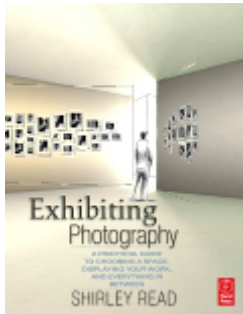




## Tips on presenting text with images at exhibitions

Adapted from: *Exhibiting Photography* By Shirley Read



One of the most neglected areas of exhibition preparation is generally the text. This is often because photographers see themselves as visual rather than verbal people and either dislike writing or ignore its importance in showing the work. But exhibitions almost always entail a certain amount of textual material and it is well worth learning to produce good text or the text can let down the rest of the show. Learning to write well about your work often goes hand in hand with learning to speak well about it and is a very useful skill to develop. The texts for an exhibition can include:

- **an introduction to the exhibition and texts that accompany the images or different sections of the exhibition**
- **artist's statement(s)**
- **titles**
- **captions**

There are many books on the market about how to write well; it's a big topic. But some basic guidelines about writing text for an exhibition are as follows:

- **Keep text short.** Too many words will be seen as privileging the text over the images and will distract the audience from the artwork.
- **Keep text as straightforward and jargon free as possible.**
- **Make sure that basic and essential information is covered**—places, dates, and names are usually important to the audience (even if they are unnecessary to an understanding of the images).
- **Do not try to influence the reading of the work, critique it, interpret it, or describe what is in the images.** All these things get between the audience and their experience of the work.

- **Avoid emotive words and keep an objective tone.** If the work is emotional, it will be undermined by the use of an emotional text.
- **Avoid intimate personal statements.** It is possible to present very personal work and still keep your privacy if the text is impersonal.

Think for a moment about your reaction to the text in an exhibition. Do you read text first or last? Do you feel unable to look at the exhibition until you have read all the accompanying texts? Do you look at an image and then at the caption, or vice versa? How different would the exhibition experience be if no text were provided?