



## Tips for Artists – Open Studios Hosting

### PREPARING FOR YOUR OPEN STUDIO

29th May 2015 by Julie Caves <https://www.jacksonsart.com/blog/2015/05/29/preparing-for-your-open-studios/>

It is the time of year when many artists are preparing for an Open Studios event. Here are tips and guidelines for a successful Open Studios experience. I have participated in Open Studios in a number of locations with very different types of visitors. I have always been in a studio complex of some sort with a number of artists each in their own space, (whereas for some Open Studios events artists will be opening their individual home studios). I have participated in Open Studios that have been part of a large Art Trail, a smaller Art Trail or just the studio complex alone. Every year I make a long checklist in the run up to the event to make sure I don't forget anything and a few times I was on the organising committee so had an additional checklist to take care of as well. I have spoken to many artists about their experiences and seen how other people do it. I have compiled all of this into some more lists.

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#### Some things to keep in mind when preparing for your Open Studios

##### What you might gain from participating in an Open Studios event:

- Sales from your studio (for some events the sales are few and mostly of low-priced items).
- Contacts with artists and curators for future projects.
- Contacts with collectors for future sales.
- Feedback and discussion about your current work.
- A deadline to encourage you to finish work.
- Reflection on your work as you decide what to show from the past year.
- The benefit of a thorough tidy to your space.
- Catching up with the other artists in your studio building, between visitors.
- Time to visit with friends and collectors.

##### Things to consider when preparing for your Open Studios event:

- Start planning early and craft a good listing for the printed Art Trail guide, if you are doing that. Often your on-line listing for an art trail has room for much more information than the printed guide, be sure to craft a good profile there, too.
- If you have gallery representation don't forget to let your gallery know you are participating in an Open Studios event and follow your contractual obligations regarding sales from your studio.
- If you are showing in your home it is safer to have a helper. They can also be of help if you have a sale or a rush of people to talk to and for lunch breaks.
- Remember that your Art Trail map will guide the visitor to your street but you may need to help them find your door with an A-board or banner.

##### For the art:

- Finish making work early. Leave time for oil paintings to dry, for instance. Pick a day to stop making so you can start on the rest of the stuff.
- Select the work you will show. Show only the best, old or new. Maybe get help choosing from someone whose opinion you trust. Have various price points. Show enough work to be full and interesting but not so much that it will be crowded.

- Attach hanging hardware if needed or if it is 3D work make or repaint plinths.
- Document the work in case it sells and you can't later. Photograph your work, create titles, assign prices and add to your records.
- Clearly label the artwork and price it if it's for sale – everyone recommends this.
- Think about your pricing.  
Some artists sell at wholesale prices during their open studio but most artists do not sell cheaper at their open studios than they would anywhere else. Selling at the wholesale price undermines your retail prices and can confuse collectors and curators as to your price range. Also the expenses of the event will need to be covered and that is in the retail half of the price. (If you have a gallery, never undercut them.)
- Some artists cover their costs of the event by selling greetings cards or small prints of their work. The type of Open Studios event it is and the location will have an effect on how much people are willing to spend on impulse.
- Frame works on paper if appropriate.
- Maybe use a print browser and easels for display.

#### For the space:

- Remove old screws from walls and patch and paint. Scrub the floor. Tidy and pack away. It's about making it welcoming and pleasant and making the art look good.
- Traffic flow: imagine your space with a lot of people in it. Is there room to move around? Is it dangerous for visitors or children?
- People love to see how things are made, but you can't demonstrate making and still chat with your guests at the same time, so consider displaying in-progress work with an information card. If you choose a good example of a stage in your process it will also help you answer visitors questions, as you have something to point to.
- Consider putting out a sketchbook for people to look through or a portfolio of past work.
- Put out free postcards with an image of your work and contact details or business cards.
- Visitors book/ mailing list sign-up.
- Artist Statement and CV – have a copy out for people to read and a few extras to give with purchases.
- If you are in a building with many artists a door sign with your name and contact details is useful for people to find you.
- Have bubble wrap and tape for packaging sold work. A receipt book and change.
- Wear a name tag (this is mentioned by so many artists), for your assistants also.
- Make sure the work is well lit and easy to see.
- Cordon off areas that are off limits (I use a few white sheets as drapery.)
- Chairs for resting or visiting. Water and snacks will be welcome if people are travelling around many spaces, but a banquet is distracting.
- Have Trail guides to give out to help people on their way to the next venue.

