

Preparing for Open Studios 2024

Keep informed, be ready for early deadlines

- Program launch meeting on Zoom **January 11**
- Artist Resource page: <https://www.artatthesource.org/resource>
- Facebook private group Art at the Source Artist's Forum- for general questions to other artist in AATS, not for self-promotion
- Prepare Excel mail list for **Jan 22**: First name, last name, street, city, zip
- Consider purchasing an ad in the catalog Deadline (**March 11**)
- Catalog proofing online **March 22-24**.
- Legalities—insurance, resale number, collect taxes, biz license in some cities
- Make a calendar with a time-line for important deadlines such as proofing, preview show drop off and pick up, printed materials (5 weeks), social media postings. Post prominently.

Marketing- **Marketing Workshop Feb 24**

- SCA will promote but you need to reach out to people who know you. Develop contact lists.
- Update your website with current images, preview show/ open studio dates/ AATS website link
- Facebook or Instagram—send several posts in the lead up, work in progress shots, details, teases, short videos, cross posting from one to the other, like and share AATS posts. Use hashtags #artatthesource #aats #aats2024 #sebarts #openstudios
- Promotional postcards with image even if you are not mailing. Provide cards to SCA, nearby studios and businesses, friends, (5 weeks lead time).
- E-mail blast to friends/potential visitors—Schedule when to send (3+ weeks early save-the-date, resend 1 week to 3 days before, midweek reminder for second weekend, thanks after it ends.)
- Coordinate with other artists in your area. Share postcard or catalog ads. Host a gathering at one artist's house to become familiar with their work and trade postcards.

Preparing to Show

- Select a good image for required preview show at SebArts. Use different images for catalog/preview/postcard so there's a range of images to like. Consider drop off and pick up dates for optional shows, but don't overextend yourself.
- Print business cards and postcards (5 weeks lead time to design/print/ship/mail)
- Prepare your bio and artist statement with contact information. Have a few copies.
- Frames: Keep them basic and similar.
- Display and lighting: Grouped or themed displays, color/pattern matching, good lighting.
- Photos of your work must be good quality (background cropped, square, lighting, focus, size).
- Have professional, protective wrapping (and area to wrap in). Include your contact info.
- Present yourself professionally, printed labels, forms, receipts, taxes.
- Print greeting cards and sell as package. If you have many, create a display so they're easily seen.
- If you are being hosted at a studio, discuss how to share responsibilities. Talk about the

amount of display space, work involved cleaning or preparing, food, road signs, demonstrations. If you want to bring an assistant, discuss that with the host.

Road Signs—You get three. If you want more, order by **Feb. 14**.

- Hang Friday night, take down on Sunday for both weekends. Do not leave up between weekends.
- Never on CalTrans property, posts, road signs, or in line of sight of drivers. They will be removed.
- Make them bold, LARGE numbers 5”to 8” especially on a fast road.
- Coordinate with artists in your area, and signage from their studios.
- Cover all printed paper with tape so it won’t buckle or bleed.
- Sawhorse or A-frame signs need to be weighted or very stable.
- H wires work well in soft or sandy soil. Rebar is better in hard dirt. Zip tie or Velcro stake to post.

Sales

- Have you got a pricing strategy? Research and compare artists who have similar medium/size/materials/reputation. Offer a range of prices. Studio prices should be the same as your work in a gallery.
- Will you take checks? Credit cards? Consider SquareUp, PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay. Discounts (not advised) Negotiable Price (No).
- Making the sale: “What can I do to make this work for you? What is holding you back?” Consider “on approval” sale. Take credit card info and let them have it for a week or so before charging. Take time payments in the form of postdated checks.
- Test credit card processing before your first sale, check connections.
- Have lots of small bills, cash on hand, receipt book and a place for wrapping work.
- Collect and show tax on receipt. Check current rate for your city at <https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/rates.aspx> . Unincorporated Sonoma county is 8.5%
- Will you do commissions? Do you have a contract or require a deposit? Usually something like three payments, three viewings of work in progress.
- Remind them they can contact you through the year if true.
- Return policy? For credit/All sales final? Post clearly to save misunderstandings.
- Have pieces to replace holes in the wall after sales.

