



Introduction

Exhibition Options for the Project Photographer is the result of research I have conducted since 1998 and interviews with directors and curators from over 30 venues nationwide. These venues, mostly non-profit organizations, span a wide range of audiences and formats covering local, regional and national markets.

A photographic project implies a level of focus and commitment on the part of the

maker and is often a result of both prolonged effort and an evolutionary process as the work progresses in time. However the making of the work is only the first step. In spite of the level of creativity and commitment necessary to create the work, it requires a far greater amount of creativity and commitment to secure for the work a place in the world.

Jill Waterman



Light Factory Gallery

Charlotte, NC

Why Exhibit

I believe it's valuable to consider exhibition as a vital part of the creative process and to cultivate the potential for exhibiting work from the very beginnings of a project or of one's career as a photographer. There is much to be learned from the entire process of exhibiting work: the skills of hanging an exhibit, the visual cues received from seeing the work in a

new context, the discipline of publicizing and marketing the work, and the feedback and new contacts received from the audience. Involvement in these tasks can help strengthen and clarify the work as it progresses over time.

"It is important for photographers to consider issues like standard sized framing to facilitate

the exhibition process. It is also helpful for artists to send scans of the images to be exhibited for publicity purposes well in advance of the show."

Harris Fogel – Chairman
Media Arts Dept. University of the Arts,
Philadelphia, PA

Growing the Project

Firstly, one must define the desired audience. In doing this, look within the local environment as well as to a wider scope of reference. Consider the parameters of the project, the issues addressed in the work and, more importantly, consider a hook that defines or expands the work and makes it appealing to a greater public.

In growing the project it is helpful to target outside sectors where one has a base of support. This support can be related to the subject of the work, to the audience

involved or to personal contacts within the community.

Look to others with like-minded projects and consider collaborating on a joint venture or exhibit. Many exhibition venues are most interested in curatorial proposals. There is strength in numbers in terms of sharing work and cutting costs, in addition to the experience gained in collaborating with others and getting comparative feedback.

Look to family or friends living in an area of interest – they may offer an untapped gold mine of resources and support in expanding your horizons within a new market.

Target venues outside traditional galleries or art organizations. Educational institutions, cultural organizations and special interest groups are often looking for thought provoking content or issue-ori-

ented exhibits. They may be less taxed with competing submissions and may have greater access to funding for your project than the principal photography or art venues.

Think of the work in terms of stepping stones – the full range of exhibition options should also include a long-term strategy and time-line. There are certain

"We look for proposals that will be of interest both to the community and from an educational point of view. Professionalism of the proposal and consistency of work is also important. Another key factor is whether the artist is flexible and whether there is a possibility of combining the work in a two-person show."

Peter Schreyer – Executive Director
Crealde School of Art,
Winter Park, FL



pARTS Photographic Arts

Minneapolis, MN

venues that can yield results within the short term and those that take years of development to realize. Plan for venues

that may provide immediate feedback or instant gratification (dependent on acceptance or rejection) while also planting

seeds for those venues that may require years of development or intricate planning to realize.

Marketing

In terms of marketing the work, it's most important to make use of a full range of media to provide added visibility and support to a project or exhibit. Basic promotional tools such as exhibition cards, press releases, and listings can be expanded to include auxiliary promotions such as web-sites, web galleries, on-line listings and e-mail updates.

Items like postcards, posters, catalogs, books can serve a double purpose of promotion for your project and a sales tool within an exhibit venue or supporting organization. Make a proposal to a like-minded organization about sharing

costs for a promotional piece featuring your image that can be offered for sale by the organization or serve as a benefit to membership.

It is currently said that one must see or hear about something three times before it makes an impact. When marketing a project think of the big picture, be strong and persistent, but don't push too far or use presentation techniques that are invasive or annoying.

When possible, factor advance planning for media placements like editorial coverage in traditional print, t.v., radio or web-

based programming. The content generated from these sources become quickly effective as elements in a press kit.

If outside coverage seems daunting or becomes impossible create your own press. Ask a colleague to conduct an interview with you captured on cassette or video.

Investigate linking to and contacts with a network of organizations that have an interest in presenting or supporting your project. As long as your contacts expand the project will grow.

Submission

The tried-and-true rule of twenty slides, artist statement and resume has been vastly altered by digital technology. It's valuable to consider individual preferences and established procedures set by those who view the work – and for this reason, it's imperative to make an initial query about submission guidelines before assembling a presentation. Ask questions about viewing preference. It's critical to account for those viewers who have a vehement dislike for specific types of technology like CD-ROMs, web-sites, digital print-outs or even slides.

A standard rule of thumb is this: if work will be viewed by a large group in a meeting format, slides are often a good bet to facilitate projection. If one person will be

reviewing the work then digital print-outs, scans loaded onto a CD-ROM or perhaps even original prints can be presented. Whatever the final package, it must be seamless and top-notch. No dusty or badly exposed slide dupes, no print-outs on flimsy paper, bad scans or files transmitted in an inappropriate format. Don't ever transmit large image files by e-mail unless specifically requested – you risk blocking the receiver's mailbox or crashing their system.

And remember – when making a presentation one should consider the balance between a unique style to set oneself apart from the pack and a general aesthetic that will harmonize well with the offerings typically presented in the exhibition

space. If possible, pay a visit to or research the space and the viewer. Be aware of the styles of work they present and pay attention to how the work is displayed, both on the walls and in promotions or press.

"When reviewing work during monthly meetings we are very conscientious about looking at submissions of all different formats (work prints, laser prints, images on CD or zip disks and slides). Yet it is not recommended for artists to submit only 35 mm slides since these submissions can be difficult to view within a limited time-frame."

Excerpted from an interview with a Director of Marketing & P.R. for an important photographic organization

About the Author: Jill Waterman

Jill Waterman is a photographer, photo editor and arts writer based in New York City. From 1987 to 2001 she worked as Senior Photo Editor for the agency FPG International. Since being a founder of the artist-run 494 Gallery in 1991, Waterman has served as an independent advisor on the presentation and marketing of photographic work and has reviewed portfolios at numer-

ous photographic conferences. Her workshop/seminar *Exhibition Options for the Photographic Artist* has been presented at the PhotoPlus Expo in New York and the Center for Photographic Project's annual Project Symposium in Santa Fe. Since 1984, she has been photographing in different cities around the world for *The New Year's Eve Project*; photographs from this series

have been exhibited throughout the US and are included in many collections. These photographs can be seen on her web site, www.newyearphotos.com.



Jill Waterman
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The Texas Photographic Society is a nonprofit organization of amateur and professional photographers whose purpose "is to support contemporary photography as a means for creative expression and cultural insight." With over 800 active members from 32 states, TPS focuses on the education and

artistic development of its members and the community by providing exhibitions, publications, education and outreach programs.

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