

April 29, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee,

In your emergency proclamation of March 16th, when you closed business such as bars and recreational facilities while prohibiting gatherings of 50+ people, you also included art museums and art galleries. Other non-essential businesses were closed a week later. We are writing to ask that you do not categorize art galleries with art museums or regular retail as you develop your plan to allow small businesses to re-open.

We believe that commercial art galleries are in the lowest risk category for re-opening. Our daily traffic flow is very low compared to shops or bookstores. Like museums, the public is not allowed to touch the art so the only surface contact would be doorknobs and restrooms, which are easily sanitized. Art galleries can support social distancing far more easily as we have open floor plans, allowing plenty of space for the few visitors we may have at any moment. We could also allow one party through at a time. Masks could be required and, of course, there would not be openings or gatherings until permitted.

To ensure the safety and health of our employees and patrons, we propose that galleries will:

- Keep minimal staffing of the physical gallery spaces to minimize exposure, and ensure appropriate separation of workspaces.
- Allow visitors in groups of two or fewer, per gallery space, following mandates and guidance issued State and City officials.
- Establish a guest per square foot ratio based on the size of exhibition spaces.
- Post signage asking that guests self-regulate by asking them to stay away if they present elevated temperatures, coughing, or other COVID symptoms.
- Increase daily cleaning regimens, and ensure frequent sanitization of high-touch surfaces such as countertops, pens, door handles, and shared office equipment. Our commercial gallery businesses are low-touch by nature. Clients are discouraged from touching artworks.
- Request that visitors wear masks when visiting, and require the use of hand sanitizer (provided by business) upon entry and exit.
- Enforce six-foot social distancing of people. Artworks are viewable by clients with gallerists outside of the six-foot radius.
- Provide low-touch delivery or pick-up of artworks. Galleries will clean and sanitize artwork and packaging.
- Cancel all community gatherings and opening events until State and City governments lift bans on social gatherings.

Art galleries are already struggling to stay open, particularly in Seattle where the cost of rent is prohibitive. We have seen a huge decline in commercial galleries in Seattle over the last 5 years. This leads not only to a great loss of culture for the general public but also diminished support for all our local artists. Each gallery not only employs its own staff but is also sending support money to all our artists through its sales.

We appreciate your consideration for the state of the arts here in Washington and your efforts to help us hang on to that richness that still remains.

With Appreciation,