

THE ART LEAGUE BOARD OF DIRECTORS GALLERY POLICY

Background

The Art League Board of Directors Code of Ethics states that the Board must “[r]ecognize that the chief function of TAL at all times is to serve the best interests of our members and students.” The Art League Gallery plays an important role in achieving that goal and fulfilling TAL’s mission of nurturing the artist and enriching the community. The Gallery exists to serve its membership and the community and therefore differs from purely commercial galleries whose operations are primarily profit- and market- driven. Of course, the Gallery and quality commercial galleries share a common goal of exhibiting high-caliber artwork, and TAL’s mission is supported in part by the revenues derived from membership fees and gallery sales. However, the Gallery is ultimately accountable to a diverse membership of artists who work in all styles, media, and genres. Unlike a commercial gallery, it can not succeed by targeting a particular market segment or artistic trend. Instead, it faces the difficult challenge of supporting, encouraging, and exhibiting artists exploring innovative, current approaches to the visual arts as well as those who prefer to work on mastering more traditional techniques.

Serving the Artist

The Gallery nurtures the artist by providing artists with real-world opportunities to learn and practice the skills necessary to exhibit their work on a professional level, thus complementing The Art League School’s classroom instruction in creating art. Emerging and experienced artists, whether or not students at the School, have numerous opportunities to hone their skills through participation in gallery programs and activities.

- Gallery exhibiting members -- regardless of their media, styles, genres, or level of experience -- have the opportunity to test their progress as artists by entering the gallery’s monthly juried shows. Acceptance by independent jurors into these highly selective shows can provide encouragement and confirmation that artists are progressing in their skills. Whether or not their work is selected, reviewing the monthly jurors’ statements and the works included in each exhibition can help artists learn what it takes to move beyond competence to the creation of professional quality work that will catch the eye of jurors and patrons.
- Exhibiting members learn how to present their work in a professional manner, through the use of appropriate matting, framing, and other forms of display, and how to enter shows juried on the basis of digital images, now the prevalent practice for juried art shows. The Gallery also provides periodic opportunities for artists to have their work professionally photographed to facilitate digital entries.

- Gallery volunteers learn the nuts and bolts of operating an art gallery, hanging large exhibits, hosting receptions, and interacting with viewers, exhibiting artists, and potential purchasers.
- Artists accepted into the juried shows have the opportunity for their work to be seen by hundreds of people monthly and thousands annually, and, potentially, purchased. Artists who have demonstrated specified levels of consistent performance and thus qualify to exhibit in Gallery 75 gain the opportunity to have work on display and for sale on a continuing non-juried basis in addition to entering the monthly juried shows.
- Artists can further measure and enhance their skills by applying to an independent jury for solo shows at the Gallery, enhancing their ability to create and professionally exhibit a substantial, cohesive body of work.
- The Gallery also provides educational resources on a variety of topics (including identifying other, non-TAL exhibition opportunities of potential interest to members) through presentations, social media, visiting artist lectures, and the like.
- Many of the artists who participate in Gallery activities have developed friendships and a sense of belonging to a supportive and diverse community of individuals who share common artistic interests and goals.

Serving the Community

The Gallery also enriches the community.

- It provides a friendly and inviting venue for visitors to view, react to, and purchase a wide variety of artwork, with professionally presented exhibits that change monthly.
- It provides an opportunity, seven days a week, for its patrons to expand their knowledge of different artistic styles and media, to follow the work of their favorite artists, to attend monthly receptions, or simply to find a respite from the pressures of daily life – all without charge.
- Members of the community also have access to many of the educational presentations and resources described above.

Board Policy

In light of the importance of the Gallery to TAL's mission, the Board, pursuant to Article IV, Section 1 and Article VII of TAL by-laws, adopts the following policy with respect to the Gallery and delegates its day-to-day implementation to TAL's Executive Director.

- As a general matter, the Gallery should constantly seek ways to increase exhibiting membership and artwork sales. The causes of any ongoing declines in membership retention or sales revenues should be

investigated, and appropriate measures should be taken to reverse such declines to the extent possible.

- As a membership organization, the Gallery should continually evaluate whether it is effectively serving its exhibiting members and (especially with changes in the art world, technology, and demographics) whether there are additional opportunities and services that the Gallery can and should provide.
- The Gallery should regularly and clearly communicate with its exhibiting members about Gallery policies, procedures, deadlines, and opportunities. Particular care should be taken to provide ample advance notice and explanation when policies or procedures are changed.
- The Gallery should periodically seek feedback from members with respect to their views on Gallery operations and their value to exhibiting members, including obtaining advance input with respect to potential changes that will affect or limit members' exhibition opportunities.
- While there are potential benefits to periodic juried shows limited to works fitting specified themes, the themes for such shows should be sufficiently broad or flexible in interpretation so as not to consistently disadvantage any particular style, medium, or genre. The prospectus for each theme show should clearly and adequately explain the theme and what it does – and does not – encompass.
- The jurors chosen for monthly and solo show selections should be qualified for that role by education and/or experience and should be committed to selecting the best of the submitted entries, regardless of media, genres, or styles. Jurors for monthly shows with specified themes should be advised of the themes and how the themes have been described in the shows' prospectuses; they should be advised that they should be open to creative or unexpected interpretations of a theme but should avoid selecting works with no apparent connection to the theme.
- For the benefit of exhibiting members and the viewing public, the Gallery should not be overhung, nor should it be hung so sparsely that opportunities for exhibiting member artists are unreasonably or arbitrarily reduced. As a rule of thumb, the Board believes that jurors should typically be advised to select a minimum of 100 pieces of artwork for a monthly show. In a month when there is no solo show so that there is additional space for the juried show, a larger number of selections should be encouraged to the extent consistent with presenting a high-quality show. The Board recognizes that, in a month in which a substantial number of very large pieces has been selected, in which there is an unusually low number of entries, or in which multiple shows will be occupying the Gallery, it may be appropriate to select somewhat fewer entries. (Should there be unusually low entries over a period of months, the Board expects the Gallery to evaluate and address the reasons for the decline so as to maximize member participation and the quality of the monthly exhibits. The Board should be timely informed of the results of

- the Gallery's evaluation and conclusions, and any actions taken to address the decline in entries.)
- The Gallery should remain open during its normal, posted business hours. In the event of circumstances requiring closing during normal hours, notice should be posted on the website (and elsewhere as appropriate).
 - Gallery staff are among TAL's most visible and important contacts with the community and TAL's members and students. As with all TAL staff, Gallery staff members should be courteous, friendly, patient, responsive, and helpful. They should be knowledgeable regarding Gallery operations, policies, and procedures and able to explain them clearly to members and visitors.