



0 | 1 | 2 | 3

Feature: Hints & Tips

Distant Relations: Working with out-of-state Galleries

by Sue Martin

"The gallery went out of business and I couldn't get my art back."
"The gallery said they would advertise my work but didn't." "They acted like they were doing me a huge favor."
"When they started talking about needing investors, I got worried."
"The gallery never paid me on time."
"The gallery owner wanted to tell me what to paint."

These are excerpts from horror stories told by artists who have learned hard lessons about working with out-of-state galleries. To avoid learning the hard way, read on as several successful artists share sage advice about long-distance relationships with galleries.

How do you find an out-of-state gallery that's a good fit?

Whether local or distant, you want to make sure that your work fits the gallery and the market it serves. If your work is abstract, don't bother applying to a gallery that specializes in traditional representational work.

"It's a business relationship," says **Hadley Rampton**, | 1 | who is not only an artist but also works for **Phillips Gallery** in Salt Lake City as a fine art consultant. "Not only do you want to get into the gallery, but you want to make sure it's a good fit for you. You'll want to do good research – go to their web site and, better yet, visit. The best fit is one where the gallery has work that is similar but not exactly like yours."

Nothing beats visiting the gallery in person. Whether vacationing in Hawaii or visiting family in Houston, take the opportunity to visit galleries and get a feel for how they do business and what sells. If you're there at a busy time, don't try to show your portfolio, but do speak with the owner or manager and ask how to submit work for consideration.

Steve Sheffield | 0 | was visiting his uncle in the Delaware Valley area near New Hope, PA. When they were out shopping one day, Sheffield wandered into a gallery and struck up a conversation with the owner and her husband. When they expressed an interest in seeing his work, he gave them a business card with images of two paintings. They invited him to send more.

Sheffield started the relationship slowly, sending only a few paintings, but when those paintings sold quickly, he sent more. Now, he visits as often as he can, and his uncle stops in often and reports back to Sheffield on how his work is displayed.

Landscape artist **Kathryn Stat's** | 2 | current gallery in San Antonio, Texas found her when she placed an ad in Southwest Art Magazine. When she said "inquiries welcome" on the bottom of the ad, she was aiming for individual collectors, but when **Greenhouse Gallery** called it was the start of a wonderful relationship.

Greenhouse specializes in art in the traditional vein. However, their

One sign of a good gallery, says Stats, is one that calls you when one of your paintings sells. "You want to hear enthusiasm," she says. After all, they are there to build your reputation as an artist so that your work can attract more, or repeat, customers to their business.

How many gallery relationships should you have at one time?

"The number of galleries you can handle depends on how prolific an artist you are," says Rampton. "For some people, two galleries may be all they can handle. A good way to go about it is to get into one, then when that's comfortable, get into another, and so on until you reach your comfort limit."

Generally, galleries like to be the exclusive representative of an artist in a certain area. More than one local retailer not only undermines each gallery, but, says Rampton, "it also saturates the market and your work becomes too common. It's better to spread yourself out more."

Though preferring exclusivity, some don't mind if you participate in an arts festival as long as it is a certain distance from the gallery. If you want to sell work from your website, be sure to clear that with the gallery, too.

Stats says she was working with two Arizona galleries when **Greenhouse Gallery** found her. Because Greenhouse specializes in traditional landscapes, it was a perfect fit for Kathryn, and her work sold quickly there. She gradually extricated herself from the other two galleries to concentrate on Greenhouse. The exclusive relationship is working very well for her. "I do 60-70 paintings per year," says Stats, "and they sell them all. They've lived up to all their promises. There's no reason to go anywhere else."

Fenter, too, limits the number of gallery relationships she maintains at one time so that she has time to produce the amount of work each wants. In addition to the **Wilde Meyer Gallery** in Scottsdale, Jerry also has work in the Village Gallery in Lahaina, Maui, and in Ryan Gallery in Lincoln City, OR.

Sheffield's work can be seen in two Utah galleries – **Utah Artist Hands**, Salt Lake City, and **Datura Gallery** in Kayenta, – as well as the **Riverbank Gallery** in New Jersey.

In addition to the **Phillips Gallery** in Salt Lake City, Rampton's work is in several out-of-state galleries: **Astoria Fine Art** in Jackson, WY, the **Jake Dent Gallery** in Palm Desert, CA., and **Kneedler-Sauchere Design Studio** in Denver, CO. She is also represented by **Wilkerson Fine Art** in Huntsville, Utah.

