



Hints and Tips for opening your studio

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. Due to our very late funding approval this year provides extra challenges in terms of marketing and publicity. The following hints and tips have been gleaned from previous participants' experiences of what has worked for them.

Press Releases

Write a Press Release about your studio, work and event and send it to the local papers. We will provide you with a template for doing this. The Press are interested in human interest stories and local talent! Think about what makes your story unique and news-worthy. The more studios send in press releases the bigger the impact will be. You can also use your Press release for on-line promotion.

Before it starts

Personal contact, word of mouth, mail-shots

- **Personally invite at least 50 people to your studio.** Send or give out the brochure 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 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. Your local library will have a supply of brochures. Check that they are on show, on a weekly basis. **Make sure the brochure is visible in your local area!**
- **Start as soon as possible** to promote the event but allow at least two weeks before it starts for mailings and personal invitations. **Take every opportunity that arises to talk about it,** keep brochures in pockets/bags/car to give out.

Social Media and on-line promotion

- Do you have an e-mailing list? If not, use the event as a springboard to start one. Encourage visitors to leave their details should they wish to receive information about you and your studio in the future. Please be very clear HOW you intend to use their contact information. Prepare a visitor book or mailing list form, which clearly states you will not pass their information on to a third party.
- If you have an e-mailing list, do an email –out, giving potential visitors your opening dates and linking to your webpage and any social media you have. Do this both before and during the event, as a reminder.
- Use your social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter) etc to send out invitations and reminders .Again, it's a good idea to keep doing this during the event as well. Use these actively in the lead up to event to promote your studio, work and any events you will be doing. Please note: Social media is a very effective marketing tool with a wide reach to potential new audiences and clients. It is therefore not a good idea to use social media to vent your personal feelings about visitors, lack of visitors, the weather etc. KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL!
- Make sure your Helfa Gelf webpage is completely up to date with all information and make sure you add images, video etc so there is something exciting for potential visitors to see. It is a fantastic promotional tool.

Developing your Open studios into a unique event

- Think about maximising the visitor experience to your studio. Put yourself in the shoes of the visitor who is arriving at your studio for the first time. You want your visitors to feel welcome; you need to get them interested in your work and processes.
- 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. This can be a real ice breaker and helps visitors understand processes. Think about how to engage people in what you do.
- A simple activity for children goes down well (piece of clay, colouring pencils, paper etc)

Selling during the event

- Have lots to look at! Visitors enjoy browsing and asking questions
- Spend some time considering how you will display your work, curate your space. Think of the different “zones” your space can offer visitors, ie demonstration space, retail space, activity space.
- 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. Make sure pricelists look professional and are something that visitors can take away with them.
- 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!
- 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.
- If you fancy doing drop-in workshops (this was very successful for some artists last year in terms of increasing visitor numbers, sales and local exposure) let HG know, so it can be advertised on-line and let the local papers know.

Preparation of your workspace

- Safety of visitors is important! Check access thoroughly, rope off or clearly mark areas that are off limits to visitors. Take precautions in your workspace: Unplug tools when not in use and keep any chemicals or hazardous objects /tools etc out of reach of small hands.
- 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 that could fall on someone or trip a visitor up. Ask someone to walk round with you to point out things you may be too familiar with to have noticed as a hazard. Walk the route a visitor would walk through your space and mark the hazards as you go along on your risk assessments.
- Make sure you minimize any risks to visitors you identify by using sensible safety precautions so accidents can be avoided.
- **Once completed clearly display your Risk Assessment Form.**
- Public liability insurance is arranged through HGC. **This Insurance will not cover damage to or theft of your own property/artworks etc. so PLEASE BE SENSIBLE AND DON'T LEAVE VALUABLES (INCLUDING ANY TAKINGS, MOBILE PHONES ETC) LYING AROUND IN CLEAR VIEW.** Take reasonable precautions with your possessions.
- Get a proper lockable cashbox for any cash takings and don't leave it in clear view.
- 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.
- 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.

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 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. Please note: refreshments count as a "risk" on your risk assessment form.(hot drinks, food contamination etc)
- 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
- 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 with our artist feedback form. We cannot accurately evaluate the event without your feedback! We are also required to supply attendance and sales statistics etc. to our funders – no statistics, no money. So please ensure you let us know how it went.

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