



North Wales Open Studios Network
Helfa Gelf / Art Trail
Welcome Pack

How to hold a successful Open Studios Event

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About Helfa Gelf North Wales Open Studios

Helpa Gelf Membership

Your Helpa Gelf membership will run for a year. There are three membership types, all provide a webpage that can be updated at any time with text and images, plus news of residencies, discounted training and exhibition opportunities.

Gold Membership for individuals and Groups of 2 or more artists, giving a double slot in the Art Trail Brochure (two images plus extra space for text).

Silver Membership for individuals with a single slot in the Art Trail Brochure which includes one image.

Bronze Membership available throughout the year. They are not part of Art Trail/Open Studio experience and have no entry in the Brochure.

How is Helpa Gelf run?

Helpa Gelf Cyfyngedig is a not for profit company limited by guarantee. It is run by a board of directors and management committee, who liaise closely with the contracted staff for project coordination, training coordination and accounts.

The Committee:

The Helpa Gelf steering group is a group of elected artist volunteers who run the event. They are the main decision making body of the organization and meet quarterly. There are artists from all 5 counties on the committee, ensuring that everyone has an equal say. The Arts Officers from each county are observers to this committee and make sure that the project is on track. The committee is elected at the AGM each year.

Interested in helping us?

We would love to hear from you if you are interested in being part of the team that makes HG happen every year. For further information about this please get in touch with Menna (details below).

The Administrator:

Menna Thomas is the part-time coordinator of the event. She is responsible for things running smoothly and for implementing the decisions the committee make. You can get in touch with her on 07472531813 between the hours of 9am-3pm Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays or e-mail her on menna@helfagelf.co.uk anytime.

Katie Trent is the part-time training coordinator. She is responsible for the training programme of events which coincide with the annual events. She works variable hours during the weeks. You can get in touch with Katie by e-mail on Katie@helfagelf.co.uk.

We can also be contacted on info@helfagelf.co.uk.

The Clusters:

It is very important to the event that it is organised from a grass roots level. To ensure that all artists are informed and help make the event a success we have implemented a system of clusters. Each cluster will contain around 10-15 artists living locally to each other, who can support each other in the run-up and throughout the event. This includes circulating marketing material, putting up banners and signposts, advertising each other's studios etc. Previously artists met in pubs or cafés and made sure they were on target with mail-outs, marketing etc. and this worked really well, creating an artists' support network. Your local cluster leader should have already got in touch with you, if not please contact Menna to find out who they are.

Communication

As you can imagine, communicating with over 250 artists in 5 counties is very difficult. For financial and ecological reasons, we will be contacting you via the e-mail address you have supplied us with. It is therefore imperative that you make sure you check your mail regularly and that you let us know should your e-mail address change. Due to the volume of e-mails we send to our membership it may be possible that your computer will put HG e-mails into SPAM, so please also check your SPAM folder. Information will also appear on our website and on our Facebook group page.

Website

The website is a key part of the event. It will contain all the info you gave us on the application form about yourself and your studio as well as your picture. Your webpage is the easiest way of keeping visitors informed of what your studio will have to offer during the event. Just in case you want to change the info or your picture we will give you full access to your webpage and you can keep it updated. WE CANNOT UPDATE YOUR WEBPAGE FOR YOU, we just don't have the resources. If you have your own website, your webpage will contain a link to this. The webpage really is the best way of selling your studio and boosting visitor numbers, so please make sure you maximize its potential.

All Helfa Gelf training are listed on the events pages along with our exhibitions and residencies.

Images

By now all of you should have submitted an image for our brochure and website. This is your Helfa Gelf image. We will be using it for publicity material throughout your membership year. So, it may crop up on an invitation for a private view for one of our exhibitions or in a press release or even on our event postcard. Please make sure you have the copyright to the image you have given us.

Insurance/Health and Safety/Risk Assessment

Helfa Gelf will have a full public liability insurance to cover the event. However, you are responsible for the health and safety of your studio. Please carry out a full risk assessment and fill in the form provided. Identify the hazards in your studio and minimize them. If there is a dangerous step, put a sign up. Stick down all loose wiring. Make all trip hazards safe. Clearly point out or put up signs indicating dangerous or hazardous areas of your studio. Make sure chemicals and tools are handled and stored safely. We have enclosed a risk assessment form. It is imperative that you read and act on the Health and Safety instructions below, as without implementing the correct steps your studio will not be covered by our insurance! Once you have filled in the form please do NOT return it to us, but have it clearly posted up in your studio.

