

LRG LEARNING RESOURCE

LATROBE REGIONAL GALLERY



Image: Latrobe Regional Gallery, street view.

Galleries **Types, Roles and Conservation**

Gallery Types - Overview

With reference to exhibitions spaces, the work 'role' refers to the usual or customary function of the art gallery or exhibition space, such as a public, private, commercial or community spaces. The characteristics of each space refer not to the artworks on display but to the space itself. The gallery type can inform the curatorial rationale, the artists exhibiting in the space, methods of display and how concepts are communicated with the audience.

Common roles of a gallery space:

- The exhibition of artworks, either from the gallery's own collection, and/or works borrowed from other galleries, artists, or private collections
- Education: providing opportunities to learn about the artworks, artists and the concepts explored in the exhibitions
- Engagement: developing a public program which invites people to engage with the exhibitions and themes through special events and workshops
- The development of collections through acquisition of artworks
- The preservation of the collection through conservation

Commercial Galleries

Commercial galleries are privately owned and their primary purpose is to promote artists through exhibitions with the aim of selling their work. Exhibitions usually run for a shorter time frame than public galleries, as they represent a number of artists. The term 'commercial' is used because the gallery is operated like business. The owners of a commercial gallery aim to make a profit out of the sale of works of art. A portion goes to the artist, some paid to the owner, and the remainder is invested back into the day to day running of the gallery.

Community and Artist Run Galleries

Gallery spaces which are run by community and groups of artists are not-for-profit and exist to support emerging artists and curators. They provide an opportunity for artists to gain experience showcasing their work and putting together exhibitions. Some artist run spaces also include studios, providing a space for artists to create.

Artist run spaces get their funding mainly through grants and hosting fundraising events. Many of the roles in community/artist run spaces are unpaid volunteer roles. People working in these spaces will often do so to gain experience working in the arts sector if they do not have any prior experience.

Gallery Types - Public Galleries

Public Galleries

Public Galleries are art spaces which are funded, owned and established by Government and do not rely on the sale of artworks. Latrobe Regional Gallery is a public gallery. Some well known examples include National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), and Art Gallery of Ballarat to name a few.

Aim

Public galleries seek to acquire, maintain, present and educate. They are devoted to collecting, conserving and presenting an array of artworks to the public. This means that they generally seek to continue growing their permanent collection, which often highlights themes that resonate with the historical and present stories of the local area. They also exhibit and tour exhibitions or individual works with other public galleries, private collections, touring bodies and independent artists.

Conservation is a priority for public galleries, and they often engage in restorative practices. In addition to this, they aim to expose the public to a wide variety of art and educate them about the works, as seen through their education based practices.

Funding

Public galleries receive funding from State, Federal and/or Local Government and both corporate and private sponsors. They generate additional funds through membership fees and gift shop sales, but this is a secondary objective to their aims of promoting art and educating the public about art.

Artist Type

Often public galleries will exhibit mid-career or well established artists, however some public galleries might include works by emerging artists or lesser-known artists in exhibitions, as well as show exhibitions of artists local to the area. Public galleries benefit from showing established artists because their status gives them credibility which helps to draw in visitors to the gallery.



Image: Installation view of Anne Moffat's work in *The Valley*, Latrobe Regional Gallery, 1 March - 23 June 2024.

Student discussion questions - Gallery Types

- Identify the differences between Public Galleries, Commercial Galleries and Community/Artist Run Spaces in three different areas:
 - How they are typically funded?
 - What kinds of artists do they show?
 - Who is their main audience?
- List two examples of each type of gallery in Australia.
- In what ways might the events at a public gallery differ from the kinds of events held at an artist run space? You could use an example of an event held at each type of gallery to think about this. (e.g. Who is the target audience?)
- Choose a public gallery that hasn't been mentioned and research what kinds of artworks they exhibit. Do they have a permanent collection? See if you can find some information about the collection and what some of the key themes might be.



Image: Exhibition *The Valley* in Gallery 1 & 2 at Latrobe Regional Gallery, 1 March - 23 June 2024. Pictured is work by Anne Moffat (foreground/Gallery 1) and work by James Bugg (background/Gallery 2).

Roles in The Gallery

Depending on the size of the public gallery, there are a number of roles which may be fulfilled by a team of individuals, or by a singular staff member. For example, the NGV employs multiple curators with specialties in different types of art of different periods in art history. In addition to this, a team of conservators are required to fulfil the conservation needs of a public gallery with a large collection across various mediums and historical periods. At Latrobe Regional Gallery we work within a small team and many of the roles are fulfilled by one or two person. There is often a lot of overlap and collaboration between the roles, and the opportunity to learn skills from another area.

