



## EXHIBITION TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Introduction

*This is a series of tips on some of the (many) things that a guild will think of in deciding to and setting up an exhibition or display of work. It is not a 'how to' checklist, but a few things that might help make the exhibition more viable (costs and benefits) get to more people (publicity) or give it more impact (display and presentation). Use them as you wish, and if you have a few that work well for you that you would like to share with others - send them through to ANZEG Executive.*

### Before the Exhibition/display or promotional exercise

#### WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- Do some brainstorming before you commit, and involve many people in order to get a buy-in from them;
- Benefits - (they don't all have to be financial): what is in it for you? what's in it for the gallery or display space? What benefits for a sponsor if you are asking for help?
- Costs - are there any monetary costs? What sources of funds can you find? Who can help (in terms of funds and don't forget time)? Councils often have an arts fund you can apply for.
- One of the key things you do want to achieve is a good experience for everyone - you want to encourage your guild to do it again and for your viewers to come again. IE: Make it Fun.

#### SELECTING THE VENUE

- Location/location/location;
- Accessibility - location, people know where it is, ground rather than upper floor etc;
- A community gallery is good as it is usually next to the library etc;
- Sharing to save costs and bring in bigger audience;
- Somewhere everyone goes to.

#### PREPARING THE WORKS

- Will you have a theme(s)?
- What are the requirements of the gallery (they may limit numbers, have a say in final choice etc)
- What will be accepted? All work? Selected? [see Appendix B re originality]
- Be specific in what the standards will be for the exhibition - eg work needs to be framed if being hung, some galleries may want specific hanging systems [see Appendix C].
- Plan for your judges.
- How to encourage newbies? Help them with presentation, focus on the positive.
- How to encourage original work? Special section with a prize?
- How to encourage work for sale? Check with the gallery first.

#### *Some Hints*

- Having a variety of work and abilities allows the viewers to relate to the work;
- Lots of different categories for prizes tends to be a huge job for your judges, confuses the public and makes works that are not given a prize look bad;

## ADVERTISING

- Look for anything that is free: papers, radio, council, event websites;
- Mail drops - small fliers and get members to drop them into boxes on their exercise walks;
- Word of mouth - hand out small fliers at your golf club, bridge club, - works best with personal approach;
- Posters - libraries (city libraries will often put them up in all branches if you give them enough fliers); workplaces; public halls; supermarkets are iffy; club rooms; retirement homes etc;
- If you have a sponsor, ask them for help - eg some organisations have a newsletter
- Looking for a sponsor - do this in your brainstorming session and approach potential sponsors with a prepared information sheet (see note below); sponsorship could be for prizes, raffles, advertising costs;
- Send invites to specific groups (eg women's business groups).



1: Example of article in local paper - photos and text.

### Some hints:

- Word of mouth is the best;
- Get the gallery to help;
- Papers often don't do free any more - there needs to be something in it for them - prepare a press release, with photos of a past event, if there is some point of difference make sure it is prominent; [pic1]
- 'Neighbourly' is a way of sending out information - it can be free or paid content;
- Advertising in a paper is expensive and not terribly effective unless it is really big (and really expensive);
- Use social media - ask your friends to 'share'. It helps to have some basic information on a flier to attach. (NB: what, where, when and who).

## The Set-Up & Opening

### SETTING UP THE EXHIBITION

- **Work with the gallery** - don't be bulldozed but offer suggestions. You know about embroidery, they know about lighting etc;
- Hanging will be dictated by the gallery system and they will be knowledgeable about layout;
- If you don't use a gallery, or are given free rein: a) ask for help b) consider things like:
  - Lighting ! [pic2]
  - Spacing
  - Colour compatibility
  - Theme compatibility
  - Hints from other guilds
- Catalogue and/or labels: This is an opportunity to promote embroidery - make it self-explanatory [Appendix A]
- Photography: Photograph and record the works (pic 3 and see Threads editor for hints);



2: Above, although there appears to be a row of lights, the dark works made these very hard to see, and viewers did not linger. Compare below, the open, light-filled gallery made it easy to see and a welcome place to visit. The seats also allowed people to sit and look. Note also the attractive table where the minders sat.



- Keep the sponsor(s) name(s) prominent; you might need to OK this with the gallery before starting out on the sponsorship journey, especially if the sponsor is a competitor to the gallery's owner;
- You will need to check with the gallery about sales and/or a raffle and how to manage these - so often the viewers remark 'there is nothing for sale' or 'I'd love to have one'. If people are reluctant to sell large works, encourage your guild to have a sales table of smaller works.



3: The glare problem of glass! Reflections. Not only is it difficult to photograph, it is sometimes even hard to see.

*Some hints from other exhibitions (no particular order)*

- Have nice big title of the exhibition in the gallery. Some lovely galleries will put the name of the exhibition up for you [pic2];
- Have big posters on the outside of gallery;
- Have a central focus (eg large work, group display etc);
- Lighting - open and bright is more attractive (and a darn sight easier to see the stitching) than dark and gloomy - you might need to talk firmly to the gallery on this one;
- Have works and labels at eye level - for women! Be aware of bi-focals (having to tilt your head back to read the captions is really annoying);
- Captions need to be BIG - be firm with the gallery on this - remind them that your viewing audience will be in the visually-challenged age group;
- Captions on the works. ANZEG recommends all exhibitions include: TITLE, artist (or maker), designer if not the artist, Category (if there is one), and a description [Appendix A];
- Catalogue: only use it if necessary, use a reasonably sized font, put all the information you need and sort it so it follows the exhibition around the room (ie not scattered everywhere);
- Try some different displays - but don't wreck the walls; if you put pins in, be prepared to have to fill and paint the wall afterwards;
- Include something big - to relieve the eye from a lot of little works (this can be a large floral display, large photos (eg Coromandel's photos in April 2021 issue));
- Plenty of space between works but...
- Group lots of small works; (this gives the impression of one large work) [pic 6];
- Don't have lots of small things on tables - this is very amateurish and is diabolical for security;
- Use cabinets for security for small works but don't use the lowest shelf [pic 5];
- Have some variety in the display;
- Have areas grouped by colour - and colour can be a unifying element in a design.