#### For publicity:

- Invite everyone! Use your mailing list. Tell people. I have participated in many exhibitions and events where a surprising number of people do not even tell anyone they are in the show. The biggest challenge for most events is getting visitors, so spend some time getting the word out. After you have done all the artwork and all the event organising it would be a shame to have few visitors.
- Send out a press release. Announce/post show everywhere.
- Create a Facebook event page. Tweet/post regularly. Put the full information on your website or blog. Photograph your space when it is all set up to use on social media for publicity.

#### Don't forget:

- Be prepared to talk about your work and about the story behind each piece. Be prepared with answers to awkward questions like: "How long did it take to make?", "Why does it cost so much?", "What does

it mean?”, “Can I pay in installments?”, “Can I get a discount?”, “Do you take special orders?”, “I don’t understand art/my child could make that”. Sometimes they are genuinely interested and don’t know how to get the conversation started. If you have thought about them in advance then you can give considered answers or direct the conversation the way you want it to go.

- Be friendly to everyone. Introduce yourself to strangers. Acknowledge new visitors if you’re busy. Avoid being monopolised.
- After you’ve made a sale get all your new collector’s contact info. A form to fill out with a few questions has been suggested.
- Update your website in advance as you should get many new visitors right after the Open Studios, if you have given out cards.
- Get contents/liability insurance sorted, if necessary.

### **Afterwards**

- Debrief as soon as it is over and make notes for next year or you will forget something that you thought was such a revelation that you couldn’t forget it.
- Save signage if you can reuse it.
- Follow up on all commissions and obligations right away.
- Email your new mailing list sign-ups to welcome them.
- And...relax.

## **Top Tips for a Successful Open Studio**

([HTTPS://WWW.ARTSYSHARK.COM/2013/12/10/TOP-TIPS-FOR-A-SUCCESSFUL-OPEN-STUDIO/](https://www.artsyshark.com/2013/12/10/top-tips-for-a-successful-open-studio/))

Is an open studio your next successful art event? **Melinda Cootsona** is a recognized authority in staging a successful Open Studio. Over the last 11 years she has hosted over 15 Open Studios, routinely grossing as much as \$20,000. Her book **Open Your Studio: Nine Steps to A Successful Art Event** has been a #1 bestseller

on Amazon. She shares information and insights about hosting these events.



Open Studios are a wonderful way to begin and augment your artistic career. For those of you who are thinking of participating but are uncertain, let me encourage you to do so. Open Studios can be a very rewarding event and a great transition to becoming a “professional” or full-time artist. Here are a few helpful hints for both new and experienced Open Studio participants including the top two mistakes that I see many artists make. Let’s start by getting the mistakes out of the way:

### ***#1 Mistake at Open Studio Events: Inconsistent and/or Inappropriate Pricing***

Let’s face it: most artists hate putting a price on their work. Emotionally it feels like taking a loved one and turning them into a product. But in order to actually sell our work, it’s a step we must take. Getting the right price for your art is a big key to your sales, so take a deep breath and begin to *look at your work objectively*.

Too often artists either overprice, or surprisingly, underprice their work. And very frequently their pricing is inconsistent. Paintings (for example) of similar size and subject can vary by hundreds of dollars, which will completely confuse a potential buyer. Typically this discrepancy is because the artist has priced their work emotionally instead of objectively.

The easiest way to objectively price two-dimensional work is by size. This step is clearly and simply outlined in my book, **Open Your Studio – Nine Steps to a Successful Art Event**. Options for other mediums are also included, but *the most important concept for everyone to remember is to price your work appropriately and consistently.*

## **#2 Mistake at Open Studio Events: Lack of Artist Interaction With The Public**

I know, I know, we paint, throw clay, bead, weld, design, draw, glue, and shoot film; if we wanted to use words to describe what we do we'd be writers! Unfortunately, in most circumstances, art does not sell itself. In my seminars I have found that many artists are shy about speaking with the public. If you have similar feelings, you are not alone. However, now IS the time to talk about what you do.

