

SVOS UNIVERSITY 2013

27TH ANNUAL

SILICON VALLEY OPEN STUDIOS



PART I - MARKETING YOUR OPEN STUDIO



Hundreds of Artists, thousands of ideas, unlimited imagination

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WWW.SVOS.ORG

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The Open Studios

concept

What is an Open Studio?

Each year, during the first three weekends in May, hundreds of artists open their studios and invite the public to see their latest works and observe them demonstrating their processes. This year, more than 350 artists are participating in Silicon Valley Open Studios at nearly 145 different sites stretching from Burlingame to Gilroy.

Remember when talking to your friends and family that many people are not familiar with the open studios concept. So be sure to explain that it's free and tell them how to participate. They don't need an appointment, they can just show up at a studio during the time that it's open.



Getting up close and personal

It's a great opportunity to talk with visitors, get to know them better and let them know about you and your work.

What Makes Silicon Valley Open Studios Unique?

There are a variety of venues available to artists to show and sell their work. Successful artists participate in many of them throughout the year – not just one. Each event has its own advantages and characteristics. Silicon Valley Open Studios is unique in that it gives art lovers a chance to meet artists personally, spend some quality time in a relaxed and intimate setting, and really get to know the artist. We call this “getting up close and personal.” For a person who is an art collector or investor, there is no better way to get to know an artist and understand the motivation and philosophy behind their work and to learn about their technique and process, than by spending quality time with the artists in their studios.

We focus on this idea heavily in our promotion, and this is one reason why we require that each artist be present at their site during the open studios hours.

What **You** can do

Word-of-Mouth and Direct Marketing

► **Tell everyone** friends, family, co-workers... invite them to your open studio, and ask them to invite their friends too. Send an invitation, flyer, brochure or postcard by mail, leave it at their door, place it on bulletin boards, in coffee shops, grocery stores, doctors offices... anywhere and everywhere.

► You can **create your own materials** or use the SVOS resources. If you do your own, be sure to include the pertinent information – **who, what, where and when and how to contact you** – and make it interesting and FUN! (*More information about marketing materials follows below.*)

► Mention our website **WWW.SVOS.ORG** and the Silicon Valley Open Studios **Facebook Fan Page**, so people can learn more about the event and see your artist page with samples of your work and map to your location.

Email and Online

► **Post on websites** like Artsopolis, Craigslist and community calendars to spread the word about your Open Studio. This will be covered more later.

► **E-mail is** one of the easiest, **least expensive and most effective** ways to contact large numbers of people. Many successful artists have developed their own **e-mail list** consisting of several hundred names. They communicate on a consistent basis to develop a strong following and customer list.

If you are setting up a new email or website, use your name (you can add artwork or art or artist too), if you have another e-mail name it doesn't identify you. Over time, your emails may be forwarded to people who don't know you, and a real name is more personal and has a greater chance of being

read and building your identity. Have your email name match your web address for easy access.

Develop a **communication strategy** – a series of messages to announce your open studio. Start sending them regularly now and continue weekly. But don't stop with that; send monthly, quarterly or biannual messages even after your open studio. Don't overdo it or send the same message each time, craft a message that engages and informs your audience. Put something descriptive in the subject line. Many spam filters will reject messages with no subject line. Example, "Mary Jones will host an artist open studio on May 1 and 2." The earliest messages can be a simple "Save the Date" reminder. As you get closer, send information about the work you



will be exhibiting, tell them about the event and direct them to a blog or website to see your work (or attach or embed photos of your work in the email). You can send a personal invitation or **Evite**. Use a call to action: tell them what you want them to do and when (Come to my open studio May 1 and 2). Let them know what is going to happen – enjoy visiting with the artists, meet friends and neighbors, eat, drink and buy some original art directly from the source. Mention www.svos.org and Silicon Valley Open Studios Facebook Fan page in your messages so people can learn more about the event.

There are many ways to sell your work directly online. It is always good to encourage a purchase, that's what you ultimately want.

► **Website, blog and social networking**, (most of them are free or low cost depending on your needs). You can post your artwork and information about you and your open studio. Encourage your email list to follow your blog, become friends or fans, (Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, Pinterest, Google + LinkedIn, Twitter or blogger.com, wordpress.com, typepad.com, moveabletype.com, livejournal.com) so that each time you post something it communicates directly to everyone. It's a great way to let them know what you are working on, where you are showing and where they can buy more of your art. Link to SVOS' website and any others that may generate traffic.

Keep it **clean and simple**. Display your work, and include your artist's statement that highlights your background and education. Also, use your website to describe whatever is unique about you, your process or technique. Be sure to include information about how the public can contact you. Also, a website with only images is rather dull, so be sure there is more content such as caption information for each image including title, size, description and inspiration. The content is also how people connect to you through

keywords (or googleability).

