

# ArtSpan OPEN STUDIOS TOOLKIT

This toolkit was produced by ArtSpan's volunteer Open Studios Committee. It continues to change, grow and adapt.

## PREPARATION TIMELINE

### ONGOING PREPARATION

- Keep your mailing list up to date. Keep an eye out for people who you want on your postcard and email list.
- Have your artwork professionally photographed, or plan to do it yourself.
- Make notes of things you like and don't like at exhibits and open studios you attend. Take note of display elements that might work for you, or the way things are arranged on a wall or in a room.
- Look at prices for comparable work. Do you feel comfortable about where your prices are set in relation to others?
- Keep notes of blogs you like, where you might like to be featured, and make a record of their contact and submission information.
- Keep an eye out for publications where you might want to advertise. Gather their information. Often print ad deadlines are months ahead of publication.

### 6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Create a budget for your event. Consider: Registration, advertising, space rental, display material, lighting, postcards/ postage, studio improvements, food and beverage, cups and service, hired help, and anything else that you can think of. It should be a number that you are comfortable with. Thinking it through early will keep you from being caught off guard by unplanned expenses.

### 3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Consider any major changes you'd like to make to your studio. Open Studios is a great excuse to dream and manifest magic in your workspace.
- Pool your resources! Are you showing with other artists? Now is the time to organize and divvy up tasks. Will you be marketing as a group? Will you create a Facebook Event together? A postcard together?
- Consider hosting a preview party! If you decide to host a Friday Night Party or Preview before your Open Studio weekend, make sure it is promoted on your posters, postcards, website and on Facebook.

### 2 MONTHS BEFORE

- Do you know which pieces you're going to show?
- Has all the artwork you plan on showing been photographed?
- Do you need to order any finishing or framing materials?

### 6 WEEKS BEFORE

- Design your postcard and have it printed early!
- Start announcing your OS plans on social media.
- Attend events like First Friday. Remind people Open Studios is coming up. Bring your postcards.

### 1 MONTH BEFORE

- What's left to get the artwork ready?
- What's left to get the studio ready?
- Are you prepared to make sales by check or credit card?
- Contact your e-mail list and invite them to Save the Date for your Open Studios weekend and Friday Preview Party.
- Create a Facebook event, a blog post, Tweet, etc.

- Mail your postcards to your mailing list.

## **2 WEEKS BEFORE**

- Exchange postcards with other artists. Keep stacks in your studio for visitors.
- Facebook, Twitter, blog about it, etc.
- Promote your friends' Open Studios on your social media, and encourage them to do the same. The more awareness there is, the better it is for everybody!

## **THE WEEK BEFORE**

- Email your list- "Invitation to SF Open Studios" - include low res jpg of your postcard.
- Clean your studio, store away personal items and valuables, & de-clutter.
- Paint walls, hang art.
- Shop for non-perishable food and beverages.
- Invite your neighbors. If they're not home, leave a postcard at their door!
- Don't have a sandwich board? Make one!
- Print your bio, artist statement, pricelists, & labels.
- Make sure you have petty cash for making change.
- Email your list - a reminder: "It's this weekend!"

## **FRIDAY - PREVIEW PARTY [OPTIONAL]**

- Facebook, Tweet, or blog pictures of your studio all set up to entice visitors.
- If you're not holding a preview party, visit neighboring studios. Bring your postcards.

## **SATURDAY - DAY ONE!**

- Go out for coffee in the morning and bring your postcards to distribute.
- Place your sandwich board or signage and balloons out front.
- Arrange for a friend to relieve you during the day for a quick break. Don't forget to eat!
- Downtime? Twitter or Facebook post about the day so far; take pictures with your visitors. If you're too busy, awesome!

## **SUNDAY- DAY TWO!**

- Go out for coffee again and hand out your postcards!
- Arrange for a friend to relieve you during the day for a quick break. Don't forget to eat!
- Enjoy your guests. Breathe. Be brilliant.

