

***Providing a great visitor experience*** has to be one of the key aims for the Open Studios event. If together we achieve this outcome then the event's reputation will continue to grow from strength to strength, attracting more visitors and artists alike.



SURREY ARTISTS OPEN STUDIOS

## **Studio accessibility**

Making your studio accessible is not just about disabled access: it is also about considering the whole visitor experience and making all aspects of your work and studio accessible to them.

### **Guidance & Suggestions:**

- Clearly signpost your studio: not everyone will have directions or a map. Use your A3 laminated arrows placed strategically to direct people off a main road, and put out your balloons and A3 posters, if needed.
- Attach a notice to your studio door/ or entrance to access to your studio detailing your opening days and times, A4 size, text font size minimum 16pt
- If you want visitors to park in a particular place, then display parking signs.
- Do a risk assessment of your studio space, e.g. if you have a low beam, or step up into the studio then put up signs or mark the low beam or step with white or aluminous tape so the hazard can be seen
- Put away your valuables, especially if you are showing in your home.

Consider the following suggestions when setting up your studio to offer the best possible experience for your visitors:

- Good lighting: take advantage of good daylight. If it's a nice day why not display a piece of work outside of your studio on an easel or plinth, to act as a welcoming gesture.
- Provide a seat or stool: this can encourage people to take their time whilst looking through sketch books, or providing a visitor with sore limbs a welcome resting spot!
- Provide a ledge or table to lean/write on: this can be used for allowing visitors to make notes or easily write out a payment.
- Provide drinking water and glasses. The weather may be hot, and being out and about visiting studios can be thirsty work, but do keep refreshments simple, making attending to your visitors needs very easy.
- Label the displayed artwork, in 18pt Arial font. Having the larger font size can help those who may have forgotten their reading glasses. Price lists are very useful, but labels make viewing the work much easier.
- Have a large type version of the pricelist available, as well as your normal price list. Visitors are happy to return the lists, which saves on paper, but it is always handy to have some note paper available for visitors who wish to make notes on the exhibits
- Provide a tactile experience: if you produce work that involves texture, make available tester cards/blocks/materials/samples

- Consider access to your work: can visitors get close to your work? Are there any hazards e.g. wires?
- Consider providing a magnifying glass if your work especially if your work is miniatures or heraldic work.
- If you are happy for the public to use your toilet facilities, then display a sign to direct people.
- Having light music playing in the background can put visitors at their ease, especially if they have never been to an open studio before

And – but only for the technically advanced (don't worry if you are not!)

- IPod or audio description of your work made available as people look round your work

**DO REMEMBER** - many members of the public have never been to an open studio event. Here are a few suggested 'DO's & DON'Ts':

1. DO be welcoming when visitors arrive
2. DO clearly display price lists and your visitors book at the entrance/exit, DON'T thrust a price list into a visitor's hand: mention that one is available but leave it their choice whether to pick one up.
3. DON'T close if you are having a quiet period with no visitors: if a member of the public turns up and finds a studio closed, the implications are greater than you think: that visitor will not return, will not recommend to others, will not come back the following year, may not bother to visit other studios and may very well complain bitterly to Surrey Arts for their wasted journey. If in an emergency you have to pop out for a few moments then DO leave a note on your door explaining why you have had to leave, and when you will return.
4. DO allow people to browse: if they show interest to see more, have access to sketch books or browser work.
5. DO remember that many visitors will just want to look at artwork and talk with the artist: DON'T be disheartened if your visitors don't buy. Some may want to come back another day, so encourage people to sign your visitors book to build up your mailing list.
6. DO encourage visitors to go and visit other studios! If we all do this, then everyone will benefit!
7. DO MAINTAIN THE RETAIL PRICING OF YOUR ARTWORK. DON'T devalue your artwork. If you have your artwork in a gallery or another studio do not drop the prices for your open studio: this does not do any favours for your buyers, the galleries which represent you or you as an artist. Buyers invest in the artist – they do not want to see varying prices, as this confuses them as to the actual value of their investment. Remember you can always offer a discount to guarantee a sale but PLEASE keep to the same retail price.

All of this studio and work accessibility can benefit all.

Studio accessibility – more information:

For guidelines on Do's and Don'ts when communicating with disabled people please email Caroline Jackman at Surrey Arts ([caroline.jackman@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.jackman@surreycc.gov.uk))