

Show Ready

A Practical Guide to Getting Your

Art into Galleries

Portsmouth, New Hampshire & Portland, Maine

Prepared August 24, 2025 By Ms. Cowdrey

How to Use This Guide

This quick-start handbook covers:

- What to prepare before you reach out
- How to approach galleries professionally
- Email templates you can copy/paste
- Checklists for delivery, opening night, and follow-up
- Curated lists of galleries in Portsmouth, NH and Portland, ME (with notes on submissions)

Part 1 — Get Show-Ready

Portfolio & Materials

- 10–15 strong, recent works photographed cleanly (front-on, even light).
- One-page artist statement (what/why/how).
- Short bio (3–5 sentences) and a CV with exhibitions, awards, education.
- Price list (title, medium, size, year, framed/unframed price).
- Website or single-page PDF portfolio; Instagram handle if active.
- Image files labeled: Lastname_Title_Year_Medium_Size_Price.jpg

Pricing & Editions

Research comparable artists showing at target galleries. Keep a consistent price for the same work across venues. Note edition sizes and numbers on the back/labels for prints and photographs.

Framing & Presentation

- Use clean, gallery-ready frames; hang wire or D-rings installed; bump-ons on corners.
- Clearly label verso with: artist, title, medium, dimensions, year, retail price.
- Pack safely for transport (glass corners, bubble wrap, corner protectors).

Tip: Many venues follow common-sense presentation standards—neutral mats, tidy wiring, and original work only unless otherwise stated.

Inventory & Tracking

Make a simple spreadsheet to track contacts and consigned works. Suggested columns:

- Gallery | Contact name | Email | Phone | Date pitched | Status | Next follow-up date
- Work title | Medium | Size | Retail price | Consignment price | Commission % | Date delivered | Date returned/sold

Part 2 — Outreach That Works

Where to Meet Galleries

- Attend First Friday art walks and openings; introduce yourself after you've seen shows for a month or two.
- Follow galleries on Instagram/newsletters and note their open calls and submission windows.
- Volunteer or take part in community events to build relationships.

Pitch Strategy (Email First, Visit Later)

1. Send a concise email with 6–8 JPGs (1200–2000px), links to more work, statement, bio/CV, and price list.
2. If there's no reply in 2–3 weeks, send a brief, polite follow-up once.
3. After attending a few openings, ask about their submission process in person—keep it short and respectful.

What Galleries Consider

- Fit with their program and audience.
- Consistency and professionalism (framing, pricing, timely communication).
- Evidence you can deliver finished work and help bring viewers to the show.

Part 3 — Agreements, Delivery & Openings

Consignment Basics

- Commission: commonly 40–50% to the gallery (confirm in writing).
- Payment timeline after sale (e.g., Net 30).
- Who insures work on site and in transit (often the artist in transit).
- Discount policy and who absorbs it; approval for discounts above a set %.
- Exclusivity (city/region/time) if any.

Delivery Checklist

- ☐ Clean, wired, labeled, and priced works.
- ☐ Printed inventory sheet matching labels.
- ☐ Artist statement + price list for staff binder.
- ☐ Hanging hardware if requested; specialty instructions for atypical works.
- ☐ Packaging retained or not (ask gallery preference).

Opening Night & Follow-Up

- ☐ Post show details to your list + social a week before and day-of.
- ☐ Bring business cards; be present and on time.
- ☐ Photograph the installation and crowd for your records.
- ☐ Send thank-you email next day with any press links.
- ☐ Request sales report and return date for unsold work.

Part 4 — Email Templates You Can Copy

Initial Submission Email

Subject: Submission: <Your Name> — <Medium/Series Title>

Hello <Gallery Name> Team,

I'm a <painter/photographer/etc.> based in <city>. I've been following your program and especially enjoyed <recent show>. I'm submitting work for your consideration that I believe aligns with your focus on <brief fit>.

- Portfolio (8 images attached, web-size)
- Statement, bio + CV (PDF)
- Price list with framed sizes

You can view more work here: <website / Instagram>. If you're open to it, I'd love to be considered for future group shows or the next review window.

Thank you for your time,
<Your Name> | <phone> | <website / Instagram>

Polite Follow-Up (after ~2–3 weeks)

Subject: Following up: <Your Name> submission

Hello <Name>,

Just checking in on my submission from <date>. No rush—if a later review window is better, I'm happy to re-send then. Thanks again and hope your current exhibition is going well.

Best,
<Your Name>

Part 5 — Gallery Lists & Submission Notes

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

New Hampshire Art Association / Robert Lincoln Levy Gallery

136 State St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.nhartassociation.org/>

Notes: Member & juried shows; recurring open calls. See “Calls for Art” and framing/presentation guidelines on site.

3S Artspace (Main Gallery & Lobby Gallery)

319 Vaughan St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.3sarts.org/open-calls>

Notes: Contemporary art venue with periodic open calls (e.g., 2026–27 seasons) via Submittable. Read each call for media/fee details.

