



## **Tips and Tricks from Open Studios veterans to the 2024 “newbies”**

### **ATMOSPHERE**

Set the mood with some good music if possible.

### **DISPLAY**

As much as is physically possible, clear your space from unnecessary furniture, plants, family photos, etc. so folks aren't distracted from viewing your art or even worse can't see your art because “stuff” is in the way. Avoid having stuff laying around, like sweatshirts, old coffee cups, bills, etc.

I have a large yard and knocked myself out every year planting flowers, etc. so it would look beautiful. It did. Don't bother - it's a gorgeous distraction from the art.

I used to show my 2D work in my garden - yikes! My watercolors are framed and the sun would cause condensation under the glass and water would drip down inside the glass. Not the look I wanted. If you have 2D framed work, like watercolors, it's best to exhibit them in a well lit interior space.

### **GENERAL**

Tip #1: Don't knock yourself out.

Tip #2: If you have people in the house, secure things.

Tip #3: Don't make it about food and wine.

Tip #4: Be engaging, don't let individuals isolate you with long conversations.

Tip #5: Brush your teeth, nobody likes bad breath!

Don't sweat the small stuff! Do the best you can to break problems into smaller parts and rely on your community to help you out. Use the FB group to source things you may need.

Don't overdo it on the snacks and beverages. People who are there to see your art aren't there to get lunch!

Have plenty of Artist Guides to give out in case the app is wonky. Being helpful is endearing and it also lets people focus on your art instead of being frustrated and trying to figure out where they're going next. *[Note from Ann: First weekend artists will be given 10 Artist Guides; second weekend artists will be given 5 Artist Guides. Ann will share the list of where folks can pick up a Guide if you run out].*

### **GUEST LISTS**

Think about the future. I started doing O.S. over 20 years ago. I believed people would drop in, look at my work, buy or not buy and I'd never see them again. Totally wrong! A big



fraction of my visitors every year are repeat visitors. I started building a “guest list” with email addresses on it to create an email outreach list. That list now numbers over 1200, and email to those folks is one of the top three ways people are drawn to my studio. (Tip within a tip: hand-written emails are often particularly difficult to read, and can contain any character. Make people print their email address, each character in a little box, for clarity. Or make your guest list digital, on a tablet or something.

Have a sheet where people can sign up to be on your mailing list AND one to take orders for things you may not have on hand. A vast majority of my sales were orders that I filled the following weeks. Also plan/hope to be busy the weeks after OS with orders! That was very unexpected for me.

## **HELPERS**

Recruit help, it makes the day way easier and much more fun!

Who is going to help you on the day before and the weekend?

RECRUIT SOMEONE TO HELP YOU DURING OPEN STUDIOS. Especially the first year it's so nice to have someone packaging up sold pieces, directing parking or flow through the house/studio & even just greeting people when you're busy.

Enlist help. I found a friend who was able and willing to help me do things like put up my posters the morning of OS, take things down Sunday night, and talk out some of my planning and I traded her a small painting for her time.

Have someone to be with you to help handle any “rushes”, maybe handle money and credit cards while you talk to visitors, close sales or give a demonstration.

## **PLANNING**

Start getting ready now. Plan on how many pieces you have. Are you going to get any giclée prints? Are you going to have cards?

Who is going to help you on the day before and during the weekend?

Set up Friday evening as much as possible. Less rush and pressure and more time to find out what you forgot and to recover.

## **PR**

Do a postcard. It's handy for visitors and promoting the show!

## **SAFETY**

If you're outside, are you letting people into your house to use the bathroom unmonitored? Thefts have occurred, but rarely. *[Note from Ann: You are NOT expected to offer the use of your bathrooms to your visitors. Bathroom locations are noted on the map in the printed Guide.]*



## **SALES**

Here's a tip! It's a sales tip! If someone is paying attention to a piece of your art, engage with them! Ask them about themselves and where they're from. Ask them what room in their house they are imagining the piece going. Then ask them if they would like to take it home, TODAY! Seal the Deal!

Have someone to be with you to help handle any “rushes”, maybe handle money and credit cards while you talk to visitors, close sales, or demonstrate.

Have a Square and make sure it works at your location. Set it up at least an hour before visitors arrive.

Have items at different price points.

## **SELF-CARE**

Especially if hosted, make sure you have lunch covered. If it's not there and there's no one else to run to the market, it'll be a very long day.

## **SIGNAGE**

Signage, part 1. Signs out on the roads leading to your studio are very helpful in letting visitors find you. Do NOT rely on maps and GPS alone. Lots of patrons just see a sign while driving by and follow it. Make sure to leave a clear trail of bright green "bread crumbs" right to your door. Signs should have fat, dark text on the green bg. I print mine from a computer, but if you're decent with hand-lettering, a big fat black magic marker will do fine.

Signage, part 2. Signs in and around your studio help people know where to go and especially where not. Clearly mark the way to the main entry, indicate private areas, small indoor areas where masks are advisable or required, where to toss trash, etc. How much does it cost? Price your items or post a price list.

SIGNS, SIGNS, Everywhere there's SIGNS! Or at least there should be. Plan out locations ahead of time where you think you'll need a sign, make a list that includes

- size of the sign
- what direction an arrow needs to go (if you're doing arrows)
- Is it a single or double sided sign?
- what you'll need to post/hang/set it up.
- label the back of the sign w/location because you'll want to use it again for All County weekend & next year
- Then when you have all of that- trust me, you still need MORE signs.



**DON'T WAIT TO MAKE YOUR SIGNS** - It takes way more time than you think to make all those clear & legible signs. Do it at least 2 weeks before your Open Studio date. Make the text bigger than you think you need it to be.

**MAKE YOUR SIGNS SO YOUR ARTIST NUMBER CAN EASILY BE ALTERED FOR NEXT SEASON.** This will save you a ton of time next year. I also stack mine in the same order every year. This little bit of organization will help when you're trying to get everything else ready.

### **VISITORS**

Try not to get locked into a long conversation with one person or just your friends, make sure to mingle and try to have at least a brief chat with everyone who comes into your studio.

Visitors seem to come in waves, so take advantage of the slow times and sit down, drink water, and eat something because it's a long day!