Very often the best “sales pitch” is to simply talk about your work and inform the potential buyer about some part of your process. *The important concept here is to engage with your visitors.* Find a story or technical aspect of your work to share that you can comfortably discuss. Stories sell art. You may even consider posting a story next to your work about why or how you created it. Consider having friends or relatives on hand who can also help you communicate with your visitors.

### **Create Simple Dynamic Displays**

Just like a good gallery or retail store, your work should be attractively and professionally displayed. This can be done with very little expense on your part. Here are three ideas for simple displays:



#### **Hollow-Core Door Screen**

Three (or more) hollow-core doors hinged together to form a “zig-zag” double-sided wall or screen. This is the best most flexible display for two-dimensional work that I have found, and can be assembled from items found at any lumber store. The doors can be painted any color and re-used for years to come.



#### **Multi-Level Table Displays**

For three-dimensional work consider using tables with various height boxes on top. Cover the boxes with black or white cloths and display your pieces on each of the different levels.



### Tabletop Easels

Small paintings on small easels are a great sales tool for clients who say they have “run out of wall space”. Let them know there are other ways of displaying art than hanging it on the wall. These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about hosting your best Open Studios yet. My goal is to take the mystery out of the Open Studios process and to help each artist attract the most visitors, boost their sales, and host their best event to date.

*Remember:*

- Always paint and create from the heart
- Create what you want to create and what speaks to you.
- People will see the passion in your work.
- Have a fabulous and successful Open Studio!

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# Participating in an Open Studio Art Event? Here are 5 Tips to Make it a Success!

By [Niki Hilsabeck](#) in [Art Business Advice](#) > [Art Marketing Tips](#)

<https://emptyeasel.com/2017/11/06/participating-in-an-open-studio-art-event-here-are-5-tips-to-make-it-a-success/>

I paint at home, so an open studio event has always been something of a pipe dream for me. But when our local school of the arts offered instructors the opportunity to participate in a weekend-long open studio event, I jumped at the chance to (and not just because it meant a weekend away from my delightful children, although that was definitely a bonus!)

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At first I thought we would just be doing painting demos to promote our own art classes, but soon found out we would *also* be displaying our work for sale. I dutifully packed up a condensed version of my festival display along with my demo materials and headed down to our local arts school, burning with curiosity and anticipation.

By the end of that long, hot weekend, I had a much clearer picture of open studio events and how I'd do things differently in the future.

And, I put together 5 tips for anyone else whose about to participate in an open studio event:

## **1. Define what you want to accomplish**

What are you hoping to get out of your open studio event? Are you looking for sales, informal feedback, or to get a few new students? Are you hoping to reach some of your repeat collectors, or to bring some artists into your space for a creative gathering? When the event is over, how will you know if it was a success?

Before our open studio event, I decided on two goals: introduce new people to my work and promote the classes at our school. At the end of the weekend, I felt that those two goals had been accomplished with the visitors who stopped at our school along the tour.

*NOTE: By participating in a group setting, I didn't have to do much logistical planning. If you're holding your own event, you'll have to factor in times and dates, how to invite people, and how you want to display your work and promote yourself as an artist. Having preset goals before you begin planning will help you make those decisions and give you a way to measure the outcome.*

## **2. Know your elevator pitch**

The event has started, and people are wandering in, ready to size you up and form an impression. What do you want them to know about you as an artist?

Whether in your own studio or participating in a group setting, it's a good idea to have your "elevator pitch" ready. In other words, how do you sum up your artwork for new viewers?

To start, choose to display artworks that showcase your signature style and be ready to sum up your medium/inspiration/unique approach in a few sentences. This is your invitation to let people get to know you and your work.

Of course, this is just the first step. You can still share your more experimental pieces as you make personal connections, or when a visitor shows an interest. It's kind of like making new friends: first make the acquaintance and put your best foot forward, then let the deeper connections develop with those who are interested.

## **3. Put yourself in your visitors' shoes**

As the artist, you control the setting in this situation, so make it inviting. Think about people physically moving about your space (make sure it's free of tripping hazards) and where their eyes

will go. Make sure there is ventilation, good light, and a minimum of dust or residue if possible (or provide fair warning to those who are sensitive to such things).