Hints and Tips for opening your studio

(advice gleaned from participants from previous years).....

The success of Helfa Gelf/Art Trail depends on each artist/maker doing everything they can to make this a memorable and worthwhile activity. The more you put into the event the more you will get out of it!

It's very important that all participants commit to publicising the event and do their best to provide a quality visitor experience.

Before it starts

- Personally invite at least 50 people to your studio. Send or give out the brochure/cluster maps with a personalized invitation, in whatever format suits you (bookmark at the appropriate page, postcard,

handwritten note/card, newsletter etc). Include information specific to you and your artform, location, directions, other nearby studios, etc. More brochures/maps are available for artists/makers who wish to do larger mailings.

- Make contact with the other participants in your area (clusters) and familiarise yourself with their location so you can direct visitors to other studios.
- Arrange with your 'cluster' to co-ordinate a brochure/map/posters drop at local shops, hotels, pubs, tea rooms, community halls/groups/ doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms etc. There will be a supply of brochures somewhere locally – ask your cluster leader if you're not sure where. Check that they are on show, on a weekly basis.
- Start as soon as possible to promote the event but allow at least three weeks before it starts for mailings and personal invitations. Take every opportunity that arises to talk about it, keep brochure/cluster maps in pockets/bags/car to give out.
- Use emails, Facebook, Twitter etc to send out invitations and reminders (it's a good idea to keep doing this during the event as well).
- Make sure your webpage is completely up to date with all information.
- If you fancy doing drop-in workshops (this has been very successful for some artists in previous years in terms of increasing visitor numbers and local exposure) let HG know, so it can be advertised on-line and let the local papers know.
- Think about how you can increase your exposure and market your studio. Use the Press Release templates (follow the HG guidelines). How about organising an exhibition for your cluster in the run-up to the event? Get in touch with Menna for possible venues!

Preparation of your workspace

- Safety of visitors is important! Check access thoroughly, rope off or clearly mark areas that are off limits to visitors. Unplug tools when not in use and keep any chemicals etc out of reach of small hands.
- Display your Risk assessment form. On the resources page there is an extra detailed file on assessing risks from Flintshire County Council which you should also read through.
- Mark steps or uneven pavement/flooring (a roll of sticky waterproof yellow 'Hippo' tape from the builders merchants is good).
- Clearly mark areas that are private i.e. lock doors/put up PRIVATE signs.
- Make sure you have adequate lighting for the evening openings.
- Don't leave any extension leads lying around, and be mindful of anything could fall on someone or trip someone up. Ask someone to walk around with you to point out things you may be too familiar with to have noticed as a hazard.
- Public liability insurance is arranged through HGC, but sensible safety precautions should be taken to avoid accidents. This Insurance will not cover damage to or theft of your own property/artworks etc.
- Check that your doorbell works! (Can you hear it from your studio...there are portable ones available)
- Have decent door mats in place to stop mud/leaves etc being trodden in.
- Make sure the signs/banners (supplied) are in a visible location to attract visitors and that it is really obvious where your studio is. Add extra signs, arrows, bunting, flags etc further down your drive, etc. As it's a temporary event we think it's probably legal to put small notices on verges, but please exercise

caution and use your discretion regarding road users and pedestrians. Put them out when you are open, but not on the days you are closed!

