

Hello and welcome to Down to Art I'm your host Kristy Gordon and today I'll be talking about University galleries with Ron Lambert so Ron is a video and sculpture artist who investigates the intersection between psychology and the environment he has a huge host of solo exhibitions and other exhibitions that he's participated in and he's currently an assistant professor at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania so welcome Ron it's so good to have you well thanks Christy thanks for having me it's great to see you again it's so good to see you again too yeah it was really exciting because when we were at the Vermont Studio Center residency just in passing you mentioned that a lot of the shows that you've been in are like these University Gallery shows which really struck me because I know those are really good venues and I hadn't like really considered uh the possibility before um yeah what shows which university galleries have you been in uh there's been a number of them recently uh last year I did a show at Binghamton University um I think next year I'm doing a show at Marshall in West Virginia um University of San Antonio or University of Texas and San Antonio wow um quite a number of them I mean there there's there are so many universities in the United States and all of them or most all of them have some Gallery as long as there's an art Department associated with them um so there's a lot to choose from it's like amazing it opens up a lot of possibilities and they're good shows like it's like a solo Exhibition at a really nice gallery and um yeah and where do you find out about this shows like the open calls and stuff um sometimes it's Word of Mouth like uh I think the universe the San Antonio one uh someone I knew from Nashville teachers there now and just posted on her Facebook that they're doing the call so sometimes it's sort of more organic like that but a lot of the places that I look are the college Art association's website uh universities can post um any calls for entries that they have for free so there's quite a lot out there and it's you know college our association is all wrapped up in the Academia of art so they um you know a lot of people are looking there that teach um NYFA's website (nyfa.org) will have some oh you know so that'll be a little bit more New York Centric um and then in Philadelphia There's a site called in liquid that sometimes has it although there's kind of less you know universities that post stuff there um and then sometimes it's just like people that will just like I'll meet that teach and then they just ask so not all the university galleries will do calls um it just depends on what system they came up with that's interesting yeah I've definitely checked out knife fun after talking YouTube I checked out the College art association website and actually there's a lot of calls like it opens up a whole new world of possibilities um and actually there's a lot of art opportunity calls like lots of other shows listed I I like totally hadn't even realized so that's like a really good resource it's great um you know and it's sort of when you do it for a while you realize there's like uh it comes and goes look at Cycles based on like you know you figure like a semester starting and faculty like start to get ambitious and do the call and then it sort of tapers off and then it comes back in another you know next semester so it's it you know in the summer there won't be as many because it's you know it's all based around the academic calendar true oh that's good to know yeah I never even like thought of that yeah yeah when we're feeling ambitious enough to yeah we're supposed to be doing but yeah that's like really good to know like about the Cycles um and like and well you've gotten into a ton of them so immediately I started like asking you about how you write these proposals because I'm pretty familiar at you know getting into like commercial Galleries and just sending a cover letter and CV and statement or whatever um but I've always had the sense that when it's like called like a proposal that there's like a certain flavor to these things that I haven't really

gotten down and like um it was I actually I know I kind of got a chance to see one of your proposals and it really helped me because I could see I was right there's certain components to the proposal it seems like you're kind of definitely talking about your work it's kind of statement to you but then you're also I think it was really smooth the way you talk specifically about some of the pieces that you've actually submitted you know and how it ties into the theme I don't know I really thought that was useful and then you were giving like a clear explanation of what you want the exhibition to be so it's like some of the work that I've submitted as well as work that I'll be doing up until the show um what other like thoughts and theories do you have about writing these proposals uh I think like kind of the most important thing is just follow their instructions to the T um you know like some of it has to do with like um like if you're emailing The Proposal you know sometimes people like try to email like two larger two larger images or two big documents and then ends up like being in several emails and then things get lost so um but a lot of them are doing you know upload sites now um but they do like I mean all the academi I think it's just sort of stickler for the rules in a sense so like if you know there's specific image sizes or the number of images um or or you know what sometimes they want an artist statement sometimes they want to bio sometimes they just want um you know a statement of intent um and also things like the length of your CV um you know they they really I think want things to be the way they want them uh which does take a little bit more time because you can you know you try to have this thing set up that you're gonna uh send out and you have to like tailor each one but that's really important um and like you're saying I I think it's good to kind of give it's clear a picture of what you might want to do um because then they can kind of see what they're going to get um you know and some of them like at Art Gallery here at Bloomsburg University we we've kind of gotten off track with after covid but we would do a call every two years and then fill those two years out so we may be a little bit more um no we wouldn't necessarily make people stick to exactly what they proposed but um you know the first year we'd be you know we kind of assumed that we're going to get what they say and then the second year it's been long enough that maybe they have new work and so that becomes more of a dialogue so I don't necessarily think that you have to like um you have to think that exactly what you proposed is what's going to happen there usually some give and take with uh the gallery director whoever's in charge that's like a really good point um like and yeah and so just giving them a clear picture so it seems like we know exactly what we're like planning on doing and then knowing that it's okay if it shifts a little bit kind of thing yeah yeah in some sense it's maybe like um just providing enough information that that they're confident that you're going to do something right like totally because um you know they need to fill in the schedule and most of the time you know they're uh gonna make a schedule for at least a year maybe two and so they they want to be able to you know make sure it stays consistent so they can publish it yeah that that makes total sense um and I think I remember you saying too it's good to tie in if you kind of look at the admission statement of the university and maybe tie in something about their location or their mission statement in some way into your proposal yeah good yeah yeah like I mean mostly like universities mission statements are just you know about educating the students um so I usually try to think about what um what it is I could bring to the table like as far as like you know content or materials or something like that um sometimes uh you know I'll try to give give a suggestion of why I think Their audience might be interested you know like so if I'm I'm you know doing work about um my sort of uh