Some of the roles relevant to the operation of public galleries include:

Curator, Exhibition Designer, Education & Public Programs Officer, Director, Marketing Coordinator

Director

Typically, the role of the director is to oversee the overall planning and delivery of exhibitions, education and public programs, and the growth and preservation of the permanent collection. The director ensures that the program and acquired works align with the gallery's mission, strategies and policies. The director is responsible for managing the gallery budget, writing funding applications, reporting to funding bodies and building stakeholder relationships.

Curator

Most public galleries will have a couple of curators overseeing a particular area. The curatorial team at Latrobe Regional Gallery is led by the Senior Curator who works in consultation with the Director in the planning and delivery of exhibitions.

Curators work closely with artists to help them realise their work, and in discussion with the gallery technicians, curators will determine possibilities of presenting artwork. At Latrobe Regional Gallery, the curators are responsible for the exhibition design/layout, as well as the research for individual artworks and for exhibitions. They develop exhibition texts, artworks descriptions and promotional copy. It is important for curators to consider the ways in which the audience engages with the artwork, as this informs some of their decisions around how the work and information is presented.

Curators will often handle artworks and need to be acquainted with art handling and preventative conservation like the technical team. With the research they do, they are able to provide direction on any limitations around display or other considerations for the display of a work.

Roles in The Gallery

Gallery Technician

Many logistics involved in presenting an exhibition lie with the gallery's team of technicians. At Latrobe Regional Gallery this is led by a Senior Gallery Technician who works closely with the Assistant Technician. The Senior Gallery Technician is responsible for managing the installation and de-installation of exhibitions in accordance with accepted gallery standards and procedures relating to Occupational, Health & Safety regulations.

Duties include:

- Installing exhibitions with reference to the planning and curation provided by the Curator.
- Overseeing and maintaining the equipment and collection storage areas to appropriate gallery standards
- Support the Senior Curator and curatorial staff in all technical aspects of exhibition or event preparation and management, and coordinate the work of gallery assistants to achieve this.
- Oversee and implement appropriate procedures for the handling and storage of artwork.

Education & Public Programs Officer

An Education & Public Programs Officer is responsible for the development and management of events that involve and engage individuals and groups in the community and schools. Events and activities are generally curated to coincide with current exhibitions and cater to different education needs, audiences and ages.

Duties include:

- Develop and deliver education tours and workshops
- Develop education kits and handouts for schools to use as a learning resource
- Book and manage artist and curator talks, workshops and master classes
- Develop and deliver school holiday workshops and other special events at the gallery

Image: Artist Talk with Heather Shimmen, Sunday 26 November, 2023. This public program took place at Latrobe Regional Gallery to coincide with Heather Shimmen's exhibition, *The sun shining ultravioletly one day upon the protean sea*.



Roles in The Gallery

Operations Officer and Front of House

The Operations Officer at Latrobe Regional Gallery is responsible for managing the front of house team, managing bookings for the venue, managing the membership program, ensuring accessibility and maintenance of the building is up to standard, and managing the stock and presentation of the gallery shop.

The Front of House team is integral to the gallery as they are public facing and are the ones who encounter visitors and enquiries about the gallery on a day to day basis. The customer service they provide allows us to build a relationship with our visitors and contribute to them having a positive experience in the gallery each time they visit.

Front of House staff will take booking for programs, speak to visitors over the phone or in person about what is on in the gallery, sell items in the gift shop and help them with anything else they might need. They also gather data about our visitors including feedback they might have about the exhibitions, what demographic they might fit into (child, youth, adult, senior) and postcodes. This feedback enables the gallery to find out who our main audience is, where people are coming from and what areas need more consideration for planning of future exhibitions and public programs.



Image: Panel discussion with Ying Ang on the topic of motherhood, with Dr. Danielle Wagstaff and Debra Dorling, Friday 8 March, 2024. This public program took place at Latrobe Regional Gallery to coincide with Ying Ang's exhibition, *The Quickening*.

Student discussion questions - Roles in The Gallery

- Scenario: You are the Senior Gallery Technician at a public gallery and in the middle of the planning stages of an exhibition. Who are the main roles that you are working with, within the gallery?
- Scenario: You are Curator, curating an exhibition for later in the year which includes work from the permanent collection and borrowed work from artists and other galleries. What are some of the tasks you would be undertaking during the planning and development?
- In what ways might the events at a public gallery differ from the kinds of events held at an artist run space? You could use an example of an event held at each type of gallery to think about this. (e.g. Who is the target audience?)
- What other roles are there in galleries that haven't been explored in this resource? Do some research by looking at other galleries and see what you can find.
- Reflect: What role are you most interested in and why? What skills do you think you would need to work in that role? Share your answers with someone else.