4: Above, the works are at eye level and the captions in a comfortable level. Compare below, (although limited by the location) viewers have to squeeze in and this can be off-putting. The layout is interesting, though.



5: A group of small works with a common theme in a cabinet. A single sheet on the wall identified the makers.



- Do note that sometimes you have to leave things out because they really cannot be made to fit the display - it happens!

## OPENING

- If you have an opening:
  - Send invites - the gallery will have a list, include local MP, Council etc;
  - Get one of these VIPs to open;
  - Invite a local paper (P.S. tell them there is food!)
- Send the local paper photos and a story - if the local MP is there (s)he will have done so;



6: These small works are grouped to make an interesting pattern themselves. Rather than being on a table the mats etc are pinned with straight pins into the wall (with the gallery's permission)

## During the Exhibition/Promotion

- Be there [pic7]. Again the gallery might be reluctant, but explain to them that this helps with security & public perception;
- Talk to the visitors - if you are shy, have some starter questions available (eg 'where did you hear about the exhibition?');
- Include 'added value' such as demos, answering questions, publications, where to go for classes etc;
- Raffles - if permitted. It helps with the finances; but make the raffles really beautiful; Raffle a work?
- Sales: Have sales table for small items, look at options for taking sales (some galleries don't allow this, or their commission is prohibitive); NB for exhibitions during the period September-December, we can let you have copies of the diaries for sale (or take orders if the gallery won't allow it);
- Be proactive, offer to put them in touch with the artist if they are interested in a sale; The artist may have something similar that they are prepared to sell;
- But: Don't have a group of people stitching and chatting but who don't actually engage with the viewers.



7: Three welcoming stitchers mind the exhibition. Their flowers and baskets of goodies tempt you to stop.

## After

- Thank yous (as your Mum said, this is really important) and make them personal, not just an email;
- Send the sponsor and the person who opened the exhibition some photos along with the thank-you note;
- Have a post-mortem: Did you achieve what you set out to do? What worked / did not work? Etc;
- Remember to write a nice piece for 'Threads'.

## APPENDICES

### A CAPTIONS OR CATALOGUE

Include for all: Number, **Title**, **Artist name**, **Designer name if not original**,

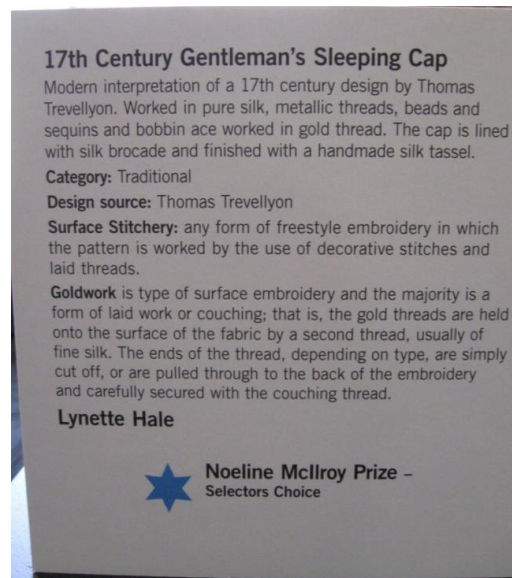
Include if relevant: Category, Medium or technique, Price or NFS, (see A)

Include for viewer information and engagement: Description of the technique (see B), and it is nice to include the Artist statement if you can.



A: (left) all labels should include this...

B: (right) a really full and descriptive label - it keeps the viewer interested.



### B ANZEG NOTE ABOUT ORIGINALITY

When is original not original? When it is copied. Has your work been copied from another source? EG Vincent van Gogh's sunflowers (an obvious one); a photo in a book or from 'Pinterest' (yes - if it is not modified in a way that would make it unique to you such as referring to several photos of a flower and re-drawing it for your work). Some photos are royalty-free. This does not mean that they have no copyright, just that you can use them without paying a royalty. If you want to make an exact copy, you can contact the owner and ask permission. If they say 'no', respect that and move on. If it is a photo or painting and you explain it will be for an embroidery, it is highly likely they will be flattered and say 'yes'. In all these cases (including van Gogh) acknowledge the inspirational artist. [SUNFLOWERS, embroidered by M Smith, from painting by V van Gogh].

There is a difference between absolute originality of design and 'adaptation'. At the guild and regional level adaptation is usually acceptable, but again, acknowledged. Organisers to confirm and stick to the decision.

**Note to selectors** - use the search software Tin Eye to compare designs that you think might have been copied.  
<https://tineye.com/how>

### C A NOTE ABOUT FRAMING & HANGING

- Glass is awful for photographing, so if you want nice pics in Threads please photograph the work without the glass, first. You could ask your framer to help with this. Be careful with the reflections from gallery lights when hanging pieces with glass.
- Finish the back of the work neatly - use framing tape (also called paper tape) to seal the frame. Use a nice backing paper/card. Write your name and the title of the work, and date on the back.
- Ask your framer (or yourself) to use D-rings not eyelets for the hangers. These do not scratch the wall or other works.
- DO NOT PILE UP WORKS one on top of another - at least not without padding between.