

## Putting Together A Mailing List

How does an artist showing and selling for the first time and outside of the commercial gallery system go about putting together a mailing list of people to invite to their exhibition or other public event?

Firstly, and right from the start, view your mailing list as an important tool for your art practice. Be prepared to put time and effort into compiling the list and in devising a way to store the list in a format which makes data easy to enter and retrieve. Computer databases are obviously designed especially for this purpose and are the best way to go.

Your database (mailing list) is going to hold entries on a number of different types of people. These include people or businesses that you hope will be interested in buying your work; people who may be able to assist your career in some way, eg curators, the media, other galleries etc; and family, friends and colleagues you want to share your work with eg, ex teachers, work and art school associates. Later on you may want to add other people and businesses to your database, such as your suppliers.

People in the third category above, friends etc, are obviously the easiest for you to collect data on. You might also ask them to suggest who else you could include. If selling your work is your aim then prompt them by asking if they know anyone who collects contemporary work in your style and price range.

However, you need to broaden your scope beyond the people you know. Following are some ways to start that process:

Your local doctors, accountants, architects, hairdressers, dentists etc all have offices that may need artworks. A run through of your local yellow pages telephone directory may turn up more. While you are in the yellow pages also look under Art critics, Art dealers, Art galleries, Art restoration, Artists.

Commercial business collections. Some business buy artworks on a large scale for their offices and over time have developed important collections of contemporary art. Some of these businesses employ a curator, others acquire work based on the taste of senior management. Make a phone call to the business and request contact details for the people involved in artwork acquisitions.

Other galleries and arts organisations.. The staff of these organisations are often consumers of contemporary art. Art Almanac and the Art Gallery Guide Australia [confirm this exists] are guides to Australian galleries and are produced monthly. They are a very good way of finding the up to date contact details for commercial and non commercial galleries in Sydney and Melbourne and to a lesser extent other states and territories and regional areas.

Artbank is the Commonwealth government's art rental agency. Part of its charter is to buy the work of emerging Australian artists.

National, state and territory galleries. These galleries may also buy artists' work and all have curators who advise the trustees on these purchases. Contact each agency for the correct name and contact for the curators.

Arts patrons. These are difficult to locate, however, you could start by looking at the Australian Directory of Philanthropy which lists the names and contact details of many philanthropic trusts in Australia.

Margaret Gees Australian Media Guide provides information on names and contacts of people involved in the media, including arts editors.

You may find after going through this process that you have far too many names and contacts. You can then start to "cull" your entries. If you are creating your list on a database

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you don't need to delete entries, rather you can code them so that you can retrieve only the information you want. If your aim is to sell work and you don't have good reproductions available you may decide that you will focus your exhibition list on people who can actually attend, ie people who live within your area as opposed to large collections or media in other geographic areas.

What information should your database hold?

Collecting and entering the name and contact details of people and businesses who will be of use to your art practice is just one part of a successful database. As important as who is on your database is how easily you can then retrieve the information — in what formats and in what groupings.

The basic formats you will need will be your original layout format and a mailing label format. Later on you may want other formats eg for letters or other promotional tools.

Coding and "fleshing out" each entry is also very important. Your database has the potential to be an important marketing tool. You may want to add details such as who came to your exhibition (as opposed to who was invited), who purchased work, what they purchased and how much. Over time you may also want to add other details about people which will help in your marketing activities. For example, maybe someone came to your exhibition and let you know they really like your work but aren't in a position to buy at the moment. You may want to make a note on that person's data record so you remember to invite them to other buying opportunities.

Keeping your database up to date

Keeping a Visitors Book at the exhibition may give you the opportunity to collect details and comments of the people who visit. This information can then be transferred into your database for future reference. Ask the person minding your exhibition to encourage people to sign the book.

When you meet people who may be interested in your work, ask them for a business card. Transfer these details into your database.

Links Box

Add websites for the orgs noted.