## **THE WEEK AFTER**

- Add new contacts to your mailing list and send them thank you letters.
- Make notes of what worked and what didn't for your next Open Studios event.
- Compile any data you may have gathered about how people heard about your Open Studio to use in planning your next marketing effort.
- Go make more art!

## **PROMOTE YOUR EVENT (SPECIAL THANKS TO JOHN KRAFT, KEY CONTRIBUTOR)**

ArtSpan provides tremendous support for your promotion: the website, the printed guide, bus posters, social media, print mail, events, and press... but getting people to YOUR studio is going to depend on YOUR efforts. Promotion does not have to be costly, but a little time and imagination will pay off! Pick up a few of these tips and start a buzz about your Open Studio!

Promote your Open Studios on your personal and business Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media accounts.

## **CREATE YOUR OWN POSTCARD**

Everyone is inundated with emails. It is easy to overlook them. Postcards can end up displayed somewhere as a reminder, or posted on a wall with the potential for others to see it. It can be exciting to receive an actual piece of mail. Particularly if it is attractive!

### **CONTENT**

- Clean, easy to read with one image on the card, ideally the one you are using for all your Open Studios promotion.
- Include your name, link to your website, and phone number.
- Include the date and time of the show.
- Include the address of your studio!
- Your return address (important so when cards get returned, you can update your mailing list).
- Pay attention to postal guidelines. Keep key content away from the bottom 5/8 inch of postcards, front and back, or it may get buried under a barcode!

### **TIMELINE**

- Design them and have them printed well in advance and especially in time for the ArtLaunch!
- Mail cards so they arrive about two weeks - ten days before the show.
- Add a handwritten note to your best collectors and fans.
- Make sure to use the correct postage! Postcards larger than 6x 4 1/4 require full first class postage!

### **DISTRIBUTION**

- Send them to your entire list. Sending a postcard is a valuable promotion, even if people can't come.
- Keep them in your purse, in your car, with you at all times so you can hand them out.

## **CREATING & DISTRIBUTING YOUR EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **E-MAIL**

- Focus on building your email list whenever possible as direct e-mail communication is still the most reliable means of reaching those that have connected with your work. This has become increasingly important since Facebook now only reveals your posts to a fraction of your total connections (both on Profile and Business Pages).
- Consider personal emails to a subset or core group within your email list. Consider setting aside the time to write personal email invitations, especially to those that have collected your work in the past.

### **BENEFITS**

- Name recognition and Branding
- Creates a buzz about your work, which generates shows and sales.
- Shows you are serious and promotes a sense of professionalism.
- Brings more visitors to your studio.
- If the recipient can't attend the show, you are reminding them about you, your work, and they can contact you or keep you in mind in the future.
- They can forward the e-mail to a friend.

### **SENDING**

- Using a service allows you to send your message to a large number of people without being constrained by the limits of your personal email. It also allows you to track the success of your mailing, record bounces, and they help keep your mailings out of the spam box. See Resources Page.
- If using your own e-mail, be SURE to make recipients invisible to each other by putting them in the "bcc" field, not the "cc" or the "to" field. Paying attention to email privacy and best practices will help retain readers.

### **BRANDING (CREATING A RECOGNIZABLE LOOK AND FEEL)**

- Pick one image and be consistent using it in all marketing materials for the show: the guide, in your emails, your postcards, on Facebook, etc.
- Pick a font or two and stick to them.
- If you don't have a logo, be consistent with the presentation of your name and studio name.
- Make it easy for people to link your name to your work.

### **CONTENT OF THE E-MAIL**

- Clear subject header with dates.
- Keep emails concise.
- Include your weekend number (1, 2, 3, or 4).
- Include the date and time of the show. (Bonus style points! Decide on your date/time format and be consistent throughout your material.)
- Include the address and a link to a map showing the location/directions.
- If there is free parking or any specific parking/transportation information such as which Muni stop you are near etc.
- If you are in a group site: include this information and/or link to the other studios/artists around you.
- Link to ArtSpan website. Including ArtSpan Open Studios graphics will help people associate your event with the bigger program.
- Include your name, link to your website, phone number, and other important contact information, and other social media links.
- Make sure to spell check. Don't count on the computer to do it. It won't catch there/their and other horrifying mix-ups.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA QUICK TIPS**