- You might want to consider putting up signs in your work space that say 'Please ask if you would like to take photographs' (easier than telling someone that they cannot photograph your work, if you feel strongly that they shouldn't)
- You must be open on the days that are stated in the brochure. Make a contingency plan should a problem arise (eg arrange for a family member/friend to briefly stand in for you, for a real emergency... try not to run out of milk and find yourself dashing to the shop)
- Consider asking people to help you during the event. Art students often need to provide evidence of 'professional practice' or work placements. Family or friends may be willing to lend a hand (especially if you live in an out of the way location). Visitors tend to be like buses. None for a while then they all arrive at once, and an extra pair of hands is really useful.
- Try to avoid being on your own if at all possible for your own safety. Take reasonable precautions with your possessions; don't leave valuables on display or handbags etc lying around.
- Decide what you want to offer visitors as an interesting insight into your work, but be adaptable as the event happens. Work in progress stimulates discussion of processes and ideas. Every artist/maker is unique in their approach to their work, some can work easily on a piece of work under the stare of visitors, while other artists find this more difficult.
- If it's appropriate to your practice have an area set aside as a demo area and/or a 'have a go' activity.
- Have lots to look at! Visitors enjoy browsing and asking questions.
- A simple activity for children goes down well (piece of clay, colouring pencils, paper etc)

Selling during the event

- Price work clearly in advance, print price lists etc. Label all work that is for sale. You don't want to be rummaging around for a price, or making one up under pressure.
- Open Studios isn't about holding a Sale but a bargain box amongst your normally priced work can be a good idea. It can be useful to have a few small items, cards, postcards, bookmarks etc but not too many unless that's all you want to end up selling!
- If you sell Reproduction prints you should clearly state what they are. There is often confusion in the mind of the buyer between Original Prints (lino, woodcut editions etc) and a reproduced image of an original painting.
- Be consistent with pricing - if you sell work elsewhere - keep it similar (remember you have heating/lighting and other overheads even if you work at home.) Don't undervalue your work by making it too cheap/or go to the other extreme! Be willing and prepared to negotiate, or provide a discount for more than one item. If you are a young/new artist people are likely to expect your work to be cheaper than the work of a professional who has built up a reputation over many years.
- Keep a record of sales, even small items, and names and addresses (explain it is for your records), in case a problem occurs later.
- Be confident in discussing financial transactions. Visitors may want to make payment in various ways, including cash, cheques, BACs, or credit/debit card if you have that facility. Use your discretion in what you agree to. Base your decisions on whether you know them and where they live, whether they've bought before from you, the value of the work etc. It may be appropriate to offer stage payments, to enable a sale to take place (standing order arrangement).

- If appropriate give advice on the 'aftercare' of the work (protection/cleaning/framing etc.) You want people to be delighted with their purchase and hopefully return for more. Ask if you can add them to your contact list.
- Have a supply of bags/bubble wrap etc. for wrapping purchases.

During the event

- If you are in a group or sharing a space, resist the temptation to talk amongst yourselves or stay together. Take turns in welcoming visitors, making the tea etc
- Offer visitors refreshments if you can (people will travel far for good cake!!). A list of nearby tea shops etc would be useful but make sure they know about the event in advance. This could also be a great marketing opportunity. Ask if they will let you display brochures, posters, maps about the event. Try not to direct visitors to eating places within retail outlets (eg garden centre) in case they stay put and spend their money there instead of at an artist's studio!
- Keep an accurate daily record of numbers of visitors and enquiries/sales on the tick sheets you will be provided with (people usually write nice things, so this is a great morale booster!).
- Have a sheet/book/form for visitors to write their name on as they arrive each day. This really helps to recall who visited you on which day. Also, you can check the sheet while your visitors aren't looking and impress them with your recall!
- Encourage visitors to fill in feedback forms (provided) for the benefit of the project's future (you can make a note/copy the info on the form for future contact).
- You do not have to let anyone in just to use your toilet! Apologize, but explain that the insurance only covers the studio area
- Be polite at all times! In the unfortunate event that someone complains, deal with the complaint politely, and try to resolve it fairly at once, if possible. Helfa Gelf Cyf cannot intervene in disputes about pricing, quality of work supplied, or similar issues. However, we have a Complaints Policy, and if the complaint concerns the Helfa Gelf organisation please refer it to you Cluster leader or to our help line on info@helfagelf.co.uk.
- Thank people for visiting, even if they do not buy anything. They may come back! Direct them to other artists in your 'cluster'.

After the event

Please take time to evaluate the project and return all requested forms and flags. We cannot accurately evaluate the event without your feedback! We are also required to supply attendance statistics etc. to our funders – no statistics, no money.

.... and most of all enjoy the experience of sharing your work with others!