ideas of living in rural Pennsylvania then um you know if I'm gonna go to like a gallery in Kentucky or something like I can sort of say like why I think these ideas might translate because the audience isn't going to be all that much different um that's really interesting you know sometimes you can do the opposite and say like you know the the contrast of my work being you know being made in rural Pennsylvania might be interesting to an urban crowd who who has a different point of view right yeah totally oh that's really smart it's hard if I haven't been to the place and I don't know maybe I could do some like research that's like very smart and you had a chance I think you said for a little while that you were maybe kind of running the gallery um or or maybe helping choose like uh at the Bloomsburg University yeah just for a year I guess we opened a gallery on Main Street and uh we didn't have it took a really long time to actually get it to open so it was like two years behind what we thought and so we just kind of gave up on on actually planning because we were like well you know uh you know I don't know when it's gonna happen so uh when it did open I just sort of took it on and wanted to schedule shows um and at that point it was so like behind schedule like you know I was just asking people to show I curated you know kind of a couple thematic shows and most of them were Regional artists just because we didn't have a budget either so I I couldn't I didn't feel right about like asking if somebody put a lot of money into being in one of these shows yeah and uh after that is when uh we went back to adding that into the the call for for proposals oh interesting so you had sort of had like proposals and then you kind of had a backlog and so you went back and selected some people when the the gallery kind of finally opened or whatever is that what you're um I think it just it just coincided with when we were gonna do the national call anyways and so um and they ended up like switching uh Scott Roper was our Gallery director for the hostel or on campus so I ended up like changing his job duties so that he was in charge of both so we just ran that together um that's cool so then but you got a chance to kind of be like making some selections um and so yeah that must have kind of helped you like tailor how best to write these things yeah yeah kind of imagine I do I've done curating on and off for um you know for a while I curated some shows at the Cheekwood Museum when I lived in Nashville oh cool um for the first I guess four or five years of its existence I was the president of the Kook Gallery in Nashville oh wow I read about that oh yeah that well on your CV or in your bio that you like founded that I wasn't sure exactly like um too much information about it that but that stood out yeah it's an artist run space and it's still going I think it's all different people because it's been announced over 10 years now I think whoa so originally it was just a bunch of uh you know my friends of mine and colleagues and other artists in the city that we kind of got together and started it and since I was the one that was like really pushing for it to happen I got to be president so I guess be careful no that's like really cool yeah I feel like that kind of experience does um help us like understand how to kind of like write yeah write these things and just like present the information that we're trying to like get across in a way that people who aren't familiar with it will understand and stuff like that which is maybe the yeah it also helps with like knowing what not to do oh that's a good one what not to do tell us that well I mean it a lot of these like a lot of the governors on campus we have a gallery director but a lot of galleries um I mean some just have like a curator like Bucknell who's about 45 minutes from me like they have uh a curator for their Museum and so it's not really run by faculty but then a lot of them are just like some it's like the gallery is some faculties extra Duty and so you know

they they might be kind of uh overworked at the point when your show comes up yeah so you just want to make sure like I always try not to be any more of a burden untowling