Images: Latrobe Regional Gallery Technician, Michelle Prezioso, and Senior Gallery Technician, Christopher Miller, picture back of house in the artwork storage areas opening a painting rack and wrapping a sculpture.

Conservation

Conservation refers to the protection and care of any cultural material, which includes artworks. Conservation is commonly associated with restoration or treatment of damaged works, but conservation also encompasses preservation, or preventative conservation.

This includes:

- Condition reporting
- How the work is packaged for transport and specialised transport of the work to and from the gallery
- Artwork storage
- Handling procedures
- Environmental conditions such as the gallery humidity, temperature, and lighting



Images: Senior Gallery Technician, Christopher Miller, pictured back of house in the artwork storage areas, handling frames and boxed artwork.

Condition reporting involves close inspection of an artwork before it travels, when it arrives at the gallery, and again at the end of an exhibition to identify any existing damage and help ensure that it returns to the lender in the same condition. The person carrying out the condition report will look for different things depending on the medium.

Transport for an artwork often involves specially designed packaging and crates, particularly when a work is being transported long distances and across climates. This can be expensive and is something that must be factored into the exhibition budget. There are specialised artwork transport services that have temperature-controlled trucks with padding and securing systems, and professional art handlers to deliver the works onsite. When transporting across shorter distances, artworks are generally soft wrapped, which means first wrapping in a layer of acid free tissue or Tyvek, followed by bubble wrap.



Images: Senior Curator, David Ashely Kerr, moving artworks into the gallery space to prepare to install. He is moving the works with the A frame trolley.

Artwork Storage

Artwork storage is secure, temperature and humidity controlled like the gallery spaces. The gallery storage will usually be separated into areas related to the medium. Latrobe Regional Gallery has an objects store, a works on paper store, painting and sculpture, and a registration store. This is where work from the collection is stored when it is not on display. When an artwork is delivered it is placed in registration or the gallery in its crating and wrapping and left for 24 hours to acclimatise.

Handling

Only staff who have been trained to handle and install artworks will move the work around the space using A-frames or trolleys. There will normally also be some staff acting as spotters, who will help keep a clear path for the art handlers and guide them through the space. Art handlers work slowly, carefully, and carry the works from their strongest points when they are ready to move the work into position. Most often nitrile gloves are used to grip the works without transferring dirt and oils from the hands.

Environment

The recommended standards for the gallery environment is a temperature of around 20 degrees Celsius +/- 2 degrees, and a relative humidity of 50% +/- 10%. Whilst different mediums and materials have their own ideal environmental conditions, the gallery needs to be suitable for all work on display. It is important to prevent fluctuation in temperature and humidity, as constant changes of conditions are a detriment to the stability of the materials. Works on paper will become buckled, painted surfaces and frames can warp, and there is a greater chance of mould or corrosion occurring to the work. Organic materials are particularly vulnerable. Not only do these temperature and humidity levels suit most works, but they also make the space comfortable for visitors.

Conservation

Lighting

Lighting is adjusted to suit the curatorial vision but also has to be adjusted to preserve the artworks. Each material will have a different maximum lux, which is the unit of measurement for the light. The most light-sensitive works are works on paper and textiles. The maximum lux level for these works should be 50 lux. Paintings can be lit with a maximum of 250 lux, and objects made with glass and ceramic can have even higher lux levels. A light meter device is used to check the lux when lighting an exhibition. Adhering to these standards as closely as possible will prevent any fading and permanent discolouration from light exposure.



Images: Senior Gallery Technician, Christopher Miller, pictured back of house in the works on paper storage area, placing a Solander box in its designated spot.

Student discussion questions - Conservation

- What kind of preventative conservation methods can you identify being utilised in the Latrobe Regional Gallery exhibits or back of house in the storage areas?
- Choose a work on exhibition and try to envision how it would need to be moved and handled. Discuss with someone and exchange your answers.
- How does the storage of a work on paper differ from the storage requirement for a painting?
- Select an artwork from the Latrobe Regional Gallery Collection. What are some of the things that would need to be checked when completing a condition report? You can research some methods for condition reporting on different types of artwork to help with your answers.

Acknowledgements

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FREE ENTRY

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Opening Hours
Daily 10am to 4pm

Closed Anzac Day 2023

Closed annually from Christmas Eve
to New Year's Day, inclusive.

Latrobe Regional Gallery is
located on the traditional land of the
Brayakaulung people of the Gunaikurnai nation.
We pay respects to their Elders past and present.