#### **FACEBOOK**

- If you have an established Facebook Business Page, make use of both this and your Profile page to spread the word about your participation in SF Open Studios. If you currently don't have a Business page, you will be better off focusing on use of your Profile page rather than starting a new Business page.
- If you are showing out of your studio/home and not associated with a group of artists, consider creating a dedicated Facebook Event and use the event page for communications around your Open Studio. If however, you are part of a group studio, you are better served to coordinate use of a single event page with other artists.
- Make full use of the Facebook Event set up by ArtSpan and any other Group Studio in which the artist is participating.

#### **ADDITIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

- Instagram: Primarily for sharing visual content and can yield better organic (free) reach within your set of followers than Facebook posts.
- Twitter: ArtSpan actively uses Twitter during SF Open Studios and use of the hashtag #SFOS and an ArtSpan handle can increase visibility and reach of your Tweets and by connecting awareness of and traffic to your Open Studios event.

- LinkedIn: Often overlooked, but LinkedIn has become more and more powerful as a means of reaching additional connections to drive awareness of your participation in SF Open Studios.

## **KEEP YOUR PAGES UPDATED**

In the lead up to Open Studios and across all social platforms, share the story of your preparation, your process, and your work. Always remember that while Open Studios is a fixed point in time, it is a great opportunity for connecting with new fans/collectors and can yield benefits for months and years to come. Tip: Fresh content goes a long way to adding legitimacy to your image.

## **TIMELINE TO SEND EMAILS AND POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

- When ArtSpan announces the weekend, send a Save the Date email and post on Facebook and other social media.
- If you send other announcements for other events in the months leading up to Open Studios, you can also have a link at the bottom for Open Studios.
- Send your main email announcement and post on Facebook about three weeks before the show. Follow up with another the week before the show.
- The day before the show, send a reminder email with "Reminder" in the subject header and also post on Facebook.
- Saturday morning post on Facebook and other social media.
- Sunday morning post on Facebook and other social media.
- If you have a piece in the ArtSpan Exhibition, send a separate email announcing the exhibition and also include the information promoting your Open Studios date.
- Posting photos of your event when it is happening in real time just might intrigue someone to seek out your Open Studio in the next two days!

## **PREPARE YOUR WORK**

- Think about how you will present your work, what supplies you will need to create an effective display that is within your budget.
- Will you show loose prints?
- Matted work in clear bags?
- Framed on the walls?
- Do you have bins, pedestals, shelves, or other engineering elements?
- If you are using a space that is not your own, make sure that you know what the rules are regarding putting nails (or screws, or bolts) into the walls/ floors/ ceilings!
- Your visitors will want to get up close to everything. They will want to touch surfaces and pick up objects. Do you need to take steps to protect your work, or is handling alright?
- Look at how other artists present their work, and ask them about their experiences.
- Preparing and framing work can be costly, but having even a few pieces that are ready to hang helps potential customers visualize how your work will look in their space.

## **PREPARE YOUR SPACE (SPECIAL THANKS TO SOAD KADER, KEY CONTRIBUTOR)**

Regardless of your type of studio - private or part of a communal space, when you plan to open it up to guests, think about creating an inviting, memorable space to show and tell... and sell! Think about what your visitors will experience with all their senses: what do they see, hear, smell when moving through your studio? How do you want them to feel in your space? What would you like them to remember about their visit to your studio? Give yourself enough time for set-up and be ready with your plan and list of tasks. During and after the event, take notes about what you might do differently next time. It is always a learning, evolving process, just like the creation of the work itself!

## **CLEAN**

- Clean all surfaces.
- Put all your materials and tools away. (Exception: You might have a work in progress or actually create a demo with work in different stages and tools/materials involved. People love to know the "how" of it all. A purposeful demo on a designated surface with signage is great.)
- Paint your studio walls (if needed). Create a fresh backdrop for your work.
- Sweep/Mop/Cover your floors.
- Think about rubber mats in areas where people will stand to look at your work. An area rug might also be nice. It makes the viewing experience more comfortable.
- Air out/ventilate your space. You want it to feel fresh in every way.

