

## Generous Blog

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Interview with Jill Schroeder of grayDUCK Gallery

Q: Why did you become a gallerist? How does your education (formal or otherwise) inform this?

JS: I studied art and was a practicing artist out of college. I continued to produce art while working in graphic design, branding and marketing. I was in the corporate world for over a decade and eventually work became my creative outlet. When I moved down to Austin I wanted to get back to my art roots. That's when all of my experiences from art and marketing seemed to make sense in running my own gallery.

Q: What are your various responsibilities? What does an average day or week look like? Are there daily things that help you keep up with your profession? This could be annual workshops/conferences, or just daily check ins with outside blogs/sites/social media?

JS: During an average week, I'm typically working on a number of future shows. I'm ironing out the details of the calendar and checking in with the artists that I have coming up to refine our PR and see how the general feel of the work is progressing on their end. I do my best to keep up with submissions and special events at the gallery, and I keep up with the gallery's social media and try to keep track of all the openings around town. The week before a new show is all about that opening, though. I'm resetting the gallery, patching and painting walls. I fine tune the layout of the show, hang it and light it. PR is in full swing, hopefully. That week, I try to stay focused on just the artist or artists in that show to make sure we're all happy with the way it looks.

Q: How do you discover new artists?

JS: I find a lot of artist through word of mouth from other artists and curators. I accept submissions online, and have found some great artists that way. I also still have strong connections to the art community in Minneapolis, so I pull from there quite a bit. I try to keep it even though by sending Austin artists to galleries up there.

Q: When you work with an artist on an exhibition, what are the responsibilities of gallerist vs. artist?

JS: Gallerist: The way I see it, the artist's job is to execute their work as closely to their vision as they can. We'll work together ahead of time to decide upon the body of work that we envision for the show to keep it somewhat cohesive or to tell a story. But it's really up to the artist to develop the series, a cohesive group of pieces. My job is to promote and display the artist's work and to advocate for them as an artist. This isn't typically hard, because by the time someone has a show here, I'm a fan of theirs and have learned something about their process and vision. While designing the layout for the show, I work with the artist and do my best to elevate the art. Moving these pieces from an artist's studio where they're probably working on one or two pieces at a time into Grayduck where we have the room to spread everything out and create groupings and space often brings the art closer to its full potential. Pieces are able to interact with each other, and viewers get to see the artist's vision and story. This is also my goal with two person or small group shows. When I select artists to show together in the space, it is my intention for the art to either contrast or relate and hopefully elevate all of the work. Another part of my job is to try to place the art with a buyer. I think even more important than having a gallery show for many artists is to see their work being added to someone's collection to display and enjoy in their home. I don't feel that the responsibility of selling is solely the gallery's, in fact I don't even believe that it's the primary goal of Grayduck. My goal is to get as many people as possible to see the art in the best light possible and if they love it, they should consider taking it home.

Q: How does one establish a relationship with a gallerist?

JS: Visit the gallery and chat with them about the show that is currently up. Go to all the Austin art openings and chat with them there. Meet them through your network of artists.

Q: In some situations a curator and an art gallerist work together. Have you produced exhibits this way?

JS: Yes, I've invited guest curators to curate shows at the gallery. Each curator is different to work with and responsibilities vary between each party. Some curators chose and curated the show and others just wanted to chose the artists and handed off the curation to me.

Q: What do you look for in the work of a new artist? What do you look for in the work of a returning artist?

JS: When meeting an artist who's work I haven't seen before, I look for craftsmanship, a well executed idea, and a developed vision. For artists that I'm considering showing again, a lot of it comes down to how easy it was to work with them the first time. Do they have a strong work ethic? Did they meet deadlines? Did they communicate? Also, I'm looking for a reason to show them again. Has their work developed? Is this something new for them?

Q: How many of your buyers are returning customers? How do art buyers build their collections?

JS: I'd estimate that about 30% of my sales are to return buyers. I've been pleasantly surprised by how many artists buy from the gallery. Typically they're buying work of an artists that they are unfamiliar with. Art buyers probably build their collections in many different ways, but the ones I typically sell to are buying the art that they fall in love with. They are not typically looking for a specific piece for a specific wall, although I have had some sales like that. I really enjoy selling to new art collectors, or to someone who has never bought art before.

Q: How do you decide what curatorial jobs -- exhibitions, juried shows, gallery shows -- to take on outside your gallery responsibilities?

JS: If I have the time, I'm happy to contribute in any way I can.

Q: How can artists be better, easier, or more professional to work with to make your job easier?

JS: Communication is so important. I try to cover all the bases but if I miss something, I need the artist to speak up. Time management is up there too. It makes things smoother when all info, images and work is ready to go. We have a pretty quick turn around at the gallery. We typically close a show on a Sunday and have the new opening that Friday. It takes teamwork with the artists to make that possible.

Q: What do you hope for when you promote an artist? What is an example of a good relationship?

JS: My biggest joy is when an artist gets exposure from a show here that helps them move to the next level of their career. I view the the relationship between gallery and artist to be symbiotic. In fact, I believe that extends to the entire art community. If the local galleries are well supported, then local artist do well and vice versa.



Gallerist Jill Schroeder of grayDUCK Gallery