There are also many ways to sell your work directly online. It is always good to encourage a purchase, that's what we ultimately want. You can tell them to contact you for prices, list the prices but contact you for sale or use some online services (paypal.com, bigcartel.com, etsy.com, ebay.com, yessy.com, small-business.yahoo.com). Some web hosting services do it all for you (fineartstudioonline.com, foliotwist.com, intuit.com, weebly.com, godaddy.com, sitewelder.com, zhibit.org).



Public Relations

Key to Public Relations efforts this year is social media. Utilize Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr to show off your art and invite people to SVOS. Three Girls Media & Marketing Inc. recommends posting on Facebook and Twitter 3-4 times per week and uploading to YouTube and Flickr one per week or at least every other week. Share details of your process, your background as an artist, what inspires you and of course, images of your artwork.



Connecting with traditional print press is also core to PR efforts for SVOS. Find the email address of reporters that work at your local community newspaper and send them info on SVOS as well as your participation in the event. Let the press know that they have a local resource in you and include a couple images of your art in the body of the email – not as attachments – as well as a brief biography. Follow-up to emails is important – at Three Girls Media we call it pleasant persistence. Touch base with the reporter up to 3 times over the course of a month providing slightly different info each time in order to try and secure coverage. Most importantly, have fun promoting yourself!

Advertising

If you have a bigger budget, you can advertise. Types of ads include print, radio, TV/cable, online and outdoor signs. These are all pretty pricy with the exception of some online ads.

You can do traditional ads in local newspapers or publications, or you can promote online through sites like Facebook with an ad that leads people to your page (easy to do and you can limit what you spend to \$5 a day for 30 days). It is often less than \$1 per click. Google ads is another source and is set up very much the same way.

Develop Your Customer List

Greet and engage your visitors, talk to them and get to know them a little bit. Tell them your art story, how you got started, how long you've been doing it. Have a guest book or a place for everyone to sign in, give you contact information and ask if they would like to be on your e-mail list. We'll talk more about interacting with visitors and basic salesmanship in the Part 2 sessions. Give visitors a reason to be on the list. Example. "I sometimes have special showings of my latest art before it's shown to the general public. Would you like to be on my e-mail list for that?" You can also think about "private showings" or "special price discounts" to people who are on your list. The key point is to make the visitor feel that she is getting something special by being on your list.

On your postcards, be sure to invite people to send you an email, become a follower, friend or fan. Encourage them to get more informa-

Have a guest book or a place for everyone to sign in, give you contact information and ask if they would like to be on your e-mail list.

tion and ask questions. Be sure to capture their information for your list. Ask everyone to forward your email message to their friends who they think might be interested.

Show with a group of artists the first few times. Have everyone send emails to their own list of friends and family. Agree with each other that you will all share the email names that you collect.

If you are mailing you can buy lists by demographics age, income zip code and more. List brokers are around and printers often have their own sources.

Increase Sales

Here are a few things to do right now to increase sales at your show. We'll cover sales strategies in greater detail in the next workshop. To be able to accept credit cards, you need to set up an account now. There are many options and prices. Banks, The Square, PayPal, etc. offer credit services. Providers advertise in "trade" publications like The Crafts Report, FiberArts and Crafts Fair Guide.

LEGAL ISSUES

Sales Tax and Reseller Permits

If you sell merchandise, you are required to have a sellers permit and collect (and pay) sales tax. You can learn how to do this at State Board of Equalization, www.boe.ca.gov then click on "sales & use tax" or call 1 800 400-7115. You will also need a business license which is issued by the city, and many cities require a temporary sellers permit if you are selling in that city for a day.

If you are not doing business under your own name, then you will probably need to file a fictitious business name statement (dba) with the County Clerks Office.

Liability Insurance

You may have visitors who are not familiar with your home so make sure that the pathways, sidewalks, driveway and steps are in good condition and clear of clutter. Check your insurance policy, or speak with your insurance agent, to make sure you understand how your coverage applies to visitors and your obligations.

Check local ordinances. Get permission from neighbors to use lawns, trees, etc. (offer a discount or freebie). Sign shops have a variety of options for posting signs. Remember to take signs down at the end of the weekend.

Ideas on How to **Network** and **Cross-Promote**

- **Enlist everyone** you know to promote your show. Always give out more than one promotional item. Ask people to pass the extras on to their family, friends, and coworkers.

- Ask local doctors/dentists if you can **leave promo items** and/or artist directories in their waiting room.

