

# Visiting Arts Information



## Tips for approaching UK galleries and curators for international visual artists

There are no hard and fast rules for artists seeking exposure in galleries. Pursuing exhibition opportunities will almost certainly involve a lot of hard work, research, persistence and even luck

It goes without saying that the market is extremely competitive and that galleries are flooded with information and requests from artists which they simply don't have time to deal with. British artists find it hard to get in touch with UK galleries so artists from abroad are likely to find it an even more difficult and complex process. Below are some tips to help you work out the best way to get your work viewed by a gallery.

### Gather as much information as you can:

- Researching suitable galleries to contact is vital. Ensure that you know as much as possible about the sort of work the gallery is interested in, if it has exhibited work by artists from your country previously, if your work will fit in with their programme etc.
- Use as many resources as you can lay your hands on: newsletters, magazines, arts publications, web sites. Some useful resources are listed at the end of this document.
- Don't restrict your research to galleries in London. Investigate opportunities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Also research galleries in major cities in England (e.g. Manchester, Newcastle, Birmingham).

### Networking - get out there and meet people

- Meeting people and making professional contacts is an essential part of promoting yourself and your work.
- Talk to curators in your own country to find out if they are in contact with any curators in the UK. You are much more likely to gain gallery interest in the UK if your work is accompanied by a letter of introduction from a curator, critic or other arts professional in your country.
- Be active in your own country - go to seminars, conferences and lectures and try to speak to people afterwards. This is a slow but effective way of getting your name known and of meeting people who may be interested in your work and who may be able to assist you.
- Go to as many private views as possible and try to meet artists, curators, gallery managers etc.
- Find out about artists from your country who have exhibited in the UK. If you can contact them, ask them if they have relevant contacts they can share with you. Be aware, however, that artists may be protective of their contacts and reluctant to share such information with other people.
- Try contacting relevant departments at UK universities - they may have specialist exhibitions relevant to you. Make contact with the curators at these institutions, as they are an important part of the art network. Universities in your own country may also be a useful source of information and contacts.
- Where possible, seek advice from your embassy or High Commission in the UK to find out if its staff has any knowledge, experience or contacts that could be useful. A comprehensive list of embassies in the UK is available on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's web site: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

### Making contact:

- Sending unsolicited slides and other materials to galleries is pointless as they are unlikely be looked at and you won't get them back. You need to have persuaded a gallery to look at your work beforehand.
- Once a gallery has agreed to see your work, be careful with what you send. Don't include too much material, as this will feel overwhelming. Your introductory material should include a CV, slides (about 12 should suffice) or electronic material of your work and a catalogue if you have one.

- You should include a brief description of the issues you are interested in and how you go about exploring them.
- Send critical writing if you have it as an endorsement of your talent. Recommendations are very important - from curators, critics, other established artists, gallery owners or agents. A good word from a professional, respected source will work wonders for you.
- Include brief details of any collectors you may have - commercial galleries will be interested in this information.
- Arrange public collections which hold your work and invite curators, critics etc along to see your work.
- Be aware that different galleries will have different approaches for taking on artists. Good research should enable you to identify the tactics that galleries employ and what they are looking for in an artist.

### Also ...

- Try to sub-let / rent studio space as this will enable you to surround yourself with other artists.
- Begin to think about the logistics of a potential visit to the UK and what may be required of you; this includes gaining some understanding of the papers and documents you would have to obtain. For information on visas, contracts, work permits and other official procedures see Visiting Arts' publication *Nail to Nail*: <http://www.visitingarts.org.uk/Nailtonail.html>

### Resources

#### Web:

Visiting Arts web site: [www.visitingarts.org.uk](http://www.visitingarts.org.uk)

Information on getting funding for the arts in the UK  
[www.visitingarts.org.uk/funding/index.html](http://www.visitingarts.org.uk/funding/index.html)

Information on Visiting Arts' residencies and fellowships, [www.visitingarts.org.uk/training/residencies.html](http://www.visitingarts.org.uk/training/residencies.html)

24-Hour Museum: [www.24hourmuseum.org.uk](http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk) - searchable database of UK museums, galleries and heritage attractions.

A-N Artists Information Company: [www.a-n.co.uk](http://www.a-n.co.uk) - practical advice and information for artists.

Art Galleries - London: [www.artgalleries-london.com](http://www.artgalleries-london.com) - links to web sites of commercial and public art galleries and museums in London.

Artquest: [www.artquest.org.uk](http://www.artquest.org.uk) - advice and opportunities for visual artists in the UK.

New Exhibitions of Contemporary Art: [www.newexhibitions.com](http://www.newexhibitions.com) - listings of contemporary art exhibitions throughout the UK, useful for researching gallery contacts.

Trans Artists: [www.transartists.nl](http://www.transartists.nl) - run from the Netherlands, this site publishes information on artist residencies and other opportunities worldwide.

Wales Arts International: [www.wai.org.uk/index.cfm?alias=import](http://www.wai.org.uk/index.cfm?alias=import) - directory of galleries in Wales with contact details

#### Publications:

*Art Monthly*, contemporary visual art magazine: [www.artmonthly.co.uk](http://www.artmonthly.co.uk)

*Art Review*, visual art magazine and listings: [www.art-review.com](http://www.art-review.com)

*Galleries*, listings magazine: [www.artefact.co.uk](http://www.artefact.co.uk)

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## Visiting Arts aims to strengthen intercultural understanding through the arts.

We:

- Provide information and intelligence in order to strengthen intercultural dialogue
- Create opportunities to experience intercultural exploration. This is done through mediated performances, exhibitions, and by initiating and promoting collaborations
- Expand the skills and knowledge of existing cultural players and develop new talent to ensure a wide, diverse and sustainable group of players.

## Visiting Arts' work links England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with countries overseas prioritised by the Board.

Among other things we:

- Create, produce and distribute authoritative directories and help-sheets, targeted briefings and the latest advice through print, web and word of mouth
- Organise seminars, conferences and networking events to deepen intercultural understanding
- Establish and foster opportunities for ground-breaking artist exchanges, promote cutting edge exhibitions and contribute to some of the world's biggest and most innovative festivals
- From Afghanistan to Zanzibar, we work with the most exciting next generation of artists and cultural players, inviting them to the UK, expanding knowledge and horizons and championing intercultural working

Visiting Arts is an independent registered charity, which was set up in 1977.

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The Board is chaired by Sir Gordon Conway. Other Board Members are Cathie Boyd, Ajay Chhabra, Iwona Blazwick, Graham Long and Romesh Gunesequera.

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