

Tips for the South Coast Artists 2011 Open Studio Tours!

Before the Tours ...

Update Your Website

This is a good time to make sure your website is up to date. Check dates for time-sensitive material. Add the Tour and a link to www.southcoastartists.org to get your friends and customers familiar with the Tour.

Order Business cards, postcards, etc.

It's a good idea to have items for your visitors to take with them. Color postcards of your work (with your name, address, phone, email) are great and inexpensive. Several artists use www.vistaprint.com

Insurance

Contact your insurance agent to ensure that you have appropriate general liability insurance (homeowners and/or business/commercial) for the visitors coming to your studio. Don't just assume that your regular Homeowners Policy is all you need for coverage.

Sales Tax

Remember to collect state sales tax. Call your state revenue office to register to collect and remit sales tax. Your sales tax certificate must be displayed in a conspicuous location during the Tour. MA: mass.gov/dor RI: tax.ri.gov

Accepting Credit cards?

Some artists accept credit cards as a form of payment and some do not. If you feel that the having the ability to accept credit cards can increase your sales, there are low cost options to consider that do not require fancy machines and large contractual commitments. If you have a smartphone (iPhone, Blackberry, Andriod, etc...), there are secure applications that you can get for your phone to accept credit cards right through the phone. Consider your options.

Organize your studio, and make it safe for visitors

Simplify. Work for sale should be well displayed. Avoid clutter, and clear away items which aren't for sale. Less is more, and your pieces will show better if not competing for the viewer's attention. Take away personal items to avoid distraction. It's all about YOUR ART.

Ensure that your studio is safe and there are no tripping hazards, or dangerous materials. Remember children will be visitors too, and you want to ensure everyone is safe.

Packing Materials, Cash for change, Sales Receipts

Be ready to make a sale. Have cash available to make change, have packing materials like boxes, bubble wrap, clean paper, bags to wrap your artwork in, and have a sales receipt book. The use of paper bags with your name on the outside (easily done by you with printed larger address labels and your computer and printer) makes the sale more professional and complete.

During the Tours ...

Be Friendly, Smile and Enjoy the Tour Visitors

Talk, listen, engage, and be engaged. If you have a hard time smiling all the time, it's time to learn. Sometimes it helps to have a friend in your studio to talk up your work while you're busy with other visitors.

Talk about your work

Patrons love to engage in conversation with the artist about how your art is made, and what inspires you to make it, and some of the techniques you use. Keep a simple, professional looking catalog of your art work OPEN at all times. It should include an up-to-date biography and examples of your best work. Newspaper and magazine clippings about your life as an artist offer additional credibility. A digital frame, with a slideshow of your work, is also a great way to entertain and excite potential collectors.

Be familiar with your fellow Artists on the Tour

Be familiar with other artists on the Tour and the brochure! Exchange your marketing materials with neighboring artists and refer visitors to "the artist down the road" or if they are interested in something specific, help them find it through the brochure. Have the Tour map handy to help point them in a direction. Your fellow Tour artist will appreciate the referral, as will you when others are referred to your studio.

Price Your Work

People are shy about asking for prices and are sometimes offended when items are not clearly marked. Place price tags on or below your pieces. The use of price sheets is also an option. Consider exhibiting items that are lower priced as well as higher priced. Everyone likes to feel as though they could afford something you've created. Showing only high-priced items can be seen as a negative.

Build a mail list

Have a sign in sheet and ask your visitor for their name, mailing address and email address so that you can add them to your database.

Provide contact information

Have a pile of business cards, postcards, etc. on hand. Make sure interested visitors take them.

Keep Records of Your Attendance

SCA wants to know how many patrons visited your studio. Keep a piece of paper handy and track of your attendance and this is best to track it as its happening and not to wait to the end of the day to estimate it. After each tour SCA will distribute a survey questionnaire about how your visitorship and sales activity.

Dining, Refreshments, restrooms

Our sponsors supported the Tours, please help support them back. Be familiar with our sponsors. If someone is looking for a place for refreshments, refer them to one of our Sponsors on the brochure. Consider having your own refreshments at your studio too. It's up to you if you can offer the use of your own restroom to visitors.

You made a sale

Some patrons will want to take home their purchase home right then, while others may want to collect it later. You may want to hold on to the item and mark it sold for a later pick-up/delivery. If it is a large or heavy piece, consider offering to deliver it after the Tour. That is for you and your customer to decide what works best. Free delivery is nice if they live nearby.

Pack up your artwork so it will not get damaged. Don't forget to include the sales receipt.

After the Tours ...

Evaluate your Tour – And it's not just about sales!

There are many factors to consider on how each artist evaluates the participation results in the Tour. Sales, possible commissions, feedback about your work, gallery and other connections are all elements to consider.

Follow up with your Customers and Contacts

You might want to send an email thank you note after the Tour. It's good to stay in touch with your customers. Follow up on potential leads that you have made.

Support our SCA Sponsors

Our SCA sponsors have been very generous to support our Summer 2010 Tours. Visit our sponsors and let them know you are returning their support.

BEST OF LUCK TO ALL SOUTH COAST ARTISTS!

Got Questions ?

Contact: Karen Raus, Kelly Milukas, any SCA Board Member, or any fellow artist !

*show us your
Art & Soul!*

It's Open Studio Tour Time !