Exhibition Review: St. George

A BYU Reunion in St. George

by Lisa B. Huber

The Sears Gallery, at Dixie State College in St. George, Utah continues to present sophisticated fine art exhibitions with the latest project by curator Kathy Cieslewicz, titled Reunion. Reunion is a collection of 24 artists "who matriculated through the Brigham Young University art program over a span of 15 years" notes Cieslewicz, "all of whom have maintained close friendships while having gone on to successful careers." The idea of this show began about a year ago with a small list of names. This evolved into the "Reunion" theme as additional names were suggested by Vern Swanson, Director of the Springville Museum of Art. Then each artist in turn referred additional artists. The show eventually gathered art not only from inside Utah but from across the nation, bringing together over 70 pieces into the over 4500 square foot

artists are all slightly different; they don't all look the same. It's not a gallery you'd find walking down the street in San Antonio. It's a destination gallery that caters to collectors who know what they're looking for.

Stats maintains that advertising in reputable magazines is a great way to attract the attention of galleries. But, it's expensive, she cautions. And you can't advertise just once; you have to do it multiple times. "If you join an art group and take out a group ad, it will be more affordable," says Stats. Signing up for multiple ads will also save some money.

Like Stats, Rampton has been fortunate to have galleries find her, not through an ad, but through a feature story in *Southwest Art*. If you want to try this route, it may be worthwhile to hire a free-lance PR pro to bring your work to the attention of magazine editors.

Washington artist Jerry Fenter was introduced to the Wilde Meyer Gallery in Scottsdale by a friend who knew the owner and pointed her to Fenter's website. The owner liked Fenter's work and invited her to submit some paintings. The fact that her friend knew the gallery was comforting to Fenter. She advises, "Never ship your work to a gallery you haven't seen or researched through a friend or others who exhibit there."

Having your own website is another good strategy for getting noticed by galleries. Even if you don't sell art from your site, just having a place you can send gallery owners or other customers to see your work is important.

How do you ensure a gallery is reputable?

Ask the gallery for a copy of their contract and/or policy and procedures for artists and make sure it spells out what they will do for the artist and what they expect in return. For example, do they agree to pay for advertising, or do they expect the artist to pay a portion of ad costs? How much commission do they take? How soon will they pay the artist once a painting has sold? To find out how well they live up to that agreement, talk to some of the artists they represent. Ask if they've been happy with the relationship.

Some networking organizations for artists, like the American Academy of Women Artists, have a "gallery alert" section on their web site, on which they list galleries with whom artists have had problems.

Rampton recommends researching particular galleries on line first, looking at sites that list only reputable galleries. She also visits the gallery personally "because there's a lot you can't learn on the Web, like the feel of the place."

"I've also aimed for galleries where friends are represented," says Hadley. "Get the inside scoop on how your friend has been treated before approaching the gallery."

Galleries should treat you like the professional you are. "I have a problem if they try to tell me what to paint," says Stats. "I also worry when they say, 'Send us a bunch of paintings and we'll pick what we like.'"

A good way to test the water before diving into a relationship with any gallery is to be part of a group show. Ask if you can send a few pieces of your work and see what happens before sending more.

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floor space that is the Sears Gallery.

The Exhibition, which opened September 7 to a large opening night crowd, displays mediums from sculpture and pottery to collage, oil, watercolor and prints. Style runs the full spectrum from abstract and impressionism to realism and surrealism. The diversity of these artists in medium, subject, and style is remarkable, given the similarities of environment and training. This presented a particular challenge to Cieslewicz in organizing the placement and hanging of all of the pieces such that they would flow seamlessly from one medium, style, and subject to another. It is an impressive display.

About half of the artists were in attendance at the Friday night affair, each identifiable by their nametag. It was fascinating to see the artist standing alongside their work. I could not have pinned the title "Utah artist" on anyone prior to nametag application as no one in attendance fit any of my preconceptions of a typical Utah artist. They are as diverse in appearance and dress as in their art. Many of my early attempts to "pin the artist on the painting" were incorrect as I mingled through the crowd. There is an additional dimension of understanding and appreciation when you view the creator and creation in the same space. I especially appreciated those whose works were featured at one time or another in Professor Robert S. Olpin's Utah Art history course on KUED a few years ago, as it fueled my expectations for this show.

I did not understand or fully appreciate all of the artwork that I experienced at this event. However, an experienced or even novice art investor would do well to visit the Sears Gallery for this "Reunion" show as this specific gathering is not likely to occur again anytime soon. To view this level of artistic maturity in one show along with the wide diversity and Utah influence is an experience of a lifetime.

The show, which runs through November 16, features [Clay and Rebecca Wagstaff](#), [Steven Lee Adams](#), [Cassandra Barney](#), Brad Aldridge, Bruce Brainard, [Michael Workman](#), [Chris Young](#), Douglas Fryer, [Brian Kershisnik](#), Ron Richmond, [Stephen Bartholomew](#), [Joe and Lee Bennion](#), Royden Card, [Jenni Christensen](#), Patrick Devonas, [Mark England](#), Doug Himes, [David Linn](#), Todd Stilson, Kraig Varner, Laura Lee Stay Bradshaw and [LeRoy Transfield](#).