Nahcotta

110 Congress St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://nahcotta.com/pages/submissions>

Notes: Rolling submissions via online form; well-known for curated contemporary shows.

Don Gorvett Gallery

123 Market St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.dongorvettgallery.com/>

Notes: Focus on fine art woodcuts/drawings/paintings. Inquire before sending materials.

Kennedy Gallery & Custom Framing

41 Market St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://kennedygalleryandframing.com/>

Notes: Submissions by email only (no walk-ins). Specializes in local scenes; see site contact/guidelines.

Dovekie Gallery

175 Market St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.portsmouthnh.com/listing/dovekie-gallery/>

Notes: Gallery + framing. Call ahead to confirm submission process.

Portsmouth Historical Society (Exhibition Spaces)

10 Middle St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.portsmouthnh.com/downtown-portsmouth-nh/art-galleries/>

Notes: Hosts rotating exhibitions. Check for themed calls and partnership shows.

MONA — Museum of New Art

135 Congress St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.portsmouthnh.com/downtown-portsmouth-nh/art-galleries/>

Notes: Contemporary exhibitions; museum model (not consignment). Look for curatorial opportunities.

Thanas Galleries

105 Market St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.portsmouthnh.com/listing/thanas-galleries/>

Notes: Gallery & antiques. Contact directly to inquire.

Banks Gallery (verify current status)

32 Daniel St, Portsmouth, NH

<https://www.portsmouthnh.com/listing/banks-gallery/>

Notes: Listed in local directory; confirm hours and whether they are accepting submissions.

Art 'Round Town (monthly gallery walk)

Downtown Portsmouth (First Fridays, 5–8pm)

<https://www.goportsmouthnh.com/art/>

Notes: Network event to meet gallerists/artists; preview programs before submitting.

Portland, Maine

Portland Art Gallery

154 Middle St, Portland, ME

<https://portlandartgallery.com/artist-submissions>

Notes: Reviews twice per year (January & July). Maine connection preferred. Online form.

Greenhut Galleries

146 Middle St, Portland, ME

<https://greenhutgalleries.me/>

Notes: Established contemporary gallery. Follow site/newsletter for submission updates.

Cove Street Arts

71 Cove St, Portland, ME

<https://www.covestreetarts.com/>

Notes: Large contemporary venue; check site or contact for submission policy.

SPACE

538 Congress St, Portland, ME

<https://space538.org/>

Notes: Nonprofit contemporary art space with occasional open calls and community projects.

Creative Portland Gallery & First Friday Art Walk

84 Free St (gallery location varies); Citywide Art Walk

<https://www.creativeportland.com/ffaw-artists>

Notes: Hosts open calls; coordinates the city's First Friday Art Walk — meet curators and gallerists.

Maine Craft Portland / Shop Maine Craft

521 Congress St, Portland, ME

<https://shopmainecraft.com/jury-information/>

Notes: Retail gallery focused on fine craft; juried process and craft shows.

PhoPa Gallery (photography & works on paper)

132 Washington Ave, Portland, ME

<https://www.facebook.com/Phopagallery/>

Notes: Photography-focused; watch social/website for calls or exhibition inquiries.

Indigo Arts Alliance (community & residencies)

410 Forest Ave, Portland, ME

<https://indigoartsalliance.me/>

Notes: Residencies and community programming; useful network and professional development.

Mayo Street Arts (community venue)

10 Mayo St, Portland, ME

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayo_Street_Arts

Notes: Performance & visual arts venue; good for community shows and exposure.

SPEEDWELL Contemporary (status: physical gallery closed Dec 2024)

Formerly Forest Ave, Portland, ME

<https://www.pressherald.com/2024/12/13/speedwell-to-close-its-portland-art-gallery-next-month/>

Notes: Now focused on pop-ups/publications; still a relevant network — email for opportunities.

Portland Downtown Arts Directory (many listings)

Downtown Portland

https://portlandmaine.com/directory_category/arts-culture/

Notes: Use as a discovery map; confirm submission policies with each venue.

Part 6 — Quick Checklists

Your 7-Day Submission Sprint

4. Pick 8–10 target galleries (fit + location).
5. Tighten your statement/bio/CV to one page each (PDFs).
6. Edit/rename 10–15 images and build a one-page PDF portfolio.
7. Draft your email using the template and customize per gallery.
8. Create a tracking sheet and schedule follow-ups.
9. Block a First Friday visit in both cities this month.
10. Prep two works gallery-ready in case a curator asks to see in person.

Packing for Delivery

- [] Artwork (wired, labeled), corner protectors, bubble wrap.
- [] Inventory sheet + price list + statement copies.
- [] Hanging hardware or pedestals if requested.
- [] Blue tape, microfiber cloth, small toolkit.