totally yeah that's definitely similar to my Approach with galleries like commercial galleries like you don't want to be high maintenance of course it's an equal relationship and everything but like you also try and keep it to short emails to the point nothing overwhelming yeah [Music] that's interesting and how do you find like because if I'm starting to like look around at the University galleries I'm definitely going to apply to the Bloomsburg show that I think you guys have an open call I'm excited about that but um how do you kind of like navigate finding your way through all the university galleries like do you think about that or just apply to all of them I mean I'll probably just apply to all of them but as far as trying to understand like whether you think it's like a really good gallery for you or whether whatever like it's maybe not such an important one to apply to or that yeah yeah that's a good I mean that's a good thing to bring up because um you know you want to be worthwhile for for both parties right like you know you don't want to just waste your time on putting up a show that uh isn't going to look good or isn't gonna you know be valuable to your career either um totally so usually I mean they're kind of generally you know University galleries are off the radar of like um reviews right like um most universities I think the majority of them are sort of outside of major um art scenes so there's there's probably not going to be an art writer even if it's in the local paper and you know certainly the the larger art magazines aren't aren't bothering to to run around the country finding these galleries yeah um so it's usually like the ones that do get reviewed would be like ones in major markets already like you know Philadelphia or um New York City of course and um New Haven because Yale you know Yale will get written about um so so usually it's just internet research like I'm looking at past shows like who they've shown what kind of work they've shown um so that might give me a clue like if they show if they only show like work that's uh really different from my work then they're probably just not going to be interested in my work so maybe I won't bother to right yeah um and I want to make sure that if if usually you can find like like through Google search um people have shown there in the past and you might you might link to like their Facebook page or Instagram or something um so then you can get a sense of what the gallery looks like and make sure that it's it's going to show your work well right like if it's got good yeah and it varies like some of the older schools will still have like that carpeting all over the wall and stuff really yeah I mean it just depends on budget and whether they've been able to find money to update things so you know that's kind of important to make sure that your work's going to look good yeah I think carpeting on the wall for my work would look pretty weird yeah I guess it was a way to change over shows and not have to fill holes in the walls because they just can't stop people that does make sense yeah that does make sense but no those are like good tricks it's sort of like figuring out what type of get like what type of work they show and what the kind of like uh how the gallery kind of positions itself and stuff like that yeah yeah you might you know sometimes I'll look at the The Faculty like if it um true they may or may not have a say you know or maybe some of them like sometimes they'll be like a committee to work on the gallery so then not all the faculty will be involved um but you know like if it seems like you have a kindred spirit with like the painting Professor like you could say well maybe they'd like my work right so that oh that's smart what's your chances a little bit um and also like um well I was just looking at our show schedule from 2021 because I had the

paper nearest and you know we have we only have slots for like six five or six shows over a two-year period wow um so it's you know uh sometimes I'll look and say like well they've just showed this person whose work looks kind of like mine they might not want me now so maybe right put that proposal on hold for a year or two you know that's that's true it's like you want it to look to fit sort of within what they show but not too closely so that it's like too repetitive or something also that's really not very many shows over two years how long do the shows stay open like um no there's like there's other shows that happen like students in the Galleries and then we have one alumni slot and then in the summer nobody's here so we don't you know we might put like a faculty in in one of the guys for the summer because yeah um you know we only have so much budget so if we're spending money on a show that none of the students are gonna be around to see it doesn't really make sense totally so it limit that limits it but um usually the shows run like a month and a half oh that's like a good length though yeah oh that that's cool it's neat to hear more about the structure I hadn't really thought about like how the faculty might be sort of closely tied to the gallery in some way like not all the time but yeah I hadn't even really thought about that and how like the gallery is like kind of sort of being used to educate the students a little bit too it's like those are interesting points I hadn't thought of that yeah there's usually uh there's usually a mission statement with the galleries whether or not you'll find it or whether it just sits in like University paperwork you won't know but right right um like our gallery on campus is specifically like supposed to be an educational tool like to bring in artists so the students have more exposure and since we you know aren't very close I mean we're about three hours from New York City you know we can't expect them to go there all the time uh so so that's that's Mission but then the one in town is it's about like um offering something to the Greater Community of the town so um yeah really good to know uh because you know those might not be online but it's like really useful to kind of think about I can imagine a lot of University galleries might have a mission statement like that too so that's yeah good yeah it's all tied up with accreditation we have to justify all these things and so it's it lives somewhere but whether to show it or not yeah that's very interesting um and then like what are the main components of a university show like I know you mentioned before there's often artist talk that someone will give in the show's like a month or a month and a half long and maybe there's a like an artist fee those kind of things what yeah what are some of the components yeah pretty often there'll be um you know an artist talk that usually coincides with a reception or something um and this will all sort of be in the contract when you know like when they offer the show they'll send you a contract and it'll State all this stuff um sometimes like uh you know uh you'll do like Studio visits with like seniors or something like that oh cool so that's fun yeah and occasionally and I I don't think I've ever done this but I've heard that sometimes they'll want you to do like a uh you know material demo or something like oh cool yeah yeah um and then as far as fees go like that is all over the map like sometimes um you know I would definitely read the contract and make sure that you know you know you're not going to go to in the whole by doing these shows um sometimes they'll have like some kind of stipend and um uh sometimes they'll have an extra amount of money to help with shipping oh sweet but it's it all kind of depends on what their budget is and yeah a lot of budgets now are you know I'm hearing from a lot of people are getting cut because of this sort of this dip in students both after covid but then there's this kind of larger drop-off that's going to happen in the next couple years where basically the beginning of the recession people put off having kids

