

Prison art exhibition guidelines

Thinking about putting together an exhibition of prison art? Preparing for an exhibition can come with a variety of challenges, but also great rewards.

Exhibitions are an opportunity to engage with the local community and acknowledge the hard work and talent that can produce a good piece of art. Exhibitions can also be a way to fundraise for appropriate and relevant charities.

Approvals:

- Proposals must be sought through the programmes teams, with the Managers Interventions and Programmes (MIPs) providing approval and oversight of all exhibitions.
- Before the MIP can approve an exhibition, they must ensure that there is custodial support for each exhibition, including Prison Manager approval.
- If the exhibition is a high-profile event e.g. national exhibition or in parliament, then the MIP should escalate the approval to the Regional Commissioner.
- The prisoners must consent in writing to their art being exhibited

Considerations:

- Discuss the exhibition idea with staff involved in the delivery of arts activities such as Managers of Contracts and Services, arts tutors, programme coordinators, volunteer coordinators, and volunteers.
- Find out what else is going on in your area/prison. Are there other exhibitions happening? What have other staff done or plan to do?
- Form a committee/group of helpers and identify key roles to support the smooth running of the exhibition.
- Find a suitable venue, inside or outside the prison.
- Plan the distribution of art supplies, and the collection and safe storage of the artwork leading up to the exhibition.
- Consult with local iwi and prisoners about the choice of charity and the theme of the overall exhibition, with the guidance of the MIP and the Māori Services team.
- Document the artwork by photographing each piece. Use the photographs to create a catalogue, and record the exhibition.
- Ensure that all information remains confidential and there are no copyright infringements.
- Engage other parts of the prison to help. For example, employment team might be able to assist with building frames or display panels, the print shop might be able to print posters and catalogues, the kitchens might be able to help cater the event.

Communication:

- The regional communications team will provide guidance in regards to advertisement and marketing.
- The National Office communications team commdesk@corrections.govt.nz should be informed of all exhibitions when they are approved. Especially if it is a high profile exhibition.

Key tips:

Keeping everyone informed

Once you have sought approval and talk to the relevant staff involved, organise a basic plan for the exhibition.

Finding a suitable venue

If you want to exhibit inside the prison: Discuss with key staff about possible venues, for example, the visiting area or the front entrance of the facility.

If you want to exhibit outside of the prison: Use your contacts in the community to suggest venues. An exhibition is an opportunity to build community relationships and engagement. Community galleries are a good starting place. Visit the exhibition space so you know approximately how many pieces of art you will need to fill it.

Appropriate content

All artists should use a pseudonym when they sign their artwork. This is essential if you intend to exhibit in a public space. Exhibiting in this context isn't about gaining recognition for the individual artist; It's about the skills and experience gained from participating in a positive event. It's important to consider the rights of victims and the families of victims in a public setting.

Material is objectionable if it describes, depicts, expresses, or otherwise deals with matters such as sex, horror, crime, objectification, cruelty or violence, and the completed hobby/art item is likely to be injurious to the public good or the security of the prison.

Objectionable items include:

- Gang insignia and gang-related material.
- Content that is degrading, dehumanising, or demeaning or depicts harm.

Consent forms

Ensure appropriate consent forms are filled in by each exhibitor to ensure that artwork can be collected, displayed and/or sold without issues. Prisoner consent forms need to clearly state what has been agreed to, for example:

- 100% sales will go to charity
- The artwork may be withdrawn by any parties for any reason (for example gang references or signature in the work)

Advice:

Arts Access Aotearoa has a contract with Te Ara Poutama Department of Corrections to provide an arts advisory service. For more advice, support and information contact:

- **Chris Ulutupu, Arts in Corrections Advisor**
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