

OPEN STUDIOS WORKSHOP NOTES

Sharing our collective experience and wisdom

1. Building Inventory

- a. Experience supports having a range of wares and prices.
- b. Think about your price range and the audience you hope to attract, from \$5 to hundreds
- c. It's fine to have items on display, not for sale, to inspire commissions at Open Studios, but also have plenty on hand to sell.
- d. Doing a demo during OS, or having works in progress to show your process, is encouraged. These strategies engage visitors, keeping them longer in your studio, and often lead to increased sales.
- e. There is mixed opinion about bargaining with customers at OS. Many offer bulk purchase discounts, or have a friends and family rate. Others have bargain baskets.
- f. All emphasized the importance of pricing and labeling everything. Make buying easy for your customers.

2. Creating Your Studio Environment

- a. Your environment is part of your brand! Give it thought.
- b. Consider Parking, Entrance (garden), Ease of Access
- c. Using your whole house or only part? Make sure to clearly label Private/Family areas.
- d. If the OS is off-site, or if you are sharing in a home, prioritize making the space sharing equitable.
- e. Signage (in addition to HA's): outside art, art or signs on a sawhorse/sandwich board, arrows (this way to studio!)
- f. Will you be doing an art demo, or showing work in progress? This can be a great interest to visitors, and extend their stay.
- g. Music – if so, what's suitable for you and your space?
- h. Plan your lighting and table coverings. Think about the details – from the visitor's POV.
- i. Maybe have a pair of "cheaters" or two by your displays, for folks who forgot their reading glasses.
- j. Plan seating for you and your guests.
- k. How will guests move through your space? Think about visitor flow (and crowds) as you set up your space.
- l. How will you welcome guests? What is your spiel?
- m. Plan ahead for bad weather. What will you do with wet jackets, for example?
- n. Can people use your bathroom? How will you manage children? What if someone sits down and won't leave? (All real challenges!)
- o. Think about all elements from the user's (guest's) point of view, and make their experience as easy and enjoyable as possible.

3. Branding Your Studio and Work

- a. All OS artists are encouraged to remember that they are representing themselves, Hull Artists, and the Open Studios event. So, professionalism in all areas, and a spirit of generosity toward fellow artists, is encouraged.
- b. All OS studio will need to have a HA windsock, to ID the studio location. The windsocks will be available for pickup at Gallery Nantasket. Additionally, Hull Artists has printed the OS artist listing/maps, posters, and provides lawn signs, street directional signage, a window placard, and a studio number, corresponding to your number on the map.
- c. Consider your Curb Appeal, including putting a sign out in front of your studio a week early, or having actual art outside the studio to attract visitors. It's all part of your branding.
- d. Some encourage putting out balloons to further attract visitors to your studio. Others feel this detracts from the cohesion of the event.
- e. All artists should have business cards with all contact info. Many also display a brief Artist's Bio with info that distills who we are as artists, through image or language, to help visitors understand our work and easily find us again.
- f. In your displays, set up for "the hunt." Create visual interest, mix objects, create height changes in the display, use beautiful containers to allow visitors a sense of discovery or treasure seeking.
- g. Some artists have give-aways at the point of sale to help people find you again.
- h. Think in advance about the tone of your studio, and ways that you can be most hospitable to OS guests who have chosen to visit you.

4. Visitor Care and Feeding – Do It!

- a. Nibbles and Drinks – near entrance (self-serve or will you serve?)
- b. Greeting
 - i. Consider what to say and not to say; how to help and be interesting without cramping your visitor's style
 - ii. Have more than one script – for your sanity and to be responsive to different guests
- c. Give visitors plenty of space (don't hover) to explore and wander, if possible.
- d. Discover visitor's interests; why did they come to your OS? Where else have they been?
- e. Are they hungry? Send guests to OS sponsor restaurants!
- f. Have OS brochures on hand – and help guide, based on their interests and on geography
- g. To do this well, make a point of knowing the work of your fellow OS artists! (HA website is a good starting point.)
- h. Point out new artists and OS locations

5. Labeling and Pricing

- a. Price everything!
 - i. On piece or by area (“everything on this wall is \$_.”)
- b. Have a range of work and prices so everyone can buy something.
- c. Decide if you are open to haggling or discounts; breaks on higher-priced items can be sensible.
- d. Decide what you want to do about sales tax – ignore, include in price, add on – it’s up to you.
- e. Make Sales! Generate buzz about your work!