If you expect children to be around, do an extra “safety sweep” of your space—don’t forget to make it comfortable for your elderly attendees too!

In an open studio environment, people will want to see *how* you work, so have your creative materials on full display. Invite people to hold brushes you like to use, or let them feel some paper or canvas. Making art is a kinesthetic experience for many of us, and letting people touch the materials gives people a chance to share that.

When the circumstances allow it, you may want to even set up a creative sign-in space to let people leave their mark on something if they get inspired!

## 4. Present yourself as a professional

As people wandered in and out of our classrooms, I was impressed by how much the artist interactions with the public differed from some of the more sales-driven events I’ve experienced.

The artists were friendly, knowledgeable, and encouraging. They were genuinely interested in making the visitors feel welcome and included in the process of making art. Even when the occasional grumbling viewers came along, they were met with a sense of humor and a smile.

Of course, this may have been because—as instructors—we’re all used to encouraging reluctant artists. I’ve written before about [not bringing bad vibes into your booth](#) at festivals, and you definitely don’t want them in your workspace either.

I would also suggest that if you are painting a demo, to work on something with which you are confident and comfortable.

Have you ever stopped by a display window at a confectionery or bakery and watched someone in a chef hat cheerfully assemble delicious-looking food? There’s a reason the display window doesn’t show the full toil and fury of the kitchen.

Artists will immediately relate to sweating out a painting you’ve been struggling with, but studio visitors might not. Show them the joyful, rhythmic part of making your art—you can always share the occasional struggle on your blog.

## 5. Be open to the learning experience of the event

At the end of our open studio tour it was over ninety degrees, and the turnout on our second day had been minimal. I was exhausted but had thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Thanks to being free of childcare duty for two days, I had finished off about four paintings that had been languishing on my easel for some time. I got to meet the other instructors and see their amazing work up close. We had a play/work table set up in the middle of our room, and at one point all of the artists were sitting together doodling and laughing.

I got to try shibori and watch a raku firing, and discuss pastel and paper brands. We even had a young bird fly into the school, and immediately mobilized to help it out as quickly and gently as possible (the sensitive, animal-loving artist stereotype was on full display!)

The setup and breakdown, though nowhere near as rough as a festival, was the only difficult part of the weekend. Even with that factored in, I would most likely participate in a group event again. I am definitely more motivated now to get my own studio space for future open studio events—this experience reminded me how much I enjoy letting others see my work in person, and the unique connection I get to make with people when they take time to look at my artwork.

If you're debating holding an open studio event yourself, I say try it! However it goes, you'll learn something from it!

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## Artist Tips for Hosting an Open Studio

<https://kristengueststudio.com/blogs/journal/artist-tips-for-hosting-an-open-studio>

### *Open Studio Checklist for Artists*

I'm often asked how I host my open studios and advice for emerging artists looking to host their own. From hosting within a co-op community or at your own location, you can use this extensive checklist to create a more successful event. It's long but the effort is worth it and even as an introvert, I leave these events on a high note.

But before I get into the planning stages, I want to first **define what an open studio is and its purpose.** For me, I don't see the actual event itself as a "selling event." Open studios are a time of sharing, hospitality, and building relationships. If you look at your open studio through this lens, you will rarely be disappointed. In short: it's a party and everyone has shown up to celebrate your work!

In my experience, the **sales typically come the week after.** If they come during the event, I am grateful but I try not to expect it. I want to focus on the people, not the sales. I am inviting them into my studio, the same way I would invite my friends to my house.

I want to **share what I've been up to and let them have a peek into my world and get to know me personally,** whether through sharing the story behind the work or doing live painting demos. For collectors and art enthusiasts, this is the most exciting part of an open studio!

And with that, let's dive into the planning stages of an open studio.

#### **NOTE:**

**This list does not take into consideration any health or safety regulations currently in place due to COVID. Please implement your state and local guidelines above all else. These are just my "general to do's" and one day they will all be relevant again.**

**Before the Open Studios Event...**



## 2 Months Before

- Set a date, unless you're in a co-op community that does it regularly, and make sure that it doesn't conflict with holidays or is too close to another major deadline you have
- Get studio signage with your name and invitation materials
- \*Personally,\* directly invite your friends, family, students, mentors, loyal collectors, long-time supporters, etc. The e-blast (aka "shotgun approach") is for everyone else.