## **ORGANIZE**

- Make your space easy to navigate.
- Move furniture to create a good flow of traffic through your space and to get it out of the way so people can get up close to the work you have hanging. Think about where people might stop to chat or sign the guest book or get a refreshment and make those spots easy to move around or be in.
- Hide clutter if at all possible. That can include shelves full of books or items not at all related to the production of your work. It helps people focus their gaze on the artwork rather than everything else in the space. When people have too many things to look at, they can get overwhelmed, confused, and tired.
- You can use a room divider to hide a stack of stuff or a screen or curtain to cover up an area.
- Indicate Private space or space otherwise off limits to guests: Keep door closed with a small note that says "Private", and tie a red ribbon on the door knob. Drape ribbon or tape across areas you don't want folks to enter.

## **DISPLAY**

- Choose carefully the work you want to feature during your Open Studio event.
- Organize it by subject matter, series, or by another easily understood criteria.
- Show a range of work in terms of price points and sizes (if applicable).
- Keep extra inventory handy but out of sight. Having too much work on display can overwhelm a visitor, or make it hard to choose.
- Hang it well - like you might in a home or office environment to help people see the artwork in context.
- Feature - Choose the piece that you used for your advertising to hang in the most prominent place.

## **LIGHT**

- Light it well - Provide the best lighting you can for each of your works.
- Halogen or LED track lighting is easy to install and looks professional.
- Well placed clamp lights can work as spotlights too.
- Pay attention to the temperature of your bulbs (daylight, soft, warm) since this can change the look of your work.
- Make sure you do not stress your circuits and blow a fuse.
- Keep the wires tidy and out of the way.

## **LABEL & PRICE**

- Label each piece with title, medium, and price.
- Posting prices clearly helps put a client at ease. No one wants to guess!
- Put your name on every label to help viewers remember you with your work.
- If the work isn't for sale, say so. Label work in progress or not for sale. Make it clear for visitors to understand what you are showing and why.
- If you list dimensions, include the frame.
- 14-point font or bigger is good for labels; don't make someone pull out their reading glasses!
- Consider having statements posted near applicable pieces or series. These can get conversation flowing and encourage the viewer to inquire about other pieces.

## **WELCOME & REFERENCE TABLE**

- Flowers - a fresh bouquet, a potted flowering plant, or other decorative element.
- Guest book with prompts for the information you need for your mailing list.
- Artist bio/artist statement/resume.
- Consider wearing a nametag.
- Consider a digital photo frame with images of your work.
- Business cards and/or postcards for people to take.

## **CHECK OUT/BUSINESS ZONE**

- Have a space set up with all you need to process a sale.

## **REFRESHMENT TABLE**

- Keep it very simple and clean - choose beverages and snacks that don't make a mess and could potentially make your space unsightly or damage work.
- Keep food and drinks away from the entrance so people have to walk through your studio to get to them.
- Limit your own alcohol intake; remember you are working and it's a long day.
- For most of Open Studios weekend, you may want to serve mostly soft drinks.
- Put out smallish servings of snacks. Remember to refresh them and clean the service plates when they get messy.
- Have a cooler or insulated bag for replenishment food.
- Consider whether you will need ice, napkins, cups, mugs, serving platters or bowls, serving knives for cheese, spoons, bottle openers, wine openers, wet wipes, Pirel, sponge, paper towels, and a trash/recycling can. Will you use disposable or reusable glasses? Think it through and avoid a last minute run to the store!

## **SIGNAGE**

- Any guidance you can provide to get people into and around your studio space is a good idea. Make it easy for people... "Please touch" (or don't). On their way out, a sign that says "Thank you for coming" or anything that directs them or lightens the mood, makes them seen and appreciated.
- Building SIGNAGE - Work with your neighbors to cross promote or share advertising to maximize your budget. Balloons have become one of the symbols of SF Open Studios, so they are always a good idea. Clear signs outside your studio, arrows pointing, or professional banners.