- Put a promo item in each **teacher's in-box** at your kids' school (with permission, of course). Clip a note explaining whose parent you are.

- Send a series of messages to everyone in your **email** address book and any **e-groups** you belong to.

- **Buy a guest book** to collect email addresses.

- **Follow up** email and snail mail with phone calls to key people. The personal touch works.

- **Promote your new work.** Don't lose potential visitors because they've "been there, seen that."

- **Company newsletters:** ask them to mention your open studio. Post a flier or postcard on employee bulletin boards, and leave a stack of artist directories in the break room.

- Print some nice **greeting cards with your art** and sell them individually or in packets. Make sure you have contact information on the back so viewers can contact you. These can also make good gifts for those who purchase art. You can buy the shells at art & office supply stores and print yourself or go to online printers or quick print shops.

- **Clubs, guilds, service organizations, church groups,** etc. that you belong to will often let you distribute your materials or mention you in their newsletters.

- **Businesses you frequent** such as hairdressers, gyms, dry cleaners, cafes, etc. are good choices.

- **Community bulletin boards** at gyms, churches, grocery stores, laundramats, etc.

- Use a highlighter to **outline your section of the artist directory.** Mark your page with a post-it note. Ask neighborhood businesses if you can leave a stack of guides and/or your promotional materials for their customers to take. Offer to take a stack of their cards or fliers to give out at your studio.

- Connect and trade info with **local restaurants.** SVOS visitors, making a day of it, will be looking for places to eat along the way, so it's a great chance for you to partner with nearby restaurants.

- Mother's Day, Father's Day, weddings, and graduations all happen this time of year. Remind them that the **gift of art** is unique and long lasting.

- **Realtors holding an open house** in your area will probably see an increase in visitors on an SVOS weekend. Visit local realtors to see if there are any open homes scheduled for your weekend. Offer to have a stack of their fliers in your studio if they will do the same for you. Have

them tell new homeowners about SVOS – they may need art for their new house and it's a good way to meet neighbors.

- **Garage Sales** are open before 11am. Bring fliers and ask if they'll hand them out for you in exchange for you mentioning their sale.

- **Link your website** to other artists' and arts organizations' sites and include links to their sites. Go to Artsopolis, Artslant and Craigslist.

- **Contact all artists participating in your area.** See if they'll take a stack of your postcards or any promotional material you may have, and agree to do the same for them. Find out what promotion, if any, they've done. Then plan a strategy to bring visitors to ALL the open studios in your geographic area. When you cross-promote, you all save time and money. **Make a group flier** that makes it easy for the public to find all artists showing in your area. You can all get together and split the cost of other advertising.

- Clusters of **artists in the same area** attract more traffic. Open the artist directory to the page for your area. Post it for visitors to see. Place the promotional materials you've collected and a stack of artist directories nearby and encourage people to visit neighboring sites.

Marketing MATERIALS

No one should leave without some take-away item, so make sure piles of your business cards, postcards, flyers, bio-sheets or brochures are on display throughout your studio. Carry them with you all day and hand them to each person as you greet them.

Flyers

Flyers are mini-posters that you can post at nearby businesses or fold and mail. A letter size (8.5 x 11") or a half sheet is fine. Keep information brief. Use big type. Include the date, time and place of your open studio, a way to contact you (phone and/or e-mail), a map or driving directions, a good image of your work or at least a description of your work and your medium. Remember that many people in the public do not know what an open studios event is -- so be sure to have links to more information, and explain that the event is free to the public. If you'd like to use the SVOS logo, email marketing@svos.org.

Many artists connect with other artists showing in their neighborhood and create a flyer that includes a map of nearby sites and an image for each artist. Black and white works fine if the images are chosen with that in mind. Make sure each visitor gets a copy and encourage them to visit the nearby artists.

Postcards

Postcards make great handouts, and they're a standard for art marketing. Galleries and artists use them often. They display your art in a larger glossy format and have room for contact information. When you give a postcard to special visitors, write a note to remind them of a piece they were especially interested in, or let them know where you will be showing next.

BUSINESS CARDS

Business Cards

Business cards include your name, contact information, and medium. These can be used anytime: just jot down your open studio info, or use your computer to print the info on small labels to stick on the back of the card. Many printers and office supply stores offer good-looking, inexpensive options. You can buy blank business card stock and make them on your own computer for a very low cost. There are also many online sources that print cards for a reasonable price.

Brochures

Brochures offer flexibility and allow more content than a postcard. These can be designed to promote you and your art rather than a specific show or event, allowing you to use them over and over again. They're fairly easy to produce either at home or by a professional. Use the same information as you'd include in a flyer, and also include a brief bio and any other relevant data. Include images of your work, and be sure they are of professional quality.