## 1 Month Before

- For everyone else you want to invite, post the dates and times to your website/blog, social media, newsletter, and email signature
- Add the event with location, directions, and parking info on your FB page, Yelp, and Eventbrite

## 2 Weeks Before

- Make or order price tags (I like getting business card sizes)
- Check to see if you need to re-order any printed materials you regularly keep on hand
- Print, package, and arrange limited edition prints, if any
- Order copies of books or catalogs featuring your art, if any
- Plan to finish new works
- Have all artwork info on the backside (signature, title, size, medium)

## 1 Week Before

- Send an invitation reminder to everyone
- Think of a fun food theme to go with what you're showcasing
- Curate a music playlist to fit you and your art (especially if what you personally listen to influences your work or process)
- Find a "draw" that makes it interesting and fun to attend (revealing all new work, auctioning items to charity, screening of your collection's video documentary, etc.)
- Varnish or seal your works (I mark the backsides with a tiny 'V' to track pieces already varnished), one week before, two days at least to allow for the fumes to air out
- Signing your art on the front or side is optional in case you like to sign in front of the collector at the time of purchase
- Frame, mount, wire, etc., to get your artwork ready for buyers to take home and hang
- Ask for help, especially if you don't feel comfortable leaving your space for things like restroom breaks or need man power for the setup
- Buy any serving ware or napkins, etc, you need for food and drinks

## 1 Day Before

- Send final invitation reminder to everyone
- Hang your art with breathing room; you don't need to hang everything you own...curate, curate, curate

- Prioritize showcasing your new works or at least rotate your old works to make it appear "fresh"
- Check your lights and replace burnt out bulbs
- Charge your music speaker and payment processors
- Nothing says "special" or "valuable" quite like having a vase of fresh flowers
- Set out a guest book to collect names and emails
- Set out a welcome sign
- Set out a laptop with a slideshow of your past work
- Set out postcards for new art releases, classes or upcoming events
- Set out business cards or brochures with your contact info
- Set out a \*small\* trash can for guests to use
- Set out your payment processor and a sign showing what you accept
- Sweep, touch up walls, and tidy up any potential trip hazards

### **During the Open Studios Event...**

Simple: don't stare down or stalk the guests. Stand outside or nearby to invite them inside (some are hesitant out of respect and need a friendly welcome before they step foot in your working space).

Give them space to browse and fall in love with your work. Let them explore. They will come get you or talk to you when they want to know more or to purchase.

Have something to do or someone to chat up other than a guest so they don't feel the pressure of being "sold to" or worry about being "stuck" in a small talk conversation. I like to mention and serve food and drinks or ask about their day to disarm any notion that an "ask" is coming.

Having music outside your door or in a corner helps folks to enjoy the art viewing experience. Have your food and drinks set towards the back of the room where there is plenty of space for a "flow of traffic" and so they don't grab and leave.

Have your prices listed so folks can gauge what they can buy without feeling like they have to ask, some are too timid and will walk away.

Be ready to negotiate and know your bottom line. Be ready to talk about delivery or framing needs. Be ready to talk about your work's inspirations and processes. Be ready to talk about your process for doing commissions. Be ready to stay later than you had planned.

### **After the Open Studios Event...**

#### **The Day After**

- Rest! Most artists find themselves low on energy the day after and it's okay to give yourself some time to re-energize after making such a big effort

- Post pics of the event (hello FOMO) and thank everyone \*not just\* for coming but \*mainly\* for such a successful event and how you enjoyed seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones. They came because they enjoy this type of thing, not because you asked or begged. So agree and acknowledge how enjoyable it truly was...especially the part where you got to meet and talk with them!

### **The Week After**

- Take note of what went right, what went wrong, and what was confusing so you can improve for the next go around!
- Add the names and emails from your guest book to your newsletter list and tag them based on how you met them.
- Follow up the next \*business\* day or two with anyone who gave you contact info for art purchases or commissions.