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# ARTIST OPEN CALL FRAMEWORK

The Artist Open Call is a framework of the A.I.R. Gallery Research and Development Program, a voluntary artist-led initiative launched in January 2021 by A.I.R. New York Artists Daria Dorosh, a founding Member, and Yvonne Shortt, the newest member. The program's goal is to discover, model, and introduce new frameworks for artists that disrupt the scarcity mindset and patriarchal selection systems commonly encountered in the art world. As we strengthen the framework we will continue to update this document. If you use this framework please let us know so we can continue to learn and grow as a community of artists.

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# What is Artist Open Call Framework?

It is a new way of thinking about open calls to get rid of the hierarchical scarcity mindset among artists. It is led by the artist as opposed to the institution or the curator.

## Traditional open calls

- Institutions and curators decide the topic
- Institutions and curators select artists
- Time is spent on preparing a work/proposal with no guarantee that it will be included.
- Typically there is no collaborative process, drop-off or reception are often the only time you have a face-to-face conversation with the curator or other participating artists.

## Artist Open Call Framework

- Artists decide the topic
- You select yourself so you are always in
- Your time of preparation will never be wasted because you are selecting yourself to be part of it, and the date/space of the exhibition is predetermined by you
- Participating artists commit to weekly group meetings where they share their thoughts on the topic to inspire each other's development of the work and strengthen ideas

# Implementation

1. Artist decides a topic to explore, finds a partner to solidify details of the call
2. Artist and their partner create a call video and send it out
3. Participating artists select themselves by responding to the call
4. Initial interviews to ensure those who responded understand the commitment
5. The group meets every week to discuss and develop their work for the exhibition
6. Exhibition

# 1. Artist decides a topic to explore, finds a partner

- Decide a topic that you want to explore through this exhibition.
- Find a partner with whom to have initial discussions to strengthen the topic, solidify details of the call, and share resources/connections to put out the call. You could invite an artist friend, or put out a note on social media to find a like-minded person.

## 2. Artist and their partner create a call video

The artist and partner discuss details of the call and create a call video. It includes:

- The topic that the group is going to explore
- Medium, if there's any restriction (e.g. digital artist only, photographer, etc)
- The exhibition date and length of time
- Exhibition location
- Meeting dates (what day of the week), and how many times before the show
- Clarify that if a participant misses X amount of meetings they will have to leave
- How many people are you looking for to be in the group? How do the people contact you if they want to be part of it?
- The amount of expense each participant shares, if any
- A deadline by which to submit. Remind them it's first come first selected.

Watch call video example: <https://vimeo.com/629392431>

### 3. Participating artists select themselves to take part by responding to the call

- First come, first serve
- No resume or past work is required
- Must agree with the terms stated in the call video

It's first come first serve, so once you hit your number, put out another video or a note saying you are no longer accepting applicants. If anybody applies after that, email them back and let them know you've gotten the number of people. You can also encourage them to start their own group using this framework. Two groups working on the same topic could even build a collaborative relationship such as helping each other spread the word, etc.

## 4. Initial interviews

Set up a one-on-one initial conversation with participants to confirm they're on the same page regarding the terms. We recommend meeting in person or over Zoom so you can talk face-to-face, rather than on a phone.

# 5. The group meets weekly to discuss and develop their work

## Meeting 1-2

Talk about yourself as an artist, rather than your work yet. Have a group conversation around the topic at hand. It is possible that every participant will come from different cultures and perspectives, so let the group conversation flow which could inspire you to change the course of your work.

## Meeting 3 and forward

Start to delve into each participant's work and what they're thinking about and have other participants discuss it. It would help to discuss and have a clear focus, e.g. talk specifically about art materials. Decide the guiding questions for the next meeting.

## Group Documents

We recommend creating group documents and managing them as a group. Everyone has a role to play in this structure to build level and equal relationships in the group. There should be no hierarchy in this framework. The artist and their partner who set up the call are not above other participants, nor play the role of a manager for others' convenience.

