

Gallery Night Goes Virtual

Gallery Night Providence found a creative solution to COVID restrictions by performing a quick pivot from in-person to virtual. They have now hit their stride on Facebook Live with an engaging format that takes viewers on a virtual trolley ride through Providence. “We didn’t miss a single Gallery Night,” said Shari Weinberger, Gallery Night president.

Alyssa Ann Heller, Gallery Night executive director, explained how it works: “I arrive at a gallery to interview the director or the artist on Facebook Live for 10 minutes. Once time is up, I flip it over to Kelly Brown (Gallery Night’s social media manager) who is waiting at the next gallery. While she is broadcasting, I drive to the following gallery. We continue to tag-team across the city.” After a few months, the event became so successful that Gallery Night’s social media roots increased a thousand fold.

How did Gallery Night manage to expand attendance, while so many in-person events went under? “Before COVID, we could fit 25 people per trolley,” Weinberger told us. “But for Virtual Gallery Night, anyone can access our Facebook Live videos from their devices, in the comfort and safety of their own homes.” Gallery Night now reaches across the country, from NY to LA, even to Canada, countries in Europe, India and Taiwan. Virtual Gallery Night has become such a hit that it will likely become a permanent fixture, allowing those who have a difficult time getting out to stay connected with the Providence art scene. The South Side Cultural Center on Broad Street, a new member to Gallery Night, has also opened the door to a new culturally diverse audience. “At least 38% of our population in Providence is Hispanic, and we want to reach them,” said Heller. She has grants in the works to fund bilingual tours.

2021 is Gallery Night’s 25th Anniversary Year, and Weinberger is optimistic about the future. “Our motto is Art For Everyone. This COVID experience has actually helped us to reach out. It’s not limited by ability or mobility - virtually anyone can participate.”

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