and so now the kids that would have been born at the beginning of the recession um you know would be going to college and so there's a big drop off so everybody's real nervous about budgets right now oh um whoa I didn't know anything about that yeah that sucks I mean the uh the thing is like I think a lot of the University galleries most of the people we show are Educators and so we kind of use each other like us Educators need lines on our resume for promotion and um you know if you're going for tenure you need to have like that's your research is doing your work and showing and the university galleries need people that um you know can do the show and sometimes do the show for no money so that's why I like you know they can count on finding some faculty somewhere to do these shows that's interesting do you think they like to see that the person is like teaching at another University too like aside from the fact that they might only they might be able to afford it because they've got a good job somewhere but well they also sometimes like I can get money if I can get all my you know if I can get everything together um with enough Headroom I can get money from my college yeah do research so I can write a grant or something um so that's another another way that I finagle it um I don't know I don't know that they like we certainly wouldn't um care whether someone is a faculty or isn't um it just happens that most of the people who apply are yeah no that's interesting I did notice a lot of people at the Vermont Studio Center too were like um you know in Academia and had managed to get their University to fund some of it which sounds good yeah

um yeah I don't know I almost can't think of too much else can you think of anything else uh well I mean like I was kind of start you know I mentioned that there's only like you know five or six slots for our galleries um so I would just say like when you're applying for these things because there's so many variables that don't um you know don't get down on yourself if you don't get chosen because there's so many reasons that aren't out of your control and it really doesn't necessarily have to do with the quality of the work as much as just the limitation in space and the need to vary the shows like yeah you know if I just my own taste like I would probably have a lot more sculpture shows in our our Gallery but that doesn't help the other disciplines right like so yeah you know if you have five shows that's basic that's like basically like one in each discipline in two years totally that's that's like a really good point I feel like that like is kind of the case with all open calls we have to like remember that as artists because it's it's easy I think like after a while like probably you and me hardly notice when we get rejections but I think a lot of people just like starting out can put a lot of weight on it and even stop applying to things because it just feels so bad like but after a while like um I don't really notice I just apply to things and I hardly notice if I ever hear back from them yeah one of my tactics I think was to apply to so much stuff that when you get a rejection you don't remember that you actually applied exactly yeah totally yeah now I think that's like the way to do it yeah wow well this is like so exciting I'm like kind of just like blown away by this whole world of like interesting opportunity that had totally escaped me and I'm excited to like dive into it and I'm so glad to have gotten a chance to talk to you about all of this and yeah just so grateful for um all of your like insights into this well yeah and thanks thanks again for having me on um it's it's always great to catch up a little bit yeah I agree I can't wait to follow more of your shows and see see all that you do and definitely like keep in touch yeah you as well yeah well thank you so much for joining us thanks for having me talk to you soon bye I hope you've enjoyed this episode of

down to Art and if you're interested in any of my classes or seeing my paintings you can check out my work at christygordon.com or look at the online classes I have at kristygordoncourses.com where you can learn about my online art mentoring program as well as the different streamed online classes that I have if you've never taken any of my classes I would suggest you start with the self-portrait class so thank you for joining us today