6. Managing Payments

- a. A quick checklist is available on the HA website.
- b. Make it easy to pay. Have a dedicated space that’s clear and workable, with bags, wrapping, ribbon, packing materials all right on hand.
- c. Be able to process credit cards
 - i. Square.com – links to your bank account
 - ii. Need wifi or cellular reception to use
 - iii. Send auto receipts to buyers and send vendor daily tallies
- d. Paypal is another option some have used
- e. For Checks, think of what info you want from your guests
- f. Have 2-part sales books on hand (Dollar Store carries these)
- g. Have a cash box with small bills
- h. Pens
- i. Wrapping – for beauty and to protect art
- j. Bags, stickers
- k. Script your sales process; be efficient; be a pro!
- l. Stay organized

7. Visitor Cultivation and Communication

- a. HA provides posters, PR, street signs, windsocks, window signs, and the Guide/Map.
- b. HA also has a targeted marketing campaign to local and regional publications and an email campaign that will include promotion and thank yous to everyone on our mailing list.
- c. Carry OS maps with you everywhere to share.
- d. Contact your own networks – friends, work assoc, other “hobby” networks, and **share** HA’s FB and Insta posts whenever you can.
 - i. Facebook, email, instagram, twitter
 - ii. Hullartists.com has downloadable links to the map and artist listing on the OS page.
- e. Our job is to help visitors find whatever they need – in our studio, other studios, and in Hull – art, craft, meals and snacks, entertainment, real estate! – to support our fellow OS artists and the event sponsors.

8. Data Collection

- a. Guests who give their data will be entered in a \$100 Raffle each OS weekend.
- b. The \$100 voucher is to be used with any OS Artist!
- c. Pick up an OS clipboard at Gallery Nantasket June 28 or Saturday, June 30. It will have a RAFFLE label affixed and a data sheet that you may copy. (OS provides one clipboard. Please have more than one if you like.) The Raffle Form is available at Hullartists.com.
- d. Artists also are asked to complete a Data Sheet each OS weekend. This helps us better understand our audience, and improve our targeted marketing. The Data Sheet is also available at Hullartists.com.
- e. Invite every guest at your studio to sign in to get a chance to win the raffle. **PLEASE ENCOURAGE GISTS TO SIGN IN AT EVERY STUDIO THEY VISIT.** This increases their odds of winning (and helps us track visitor patterns).
- f. At the end of each OS weekend, copy all of your data sheets for your records. Many will opt to take a picture of the sheets with their phones!
- g. No later than the **Tuesday evening** after each OS, drop your data sheets at a neighborhood drop-off site, one at each end of town where you will find a well-marked box. Your two choices are:
 - Priscilla Beadle's - 23 Andrew Avenue (Hull Village)
 - Michael Domina's - 11 Seaview Avenue (Gunrock)

9. Self-Care

- a. OS is 10 am – 4 pm, Saturday and Sunday. That's lots of time to be "on." Plan to take care of yourself so you have fun and can take good care of your guests.
 - i. Do you have any support or backup? Invite friends to help!
 - ii. Make a lunch or snack in advance and have on hand
 - iii. Take small breaks if possible
 - iv. Hydrate!!!
 - v. Set up Sunday's studio Saturday night; you will thank yourself in the morning.

GOOD LUCK WITH 2018 OPEN STUDIOS!