Discounts/Freebies

Offers or discounts are a good way to entice people to come and buy. You can put the information on your postcard or flyer, or create a special coupon. You can use a gift with purchase, a percentage discount or multiple purchase discount. For example, "10% off purchases of \$100 or more with this card, flyer..." or "May 1 & 2 only: spend \$100 or more and receive a ceramic bud vase valued at \$25." You do not have to offer discounts. It's just another option to encourage people to visit, and it's a way of tracking your advertising.



Artist directory and Sign Distribution

Distribution Methods

Artist Directories are distributed to the public in three ways:

1 Professional Distribution

First, we hire a professional distribution company to deliver the bulk of the Artist Directories beginning in early April. These will be distributed freely to the public at more than 400 locations throughout Silicon Valley. These are usually libraries, CalTrain stations, community centers, some art galleries, and some art supply stores, colleges, restaurants, coffee shops, and other public locations. These are pretty much wherever you see wire racks displaying free literature. Further, each location is refreshed on a weekly or bi-weekly basis as needed. This allows the public plenty of time to browse the Artist Directory and select which sites they wish to visit. Because of the magnitude of this activity, we allocate most of the Artist Directories to this channel.



2 Local Artist Distribution

Second, a few artists have found other locations in their neighborhoods that are a good pick up point for the public and have volunteered to deliver Artist Directories to those places early in April. These might be locations such as framing shops, or other retail stores that are interested in helping promote the arts but are not on the normal route of our distribution company. If you have done this in the past, or have ideas about where you would like to deliver Artist Directories, please let us know so we can determine if the location is on our master list, or maybe we might add it. If you wish to distribute copies in your neighborhood, please let us know where and how many you need.

3 Pick up at Sites

Finally, a few of the public waits until the first day of the event to get their Directory at the first site they visit, so each site should have a few. The better job we do with the professional distribution, the fewer we should need here. We generally allocate 5 copies for most sites. In past years, this has been our least effective form of distribution, as there is always a fair number left over and returned (or thrown away) at the end of the event. This doesn't do any of us any good and we are trying to adjust the quantities to the right level.

Portfolio Copies

Many artists want to retain a few Directories for their personal portfolio or to give out during the year. Usually we allocate 5 copies per artist for this.

Distribution Path and Allocation

The distribution path is from the printer to the professional distribution company, then to volunteer neighborhood distribution coordinators, and finally to the host (or representative) for each site and then to each artist. Usually the host of that site will collect the material or ask someone showing there to act on behalf of that group. Each host will be contacted by a nearby neighborhood distribution coordinator who will provide instructions on where and when the host can pick up the material that is allotted to that site. If you're showing at multiple sites, your personal copies will be at the first site.

Artist Directories are allocated to each site based on the number of artists showing there as described above.

Yellow signs are allocated 7 to each site. These should be saved and used again in future years. We realize that some sites may need more, and some need less, so please let us know and we'll do our best. We try to control this because the yellow signs are somewhat expensive.

The bottom line to all of this is that we'll get you what you need so long as you tell us what you need.

Resources

Postcards, Flyers, Brochures, Business Cards

Printers such as:

J & N Printing

111 Industrial Road, #11
Belmont, CA 94002
Phone: (650) 654-7745
Fax: (650) 654-7746
www.printforms.com

Post Script Press

www.psprint.com
(800) 511-2009

Modern Postcard

www.modernpostcard.com
(800) 959-8365

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Vista Print,

www.vistaprint.com
(800) 721-6214

Ask other artists for recommendations

Check the back pages of magazines catering to artists/craftspeople

Search online

Office supply stores such as:

Office Max
Staples
FedEx Office

Artists websites and resources

https://www.artistsites.org
http://artid.com
http://www.artbreak.com

http://fineartstudioonline.com

http://www.artdealers.com

http://foliotwist.com

www.artist-listing.com

www.artistwebsites.com

Credit Cards/ Merchant Services

Banks The Square

Check the back pages of magazines catering to artists/craftspeople that sell at fairs, festivals, etc.

Ask artists/craftspeople that sell at fairs, festivals, etc. for recommendations

PayPal can be used in many different ways – go to www.paypal.com

E-mail Services

emailbrain.com
constantcontact.com

Books

How to Survive and Prosper as an Artist: Selling Yourself Without Selling Your Soul, 5th ed. by Carol Michels

Taking the Leap: Building a Career as a Visual Artist by Cay Lang

Legal Guide for the Visual Artist by Tad Crawford

Art and Fear by David Bayles and Ted Orland
This is more counseling, rather than practical advice.