

Artists with Disabilities: Exhibiting in a Gallery

TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

An artist with a disability is like any other artist. A creative urge from within encourages the need to communicate through a work of art. Although the process itself is quite satisfying, the artist needs to share the work and allow it to touch the lives of others. Sharing artwork professionally may seem difficult, but knowledge of the steps makes this process more manageable.

Lain York is well-versed in the gallery submission process. An artist himself, he is director of the Zeitgeist Gallery in Nashville and a preparator of exhibits for the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence Art and Disabilities Program. The following is a summary of York's advice.

Choosing a Gallery

Know the gallery before asking to submit work for consideration. Visit the space, the gallery websites, and the websites of that gallery's individual artists. Approach a gallery that caters to your art form. Attend openings, and talk to artists. You may then call or ask in person whether the gallery is currently viewing slides or taking proposals and what their procedure is. Most galleries will ask for slides/disk of images, a resumé, and an artist's statement of intent.

Images

It is important that you create an image disk (CD) that includes at least 10 images of your current work. A gallery knows what it needs and what it is looking for. Submitting an image disk will allow the gallery representatives to view your work easily. If there is an immediate fit, the gallery will ask for more images and perhaps to view an actual piece. Submit a focused body of work from one series, and preferably the one you are working on now. Image disks can be created using a digital camera and decent lighting. Don't have professional lighting? Take pictures of your art outside during an especially sunny day.

Artist Statement and Resumé

A well-written artist's statement adds an important dimension to your work and can answer questions that a gallery might want to know immediately upon seeing the work.

Keep it simple—several sentences or one paragraph. Be as objective and honest as you can. Writing statements takes practice, but pays off in the end. For help, see "Other Resources" (reverse side). Artists with limited verbal skills may need the help of those around them to express what creating does to and for them. A family member might describe how the creative process affects the artist's physical and/or emotional state. How does the artist react when people talk about his or her art? A statement of intent can be a description of how the artist appears to experience the act of creating.



What Galleries Are Looking For

Galleries need you as much as you need them. This is especially true for local talent. In most cases, a gallery will want a balance of local, regional, national, and international talent. Being able to explain the meaning of your work is important. Good information aids gallery representatives in knowing you and your work, and gives them the tools they need to impart that meaning to their patrons.

What to Expect From a Gallery

With a gallery, you—the artist—are getting the benefit of an association—that gallery's experience and its resources. Keep in mind that a gallery's decisions are often based on individual taste as well as what the gallery managers think will sell. If you have a showing, the gallery typically sends a printed invitation and an e-mail to its current mailing list, allows access to that gallery's collectors, and provides a professionally hung show and a reception.

Please see reverse for resources.



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RESOURCES

Who We Are and Who We Serve

The **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC)** works with and for people with disabilities and their family members, service providers and advocates, researchers and policy makers. It is among only a few centers nationwide to be a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, a *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center, and a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Training Program. The following are some of the ways the Center's programs and staff can assist families, educators, and other service providers.

VKC Arts Program

Quarterly exhibits of art by persons with disabilities and art workshops. See kc.vanderbilt.edu/artexhibits/ or call (615) 936-8852.

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is a free statewide phone, web, and print referral service in English and Spanish. It connects the Tennessee disability community with service providers and resources. Its website database has over 3,000 agencies searchable by Tennessee county and service. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities, TN Department of Health, and the TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Contact www.familypathfinder.org, (615) 322-8529, toll-free (800) 640-4636.

Tennessee Art Resources:

- VSA Arts Tennessee, is a statewide organization with a mission to empower individuals with disabilities through the arts. A variety of programs and services are offered for artists with disabilities. They include exhibition opportunities; performance opportunities; professional development training; and competitions in music, visual arts, and writing. www.vsaartstennessee.org
- Tennessee Arts Commission stimulates and encourages the presentation of performing, visual, and literary arts throughout the state and encourages public interest in the cultural heritage of Tennessee. It provides information resources, referrals, and funding. The website has a section devoted to art programs with an emphasis in disabilities. See www.arts.state.tn.us.
- Metro Nashville Arts Commission is a department of the Metro Nashville Government. It provides leadership to stimulate and advance the arts to enrich the human experience for the community. Their website includes artist and art program registries, artist links, and grant information. See www.artsnashville.org.

- The Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville is a non-profit art-exhibition center dedicated to presenting the finest visual art from local, state and regional artists, as well as major U.S. and international exhibitions. One of its most popular locations is the innovative Martin ArtQuest Gallery. ArtQuest activities abound for people of all ages and abilities. With 30 interactive stations and the assistance of knowledgeable staff and volunteers, ArtQuest teaches through activity. See www.fristcenter.org/site/about/default.aspx.
- Tennessee Art Therapy Association, (731) 668-3888
- Nashville and Middle Tennessee Art Association Listings, www.nashvillelife.com/nonprofit/page55.html.

Art Classes

The following suggestions for locations of art classes are representative of opportunities throughout Tennessee. Check especially with local school systems or parks for adult education classes.

- Centennial Art Center (Nashville)
www.nashville.gov/Parks-and-Recreation/Cultural-Arts/Visual-Arts/Gallery-CAC.aspx, (615) 862-8442
- Cheekwood (Nashville)
www.cheekwood.org, (615) 356-8000.
- Sarratt Art Studios (Vanderbilt University, Nashville)
www.vanderbilt.edu/sarrattart/, (615) 343-0491
- The Renaissance Center (Dickson)
www.rcenter.org/default.asp, (615) 740-5600
- The Art House in Memphis
(901) 758-8818
- Knoxville Arts & Fine Crafts Center
www.ci.knoxville.tn.us/recreation/arts/, (865) 523-1401
- North River Civic Center (Chattanooga)
www.chattanooga.gov/youthandfamily/senior-and-cultural-facilities/north-river-civic-center, (423) 870-8924

Other Resources

- Artist Trust information on writing an artist resumé, www.artisttrust.org
- Empty Easel information on writing an artist statement of intent www.emptyeasel.com/2006/12/15/how-to-write-a-good-artist-statement-and-resume.

Contact the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
Nashville (615) 322-8240
Toll-Free (866) 936-VUKC [8852]
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Web: vkc.vumc.org