## **CONTINUITY**

- Try to enter your space with fresh eyes or ask a friend to help check if you missed anything or if something seems out of place. How does your space look and feel? There are so many details to manage and sometimes it helps to get an outside perspective to see anew and be sure you are presenting your best.

## **YOU!**

- Be sure to get yourself ready as well - what will you wear? How will it look in your space and in front of your work? Be both comfortable and sharp.
- Be well rested and well hydrated leading up to the big weekend.
- Plan how/what/when you will eat your meals.
- Enlist trusted helpers from friends and family to ease the load of carrying artwork, installing, and even talking to visitors if you need to take a break.
- You need to be functioning at your best so you can get the most out of all your interactions with your guests.
- Remember to have fun!

## **SELL YOUR ART (SPECIAL THANKS TO DIMITRI KOUROUNIOTIS, KEY CONTRIBUTOR)**

## **GREET THE CUSTOMER**

But do NOT pressure them. Be sincere. Allow them time and space to view the artwork. Stand, don't sit. Do not create a barrier around you of private space. Dress nicely, like to a good party. Wear comfortable shoes.

## **PERMISSIVE SELLING**

Allow the customer to give you permission to sell to them. After you have greeted them and given them space, they will indicate they are ready to talk or want to know more. For those who are receptive to chat, this is a good time to show samples of work in progress, discuss processes, and learn more about their interests.

## **LISTEN TO THE CUSTOMER**

They will tell you how they want to be sold to and what objections, if any, they need to overcome. Address them by their first names. Look them in the eye when you introduce yourself. Meet all customers' friends. They may influence the buying decision. Keep an eye on their body language and learn to read it, you'll notice the body language is very different if someone is arrested by a particular artwork, versus someone being polite. Keep an ear open for Ownership Language - "We love this piece!", "This piece would look great in our living room!", "These colors would work great for us!" - When you are at this point, it is a very good thing for both of you.

## **WHEN YOU ARE STUCK**

Ask if or which piece caught their eye (not which is their favorite). After a customer says they love/are interested in a particular piece(s) - mention the title and briefly say what you like about it personally. Ask if they know what drew them to it (note they may not have the vocabulary). You can also, once you've established that they like a piece, ask them if they were looking for a piece for a particular space or of a particular emotional connection/size/theme/color palette etc. Note: this is only to keep the discussion going so the customer can continue to vocalize their needs and wants in artwork, which are often abstract versus specific (which would be the case for a technology purchase for example).

## **FOCUS ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN**

Buying is an emotional issue which is nudged along by decision making such as, but not limited to, price, size, color, content, delivery, installation, husband/wife/partner/friends' opinions, future remodeling, future decorating, special events, payment methods, home visits with art pieces etc. If someone asks a left brain question-- be clear, brief, and precise. Then move back to how that would relate to the art and work with them to clear other hurdles/decisions to help them buy.

## **BE MENTALLY PREPARED TO DEAL WITH BARGAINERS AND OFFERS**

If they cannot pay right now, are you willing to offer a payment plan (ex: 6 checks to be deposited over 6 months)? If it's only slightly outside their budget, would you give 5% off to close the deal today? If they are interested in more than one piece, can you discount the second? Different artists have very different feelings about this. You should think through what your flexibility is so that you can be clear with your customer, and never come away from a sale feeling like you've agreed to too low a price.

## **STORY SELLS**

Have a brief story that sells your work, about your motivation to do what you do, in the way you do it.

## **FRIENDS & FAMILY**

Make sure they do not hog your time gossiping and catching up and respect that you are at work. But also note that they will be the first people exposed to your work and often the first to buy it. If a customer walks into your space and they feel like they are interrupting a private conversation, they will probably walk right out.

## **COMMON QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER**

## **DO YOU SHIP?**

Calculate the cost (don't forget packaging) for your most popular pieces, so that you will have the answer ready if someone wants you to ship, at least domestically. San Francisco is a tourist town and it's valuable to make it is easy for visitors to buy. Try to keep your shipping charges as low as possible. If you can throw in free shipping, that can often help close a sale, but don't promise shipping if you are not prepared to, or you don't know the costs!

