

Cheshire Open Studios

Tips for opening

- You **must have work on display** for visitors to view. Treat it as a mini exhibition. This can include photos / photocopies of old work, sketchbooks, mood boards, prints, cards, business cards etc.
- It **can be quite interesting to show processes** in some way i.e. a display of stages of work or a work in progress or some people do demonstrations, always interesting (but people will want to talk too)
- Try to 'unclutter' your studio a bit, putting away items that are not relevant to the way that you work. Visitors often like to see some 'artistic clutter' as it gives an impression of the way you work. A tidy studio makes for a safe environment for your visitors.
- If your studio is in your home it may be advisable to move breakable items and ensure doors are shut to rooms that you don't want people to enter. It may be an idea to put up 'private' signs.
- If you have a loo accessible to visitors it may be an idea to put a sign on the door.
- On occasion visitors may bring young children so would recommend putting child protection covers on unused sockets or switch them off or corner protection covers on table corners.
- This is a great **opportunity to sell** (you are under no obligation to) or promote other work you do e.g. workshops, demos, community work etc.
- It is good to have a wide price range of pieces to sell i.e. prints, postcards to large pieces. Unframed work and (clearly labelled) seconds can both be good sellers.
- If you are selling work try to have things **clearly labelled** – stating materials, title & price – in case you're busy or people feel intimidated to ask.
- If you are selling work you may need some **petty cash** for change.
- You may also need to have wrapping / packing / bags available.
- It can be useful to have business cards / personal info / CVs or Artist statements, leaflets or posters available to hand out to people.
- **Open 10am – 5pm**, people do arrive at 10am, so get there a bit earlier.

- **Be there in person**, people want to meet & talk to the artists.
- For the artists' questionnaire you need to know **how many people visit** your studio on each day – so try to keep a tally or get them to complete your guest or visitors book.
- Some people do serve refreshments e.g. drinks & eats / nibbles. Serving tea / coffee– can tie you to the kitchen. Cold drinks may be easier for self serve! These are good to offer as many people travel a long way. Also encourage a donation for our nominated charity!
- It can be good to have someone with you on the day i.e. a friend or a student – they can help with hospitality e.g. large no's of visitors / children visiting (get them drawing, telling stories) / serving drinks etc.
- People can end up arriving in waves so sometimes you can be very busy or empty.
- If taking part from home it may be good to let your neighbours know – they may end up having people parked on the drive etc.
- Put your **yellow signs in conspicuous places**, so that visitors unfamiliar with your area can find you easily. Balloons help attract attention. Be sure to check them throughout the day and take them down at the end of each day.
- Make sure that your signs are only up when you're open to avoid confusion.
- Think about **parking** – is it safe to park on the road or is there a handy nearby car park. For example if there is a restaurant or pub car park nearby –do ask permission!
- Have a map available to help people find other local studios near you.
- Some small local groupings of artists have displayed a piece or postcard of each others work as an advert for each others nearby studios – this may be appropriate for you and another artist or two.
- It can be a good idea to have a **guest or visitors book** – email and mailing addresses can be used to promote future exhibitions / events to interested parties. You shouldn't pass these addresses on to other people or create a computer database with them without checking with **data protection**. You can however use them yourself but should handwrite them! If indicated by the visitor that they would like to be kept informed of future COS events or to receive a COS newsletter please forward on email addresses to the Project Coordinator at info@cheshireopenstudios.org.uk.
- You will receive a link to the **visitors' questionnaires** which can be downloaded from the website. . If you have a laptop or PC in your studio or

your visitor has a Smartphone with internet access then encourage and signpost them to complete a feedback form by these means via our website. If a visitor hasn't filled out a questionnaire this year please ask them to do so if possible. The questionnaires are important as they provide invaluable information on the success of the project that allows us to get funding and therefore continue the project for future years

- Please display the **Visitors Questionnaire poster** (downloadable from the website), if possible, near to the printed questionnaires or laptop/PC in your studio.
- Please **display the Disclaimer** which can be downloaded from the website.
- Please complete and submit your **risk assessment prior to your open weekend**. Do the jobs you needed to do as you have stated on your **risk assessment**.
- Please display your **Fire Notice** which can be downloaded from the website and advise your visitors of any potential hazards or health & safety issues whilst visiting your studio.
- Please keep two or three copies of the **Accident/Incident Form** (downloadable from the website) handy for visitors to complete if necessary.
- If you have **insurance** please contact them to inform them that your studio will be open to the public and you will need to ensure your COS weekend is covered by your **Public liability Insurance (PLI)** a copy of which must be submitted to COS **before** your open weekend.
- Please read through your **artists' questionnaire** (downloadable from the website) prior to your open weekend as there are some things we try to record that you may need to be aware of before you open e.g. counting the number of people visiting your studio, keeping a record of sales/bookings etc. This questionnaire is now available to complete online from the website (see under Contact Us on the website) and **MUST** be completed within a month after your open weekend so probably a good idea to complete it on the evening of your last day or the following morning whilst things are still fresh in your mind.

We hope this information has been useful. If there is anything else that you would like clarification on or would like see added to this document please email Midge at info@cheshireopenstudios.org.uk.

Good luck with your open weekend and hope it will be an enjoyable and fruitful one!

PLEASE NOTE: From 2012 we are aiming to reduce our use of paper & printed materials. Hence:

- a. Most notices have been created to be generic so they can be used again for future years so keep them safe for next time. COS will advise you if these should ever change in the future. Only print what is needed.**
- b. All forms, notices & signs are no longer printed & handed out at meetings (i.e. we no longer have the capacity to do this). Hence it is the responsibility of the artist to download and print these from the website as needed. If you have no access to a printer let other artists near you know as they may be able to help, if not contact Midge at info@cheshireopenstudios.org.uk.**
- c. In the past feedback forms were mainly posted. However we would like to encourage both artists & visitors to make more use of email, downloadable forms and online forms on the website. Using electronic feedback helps saves time, money and makes collation & analysis of the data easier to manage.**
- d. COS has a limited number of posters printed each year (100 approx). Some will be available for artists to have to display in their selected locations upon request. The remainder are distributed to the council to display in libraries and tourist information centres. A copy of the poster will also be downloadable from the website for artists to print their own additional copies if needed.**
- e. COS also provide PRESS RELEASE documents in electronic form which again can be downloaded from the website to be printed & distributed by email etc.**

If you have any questions or issues relating to these points please contact Midge at info@cheshireopenstudios.org.uk or phone 07808944550.