

Writing Proposals for the Concourse Gallery

This handout has been prepared specifically to assist students who wish to propose an exhibition for the **Concourse Gallery**. It is meant to be read in conjunction with the handouts on writing proposals and writing artists' statements.

Basically, it is just a list of kinds of things you might consider and some of the common problems students run into.

- **Be Specific:** Often students decide that they want to put a show together for the experience, but have nothing but a vague idea about what the central theme might be. It's usually not enough to say that you are a group of ten artists who want to put on a show that deals with feminism, or images of poverty, or beauty, or landscape, or disabilities or cross-gendering, or representations of the "other," censorship, cosmetic surgery, First Nations issues, painting or printmaking, or questions of identity. You must ask yourself how your show is going to be different from twenty or one hundred others that have focused on these themes or these mediums.
- **Who are You?** : You can't really be specific if you don't know who you collectively represent. What makes you a group? What ideas or techniques or mediums do you have in common? How are you different? How can you work with those similarities and differences? Perhaps you all enjoy pushing the boundaries of various litho techniques in printmaking. If so, how? Can you provide the Selection Committee with an example of what you mean. Perhaps you want to put on a show that includes only students with disabilities. You're probably be going to be a bit more successful if you can come up with a focus for the show that has something to do with technique or style or a theme that is a bit more specific.
- **Provide Examples:** Your audience (the Student Selection Committee) is going to find it a lot easier to visualize what it is you plan to do if you can provide slides or even photographs of your work. If you can suggest how the work will come together in a show, and how similar or different this work is to what you're going to be exhibiting, then all the better. You might also consider how the work you want to show in the Concourse gallery relates to past or present work, or to a theoretical model. Have you been influenced by any particular artists, academic readings, etc.?

- **Visualizing the Show:**How will the pieces fit into the space? How will you utilize the space? Will you be using plinths, walls, video installations, floor space? Can you visualize the way in which some of the pieces might interact or relate to one another?
- **How Do You Make Your Work?:**What materials do you work in? Are they varied? If so, how do they relate to one another? Will the show be primarily comprised of photographs? If so, what kind? Are there any special techniques you'll be using? Will there be a variety of mediums? If so, how will an installation relate to a painting or a photograph?
- **Title:**What is your show going to be called? Coming up with a title is important as it should give your audience a sense of your overall focus. A title should also be somewhat provocative and inviting.
- **A Proposal is Just That: a Proposal!**Remember that your primary goal is that you are out to convince your audience that what you propose to do is viable and interesting. Things will change over the course of putting together the show. Obviously, you will be learning as you go. Students often avoid writing proposals because they feel that what they have written is then set in stone. Don't let that kind of thinking get in your way. You just have to sell your idea — make it plausible!
- **A Curator's Proposal:**If you would like to curate a show, you will need to convince the Selection Committee that your idea is exceptional, that you are extremely well organized and that you will be able to solicit the work in time. It will really help if you have certain artists in mind, if you can provide examples of their work, if you can talk about how the show will be put together. If you are still at the stage where you are putting out a call for work, explain what it is you're looking for, etc.
- **Your Audience:**Don't assume too much of your audience! You may know someone on the Selection Committee, so you may think they know what your work is like, and/or how you curate shows. Each proposal is a new proposal and you must consider the fact that the committee may not be familiar with what you've done before, the mediums you work in, or how your work relates to other work in the show. Keep it concise, but be as thorough as you possibly can.
- **Adopt a Positive and Convincing Voice:**This is a show you plan on doing and seeing through to its completion. Make it sound convincing. Be serious!

And take a look at the handout writing proposals. It has quite a few examples of ways to begin your proposal, and how to frame your ideas. The handout on writing artists' statements should also be of some help.