## **DELIVERY?**

Are you willing and able to deliver a piece? Will you charge for that? With very large pieces, delivery and installation is often expected, and it is a good time for you to build more rapport with your collector. Also, the artist will be more likely to find the perfect spot for a piece, increasing the likelihood that the client will love it.

## **TEST DRIVE?**

Are you willing to send a piece home with someone "on approval"? Under what terms? Sometimes a client feels like they need to see a piece in their space, but you want to make sure that it isn't out of view to other potential buyers during your weekend.

## **CUSTOM?**

Will you consider taking commissions? Often visitors love an artist's style, but want something made specially for them. This can be fruitful or frustrating, depending on the chemistry of the artists and client. Think about what your criteria are for taking commission before your Open Studio.

## **YOUR WAY**

Every studio will have different variations on a sales process, but whatever yours is, play it through your mind, or even with a friend, until you find the system that works for you. It's better to find the gaps ahead of time than work them out on the fly!

## **PROCESSING THE SALE (SPECIAL THANKS TO AUDREY HELLER, KEY CONTRIBUTOR)**

They love it, they want it, they're ready to buy it. Are you ready to sell it? Step through every move from when the customer says "Yes!" to the moment they have your art in their home to make sure all of the little bits are in place.

Remember: your new clients are most likely your future clients. Giving them a great experience with their purchase, no matter how small, is a great investment.

## **WRITING IT UP**

A custom two-part form allows you to create a receipt with your contact information and the information you want to collect from buyers. You can have one printed at most office print locations in small quantities. A standard two-part receipt book is fine, too.

## **WHAT YOU WANT TO CAPTURE ON A RECEIPT**

- Buyer name
- E-mail (If you only get one point of contact, get this!)
- Street address (At least city)
- Phone (For follow up or unconfirmed credit card charge)
- What they bought (Be specific.)
- Price
- Discount- if any
- Tax
- Shipping-if any

- Total

After giving the customer their copy, scribble any memorable moments from the transaction on your copy.

## **THE MECHANICS**

- Do you have a writing and packaging surface clear and enough GOOD pens handy? The customer shouldn't be awkward when they are filling something out or writing a check. Clipboards can be useful.
- Write the name of the piece(s) and the edition number or other identifying feature on the receipt. It can be useful for you to know the exact frame that something is in in case you have follow up sales to the same client.
- If you are going to give a discount, write the UNDISCOUNTED price on the receipt, followed by the amount of the discount, followed by the new subtotal. Let people know what you are giving them.
- Write the payment method on the receipt, including the check number, if applicable.
- Have the customer fill out as much personal information as they are willing to give, but definitely full name, e-mail, and the city where they live. For larger purchases, try to get a street address so that you can send that customer special mailings or a thank you note, or other lovely treat.
- Check for legibility before they run off! Particularly for e-mails!
- Keep the original and give them the copy.

If someone buys anything, have them fill out a receipt It can be a \$10 cash sale but they could grow into an important collector. Remember: with electronic card readers, you are not retaining the customer's e-mail even if they enter it. Don't let any customer walk away without knowing how to reach them again.

## **HOW WOULD THEY LIKE TO PAY?**

- Are you set up to take credit cards? Know which ones and TEST YOUR PROCESS every day before your first customer. There is nothing that makes a customer antsy like watching you swipe their AmEx a hundred times, or hear you say "I'm not sure that went through..." or otherwise feel insecure about your money handling. Be sure to check the customer's credit card for signature, or ask for ID, and be sure to give it back!
- Do you have needed supplies and power for your credit card service? If you are using your cell phone, make sure to be equipped to recharge during the day!
- Do you take checks? Decide now what your criteria will be for accepting personal checks, particularly out-of-area. Write the check # on the receipt.
- Cash? Do you have change in the right denominations? Plan on everyone paying with \$20 bills for purchases under \$50. You can round in the customer's favor if you can't make exact change, but don't get stuck being off by more than a couple of dollars. Don't deflate the excitement of the moment by scrounging for loose coins! Where are you keeping the cash? Keeping cash somewhere other than your personal wallet looks more businesslike, but keep it safe and secure. Do you know where the nearest ATM is?
- Some artists are comfortable working out payment plans, and some are not. You should decide what your policy is so that you are comfortable with it. The ArtSpan Facebook Page is a great place to find out what other artists do.