Gathering Contacts

- People who come to your studio are your best contacts and you must capture these and keep building it year to year. Get addresses of all sales. Square does not collect this.
- Set out a sign-in sheet with large spaces to write for legibility. Indicate information you’d like: name, address, city, zip, e-mail, interested in class, comments. Check that you can read it before they leave. OR set up a tablet or laptop and let them enter it into a database. For your own files, note the year so older names can be cleaned out when necessary.
- SebArts is now creating a permanent list for receiving the catalog but they must indicate they want to be on that list. Have SCA checkbox on the sign in. Some may only want to be on your personal list. Assure them the list is de-duplicated.

- Give them an option of email or snail mail, explaining they will get the catalog only with the snail mail address, or postcards if you mail them.
- Do you offer workshops? Have promotional materials, check box on sign-in sheet.
- To encourage people to sign up, offer a small gift or raffle prize for an inexpensive item.
- If you have only email contacts, send them a message asking for their address if they want the catalog delivered. SebArts needs mailing addresses because the catalog is a primary advertising tool. Artists need both so they can do an email campaign to promote, and have a growing list for next year. Ask friends, social groups, and business acquaintances if they're interested (always with permission).
- Ask where they're from, collect their zip code on a tally sheet, useful for SCA advertising.

Create a comfortable environment

- Keep clutter to a minimum. Easier to focus on your art work. Cover distractions with cloth.
- Add comfortable seating for elderly visitors, spouses waiting, kids activity.
- Bathroom policy. Do they need an escort? Pets policy?
- Show work in progress, and work on it in the slow times. Or have a demonstration with preliminary steps set up so it can be executed quickly.
- Create a memory for your visitors so they want to take away a piece of it. Is there an activity that would engage them? A small something to take away?

Studio safety

- Mark uneven surfaces. Hazards such as water, ponds, cords, tripping hazards.
- Consider what is your pet policy, safety of children visiting with parents.
- Mark doors Private if you don't want visitors to enter. Check locks at night.
- Should be code compliant if you list as wheelchair accessible. Parking, slope, small thresholds, narrow passages, restrooms?
- Covid protocol if necessary.
- Parking area. Mark parking if not obvious. Consider traffic flow. Notify neighbors.
- Prepare for weather—rain, heat, wind (weights for tents).

Greeting your customers

- If you're busy, at least acknowledge them when they come in with eye contact and smile.
- Introduce yourself or say something brief, and then invite them to explore and ask questions.
- Leave them alone until they're ready to ask.
- What is your story? How did it come about? What inspires you? What is unusual about your subject or technique? Keep it simple. You may repeat it a lot! Have stories for answers. Signs to answer some questions or explain terms.
- Remember that others in the studio are listening. Get them to look again.
- Have conversation starters. Introduce yourself. Show work in process, inspirations, tools, a list of terms, samples of steps next to a finished work. Ask Where are you from? Have you seen some good art today? Have you been here before?
- Prepare for other artists asking technical questions, and art students interviewing you.

- Keep tally of visitors by day. This info will be asked on the evaluation form.
- When you make a sale, take a picture of the buyer, get their contact info, send them the picture to post for social media (with permission).

Studio helper

- Keep count of visitors. Help with ringing sales or wrapping.
- Security concerns, private signals to keep an eye on someone, escorting someone to bathroom.
- Needed during lunch, bathroom breaks, run out and check signs.
- Keep conversation with friends visiting to a minimum so you won't be distracted.

Snacks optional

- Individually wrapped food is recommended, easy to grab on their way out so they don't feel shy.
- Beverages in small cups, snack appreciated in afternoon, but don't spend too much money. Consider boxed water. Alcohol not recommended for liability.
- Don't forget food and water for yourself to keep your energy up.

Wrap up

- Count the number of pieces sold, total value without tax, and visitor count. Fill out your required evaluation and turn it in Monday after the event is over. All dollar amounts are kept confidential.
- Send thank you notes to your best customers—a personal touch! Send email to everyone who signed up so they remember you before the next event (and to check email validity).
- It is about building relationships over the long term, so don't judge success by one event. It's not about who comes by, but who comes back.