

Surrey Artists' Open Studios 2014

Tips for Open Studios Participants

Before Opening your Studio to the public:

1. Think about your studio's accessibility, do a risk assessment and take reasonable precautions to avoid accidents eg. Notices saying 'mind the step'
2. Make sure that you have good lighting; can you offer toilet facilities, if so make sure they are well signposted?
3. Make sure that your neighbours are aware of what you are doing, think about how the parking will work and warn them about your opening dates.
4. Always check which studios in your area are open and encourage visitors to visit them too – hopefully they will be doing the same for you. If there are enough of you then you could get together and organize a trail with a flyer listing studio details.
5. Take the time to make your studio and display look as good as possible; visitors appreciate a professional approach if they have made the effort to come and see you. (It's also a reminder to have a major clearout and spring clean!) Have a mixture of old and new work and some work in progress.
6. Prepare labels explaining your work, and your processes, have your sketchbooks available for people to look at.
7. Get some business cards printed with your name and contact details.
8. Price your work carefully, (do not devalue it). Keep a photographic record of everything for sale.
9. Have a receipt book and a list of all artwork for sale with prices.
10. Collect suitable packaging materials and make sure that all artwork has your name and contact details attached. Maybe print off a short bio to go in the bag!
11. Use the orange flags and balloons wherever you can on roads near you and make the entrance to your studio as visible as possible i.e. balloons and orange flag or poster at the gate/door.
12. Prepare signs for your studio, with the opening times clearly displayed, there is a blank poster downloadable from website (add your studio number). Prepare signs for parking
13. Display prominently the disclaimer notice, prize draw notice and the competition notice
14. Throw a preview party before the official start of Open Studios and invite your neighbours as well as friends.
15. Send postcards to invite people. These come as part of your pack, but should be personalized with your details.
16. Give out your brochures at the event but if possible to friends etc beforehand. Most visitors like to plan a route or day out so a full brochure is useful. The postcards are cheaper to post with your opening hours on or personalized details of your studio

During the Open Studios:

1. If you say you are open then you must be there – nothing more annoying than arriving at a studio to find they are closed. It's a good idea to have another person with you so that you can have lunch/go to the loo. If you have to close because of an emergency, please make sure that you put a notice on the door.
2. Always keep yourself and your studio safe – place all keys, handbags, cash box etc out of site & if you are doing a solo studio ask a friend or family members to be on hand in case of emergencies (or requests to use your toilet while you are otherwise occupied). Most visitors are honest but it only takes one opportunist....
3. Use a visitor's book and ask them to sign and put their email address. This helps with counting your numbers, but more importantly gives you a future mailing list – explain why you want their details & that it won't be passed on to third parties. Then you can email them an invitation to your next years' open studio.

4. If you wish, have some drinks on hand – we tend to stick to cordials as tea/coffee requires too many choices– cold in summer, warm in winter. Beware of including food items particularly if visitors are handling textiles or items for sale.
5. If you would like to include quiet background music it can be less intimidating for visitors, but may need to check on broadcasting or public music license rules?
6. It is good to have work in progress for visitors to see, or sketchbooks as most like to see how you arrive at a finished piece of work.
7. Postcards or greetings cards of your work are a good way of getting small sales if visitors cannot afford to buy bigger items, make sure these have your name and contact details.
8. Do not leave out signs, balloons etc unless you are open. These may be removed by local authorities, parish council etc, and are misleading to the public as they will assume you are open if displaying them. A notice on your gate or entrance with your opening times is a useful addition.
9. Do not be disheartened if your first open studios event is quieter than you expected. You will build up your visitor base over a period of years and once people know what you do, they will return. Keep working on something during the quiet times.
10. Don't expect to sell everything – this is a networking exercise as well; visitors will get to know you and your work, and if you build a good relationship they will probably come back after the event.
12. Enjoy yourself, and your visitors will enjoy the experience too

After the Open Studios:

1. Follow up on any visitors who showed interest in your work or in returning for future events
2. Keep a record of visitor numbers and feedback to help you make changes for future events
3. Complete the evaluation.