- a. Meeting Notes
- b. Project plan spreadsheet

## Group Documents a. Meeting Notes

- Basic information of the group/exhibition (dates, location, terms)
- Guiding questions for each meeting to prompt discussions
- Actions that need to be taken, their deadlines, and who is in charge of them
- Each participant's ideas and thoughts for their work so others can see them in advance of the meeting and think what to bring to the table.
- Notes can be written with a dedicated color for each participant so it's easy to see which one is from who.

5. The group meets weekly to discuss and develop their work

## Group Documents b. Project plan spreadsheet

1. Participating artists' Name, Email address, Phone number, Website URL, Social media handles, and Location
2. A section of meeting dates. Each participant takes responsibility for setting up a meeting, filling out the information in the spreadsheet, and inviting the group. Example:

MEETING DATES	TIME	ARTIST	ZOOM   VIRTUAL MEETING
Nov 1	5-6pm	Megan	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/827">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/827</a>
Nov 8	5-6pm	Candace	<a href="https://us04web.zoom.us/j/756">https://us04web.zoom.us/j/756</a>
Nov 15	5-6pm	Alana	<a href="https://yale.zoom.us/j/9276036">https://yale.zoom.us/j/9276036</a>
Nov 22	5-6pm	Yvonne	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/896">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/896</a>
Nov 29	5-6pm	Yvonne	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/896">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/896</a>
Dec 6	5-6pm	Christine	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8</a>
Dec 13	5-6pm	Abigail	<a href="https://yale.zoom.us/j/9276036">https://yale.zoom.us/j/9276036</a>
Dec 20	5-6pm	Sherese	<a href="https://yale.zoom.us/j/9276036">https://yale.zoom.us/j/9276036</a>
Dec 27	5-6pm	Jennifer	<a href="https://zoom.us/j/28735736">https://zoom.us/j/28735736</a>
Jan 3	5-6pm	Megan	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/896">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/896</a>

5. The group meets weekly to discuss and develop their work

## Group Documents b. Project plan spreadsheet

3. Important dates. Example:

<b>IMPORTANT GALLERY DATES</b>			
<b>Dec 17</b>	EXHIBITION INFO DUE	ecard   press release   signage   exhibition list   artwork labels	
<b>JAN 6, 9, + 10</b>	INSTALL	<i>FIND OUT TIMES FROM DEBBIE + MAX</i>	
<b>JAN 13 - FEB 20</b>	EXHIBITION + WORK IN PROGRESS	GALLERY HOURS: Sundays 12-5pm   Mondays 12-5pm   Wed	
<b>Jan 16</b>	OPENING RECEPTION	1-3pm	
<b>Feb 20</b>	DEINSTALL	3-5pm	
<b>Feb 21</b>	DEINSTALL	12-5pm	
<b>Feb 23</b>	DEINSTALL	12-5pm	

# Q&A

## *How does an artist find a location for their exhibition?*

- Outdoors such as walls, fences, gardens.
- Indoors such as a storefront, an extra room in your house. Putting together a proposal for a gallery or an art center. Renting space and sharing the expense, in which case you need to be upfront about how much each participant would pay.

## *What if you have a participating artist who misses the meetings or doesn't do their work?*

- If someone doesn't come to X amount of meetings, they have automatically removed themselves from the group.
- Participants can opt-out if they feel the framework is not working for them at an early stage in the process.

\*It is important to clearly communicate these terms in the initial interview with the applicants before they come on board. We expect the time commitment required in this framework will naturally filter out those who are not willing to do the work.

### *How do you decide the number of participants?*

The size of the space where you are going to have an exhibition can be a good guide for how many pieces/artists can fit in. You typically lose one or two people as the meeting continues, so we recommend starting with the ideal number of participants +2.

### *How is this framework different from artist collective?*

This framework is a different way of looking at an art exhibition. It is specific to one exhibition, has a certain time frame that the group work together, as opposed to forming a permanent/long term artist group.