

Exclusivity

- by Always Art Staff

When you decide to work with a gallery or agent, some agreements and contracts will be exclusive. This means you are restricted to only selling your work through that channel and cannot sign multiple similar agreements to get business in other ways. When you are faced with this option, it can be a big decision, as it will determine the strategy of your career for the duration of that contract.

Here are some ideas to think about when you are considering exclusivity:

Is exclusivity the right choice for you?

Exclusivity has some benefits, like a guaranteed stream of income and increased exposure. But there are, of course, downsides, as well. Being exclusive with one organization can massively limit your opportunities to sell on the market and through various online or in-person channels. Reflect on your priorities, the significance of the institution offering you exclusivity, and your current financial and sales situation to determine if it is right for you. There is no one size fits all answer, so you will need to make the decision based on your career.

Have you read and understood the agreement in full?

Before you decide, and especially if you decide to become exclusive, read the full contract agreement and terms before you sign the document. Get help from a lawyer to fully understand the implications, time constraints, commission percentages, and more so that you can get an accurate picture of how the relationship would work and where you are and are not allowed to sell your artwork.

Weigh the pros and cons

As mentioned above, there are benefits and drawbacks to every option. For example, with exclusivity, you may gain more exposure or limit your exposure by closing down some distribution channels. Make sure you fully assess both sides of the coin before committing



and try to speak to other artists who have experience with these types of contracts to hear their perspectives and learn what has added or detracted from their careers.

Negotiate the terms

If you are considering agreeing to an exclusive contract, this doesn't mean you are disallowed from requesting changes to the contract. Consider what conditions you would need to make the agreement worthwhile, and feel free to request changes to the time period, commission percentage, and more. Maintain respect and professionalism in your interactions, but advocate for your needs.

Keep your options open, either way

Even if you are exclusive, find out where you are allowed to display and distribute work and keep an active presence on your own social media and website so that you have an audience, even when the contract ends. If something should fall through or go wrong, you don't want to feel as though you have put your full career in the hands of one organization and are now left starting from the ground up.



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