Bottom line: Make it as easy and painless as possible for your customer to pay. Money should not feel like the center of the transaction, your art should.

## **GETTING IT HOME**

Do you have a bag, a box, or other packaging material, to make sure your art gets to its new home safely? If there's rain in the forecast, have plastic bags. Recycling is fabulous, but be sure your packaging material is clean and appropriately sized. Thoughtful packaging shows that you consider the purchase to be a thing of value. They should get home feeling like they have a treasure.

Print labels with your logo, name, website, and contact information and put it on the bags or packing materials. This is also great marketing if you're in a group site, others will see your new collectors holding a piece of art with your logo and want to see the artist's work that just sold.

What else is going in the bag? Even a tiny treat goes a long way in cementing your new relationship. If you give customers a greeting card when they buy a print, they may send it to someone and introduce you to another potential collector. Be sure to include a business card or two.

## **THE LONG GAME- KEEPING IN CONTACT (SPECIAL THANKS TO AUDREY HELLER, KEY CONTRIBUTOR)**

### **YOUR GUEST BOOK IS GOLD**

For an independent artist, a mailing list is an incredibly valuable tool. Giving your business card is great, but it puts the next contact in their hands. It should be in your hands. Always have a guest book handy at your Open Studio! Invite every visitor to sign the guest book. You never know who is going to be a customer or who will link you to a customer.

### **ORGANIZING YOUR GUEST BOOK**

Maintain your list in a searchable database. This could be a spreadsheet like Excel or Google Docs or a more dynamic database like Filemaker Pro. The more information you maintain, the more valuable this list becomes. It will be the key to your NEXT Open Studio. Some of it may seem like overkill when your list is small, but as your list grows, the extra effort will be worthwhile.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL FIELDS/ SPREADSHEET COLUMNS**

- First name
- Last name (keeping the names separate gives you more sorting and personalization options)
- Second name (Spouse, partner, etc.)
- E-mail
- Street Address
- City
- State (You might want to send a message to people only in San Francisco, or only Colorado, or only Chicago. It makes your e-mail more relevant than if it can be location based)
- Zip Code
- Phone
- Date added to your list
- Source of Contact ("Open Studios 2014", "Web", "ArtSpan Mixer", etc. This is very handy for deciding who you will contact about future events.)
- Category (Friend, colleague, artist, none)
- Receive promotional mail? Yes/No
- Collector? Yes/No (These are folks who might get some extra loving, like a real card sent through the mail or a special invite or offer.)
- Notes ("Newlyweds", "Funny 6-year old who showed me his lego", "Regular visitor". Anything that might add a personal touch to a future contact.)

Your mailing list is GOLD. The time you spend setting it up, cleaning it, adding to it, and organizing it may seem tedious, but it will pay off over time.

### **FOLLOW UP**

Send cards or e-mails with pictures of artwork people liked after the event. Always include an appropriately sized image of your work, a link to your website, and a notice of your next event.

### **GET READY FOR NEXT TIME**

Take photos of your set-up and display so next time, you can repeat what you liked.

Make your own checklist of what you need to prepare so next time it's easier.

Save all your templates: newsletter, postcard, and ad for the guide and then each year you can just drop a new image and change text as needed.

Make sure to take photographs and measurements of all work for your records.

Most of all, enjoy the weekend! Take time to look at all your accomplishments; your new series of work, your clean studio! Each time you do Open Studios, you will build on your experiences from the previous years. There is a reason so many SF Open Studios artists have been participating year after year. It is a wonderful event and a great way to build your art career!