

INVENTORY NUMBER

You can devise your own tracking number system, especially if you have similar or repeating titles, such as “Untitled.”

Many times if you are working with a gallery that has your work on consignment, it will also have its own internal inventory system. We recommend keeping track of your own inventory numbers as well as ones that have been assigned to your work. Here is a suggestion for an inventory format:

The first number should be the last two digits of the year the work is completed. 03 for 2003, or use the full year. The next letter should define a category. For example:

P = Painting S = Sculpture E = Edition

V = Video F = Photo M = Media

PR = Print C = Ceramic TX = Textile

D = Drawing PF = Performance I = Installation

WEB = Web DS = Design PUB = Public Work

Then include a number for each item corresponding to the number of works of that media made in that year.

Consider a painting might be numbered “13P-023.” This would be the 23rd painting done in 2013.

If you have an edition, you can add yet another set of numbers. For instance, it might be labelled “13E-002-21.” This would be the 2nd print done in 2013, and the edition number is 21.

MORE INVENTORY NUMBER OPTIONS

You can also consider adding other elements to this inventory system, like your initials, which can help you differentiate your art from work made with collaborators or other entities like galleries you are a part of or run yourself. This is one way to use the GYST database to manage multiple artist’s work. For example, let’s say my name is John Artsy but I run a gallery that shows the artist Tucker Neel. For his work I would enter the inventory number “TN14D-022.” This would be the 22nd drawing made by Tucker Neel in 2014.

Let’s say you are part of an art collective called Station. The Number “STAT07PR-05” would be the 5th Print made by the collaborative Station in 2007.

If you wanted to archive work shown as part of an exhibition put on by a gallery you run or collaborate with then you would enter the work in the following manner: The Number

“323PROJMED13-04” would be the 4th multimedia show made by the gallery 323 Projects in 2013.

TITLE

This should include the complete title of the artwork. If you have a tendency to title your works with a lot of text, this is a good place to keep track of it.

CATEGORY

List the medium or other descriptive title. This is very useful for doing searches for all your paintings, for instance. Categories can include the traditional art mediums, such as paintings or sculptures as well as non-traditional mediums, such as social practice projects or installations.

DATE CREATED

This can be the exact date the work is finished, or just the month and year.

SIGNATURE

Describe if the work is signed or not signed. If applicable, also indicate where it is signed (e.g. recto, or verso). If the work is accompanied by a letter of authenticity and state those details in this section.

MEDIUM(S)

Add the various mediums that you used to create the work. This information is vital especially if you use unique materials and techniques to produce your work. These details can also be useful in keyword searches if using a computer inventory program.

DIMENSIONS

This should include the height, width, and depth of the work, respectively. Or use the term “variable” for an installation, the duration of a video or performance work. Be sure to indicate the unit of measure so as not to confuse yourself or a potential client in the future. Be clear with your measuring format if you are using inches, feet, centimeters, or another unit of measure.

Use separate areas for framed and unframed dimensions. This is very important in order for you or a curator to know how large a work is in relation to its frame. A work that is substantially smaller than the frame speaks to a presentation style different than

that of a work framed to the very edge. This information is also important because many times artists photograph their work before it goes off to the framer. The images might depict the unframed work, however the art exists in your inventory framed.

EDITION

Include the number of editions of this work. Details can be included in the description section.

STATUS

Keep track of what work is sold, what is available, and who you have given work to as a gift. Other categories can include NFS or not for sale, donated, destroyed, etc.

CONDITION

Frequently update condition reports (see Chapter 10) on all of your inventory. Is the work damaged? Where and by whom was it damaged?

DESCRIPTION

Describe the artwork visually and conceptually for tracking and for archival purposes. This is especially important for kinetic or participatory work, social practice projects, installations, video, and performance. A static image can only explain so much, supplemental text may be needed. This will also be useful for a future retrospective exhibitions or research on your practice.

EXPENSES

Keep track of your expenses for each artwork so you know how to set the price, or for tax purposes.

LOCATION

Know where your artwork is at all times. Is it on a shelf in your studio, consigned to a gallery, under the bed, or in an exhibition in Europe?

COLLECTION

Keep track of who owns your work. If it is resold to another buyer you can track who owns it (if anyone tells you they sold it). See Resale Royalties Act in CA. This does not

usually contain a list of everyone such as your great aunt, but those collectors who own a specific collection.

PRICES

Keep track of who sold the work and when it was sold. Include how much you received for the work, and when you were paid. This is important for future pricing of work as well as changes in pricing from venue to venue. You should also keep track of internal wholesale prices to understand how much the work is valued as well as retail prices for how much it will sell on the public market.