough to achieve a sense of intimacy?
- Is there proper lighting, wall space? How has the gallery been maintained? Nail holes? Floors? Needs paint?
- Is the gallery location desirable; are there other galleries in the vicinity? Are they listed in the local gallery guide?
- Does anyone greet me or make an attempt to talk to me about the work?
- In general, how do I feel when I walk into the space?

Each artist will have different questions depending on his or her specific needs. Try to develop a set of questions tailored to your work.

The next step is to visit the galleries. The easiest way to attempt this is to divide galleries geographically and visit as many as you can in one area. Don't use this as an opportunity to introduce yourself or talk about your work. Don't bring slides of your work or a portfolio in with you... Remember, you are doing your homework; take notes.

By the time you've completed your visits to the galleries you should have a fairly good idea about the type of work they represent. If you sign the guestbook and start getting gallery announcements, over time you will have a very clear idea about the direction of the gallery and if they are appropriate for your work. Eventually, you will have a handful of galleries that you feel are ideal for your work. These will become your "target" galleries... the galleries that you begin to cultivate a relationship with. Although most gallery relationships are made as a result of contacts, often these attempts are futile if the gallery doesn't handle work that relates to your own. Once you have narrowed down your choices, you can take advantage of your resources and contacts. Begin by sending slides/JPEG images on CD of your work or email a link to your website, (see "[Creating the Perfect Artists' Website](#)") and your exhibition announcements. Try to start going to the gallery opening receptions to get to know the other artists represented. It is important to keep yourself informed so you can develop a sense of how you fit into the art community. Remember, it is *you* that is going to be selecting a gallery for your work, not the other way around!