

# HUSTLE : Successful Studio Visits

## Your Space

- Studio space outside of your living space
- Studio space within your living environment
- Virtual studio (preparing documentation of your work on a laptop, meeting at a coffeeshop or some other public space)
- Roving studio (perhaps you're making work that is public art or social practice, and wish to take your visitor on a tour - in this case, be sure to clearly define the time frame well in advance, with respect for both your and the visitor's time constraints)
- Meeting in an Exhibition (in this case, you may want to have a catalog of work available for them to take, or promise to follow up afterwards with examples of other work)

## What? Who? Why Now?

There are many reasons for a studio visit.

- You could be sharing new ideas with a friend or fellow artist.
- You're participating in an open studio event.
- You've invited a gallery representative to introduce them to your work or, if you're already working with them, show them your current trajectory.
- A curator is interested in either discovering new artists or is specifically working with you on a show.
- Collectors or potential buyers are visiting to purchase - or consider purchasing - work.

**Each of these possible scenarios may lead you to set up your studio in a different way. But I think it is really important to begin with a little self-reflection:**

- *Why* do you want to open up your studio now - what do you hope to gain from it?  
Examples may include:
  - introducing your work to a new audience
  - getting feedback on work in progress
  - sales
  - a desire to establish new professional relationships (such as galleries, agents, or collectors)
  - educational - a group of students coming through with a teacher
  - putting your work on the map of museum or exhibition curators
- Are you prepared to talk about your work?
- Is this a good time to invite someone to view your studio practice, or are you in a more vulnerable, private part of your artmaking?
- What do you want the takeaway to be for your visitor?
- Expectations - this is huge. Manage them! Don't be demanding of your visitor, either in the invitation nor during the visit itself. Know that not everything leads to a concrete opportunity, but consider this instead a chance to talk about your work and expand your viewership. Most of the time, gallerists and curators come out of curiosity and interest, but may not have specific opportunities to offer. Keep your expectations reasonable, but still be as prepared as possible. Remember, they are your guest, but this is also your sacred space. It is a privilege for them to get a glimpse into an artist's process.

## **Who is visiting?**

- **Fellow Artist or Friend**- If you are new at this, this is a great way to get comfortable talking about your work and having people in your space. It's also a really good way to get feedback on new work or pieces you are stuck on. If you are not ready for that kind of critical engagement, though, listen to your gut. Don't jump the open studio gun before you're ready for it!
- **Curator** - unless you are already agreed to a show with a curator, this is usually an opportunity simply to introduce yourself and your work to them. Manage your expectations. Just because they are visiting doesn't mean they are for sure considering you for a show - even if they are really interested in the work, it might be years before they have an opportunity to place your work in an exhibit. Be prepared to accept that, if a good connection is made, this may be an ongoing conversation! Also, understand that they see a lot of work. Take care to make sure you and your work make a good impression, and follow up afterwards with invitations to shows so they can stay connected with your work.

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- **Gallery representative** - If you are inviting a gallery professional into your studio for the first time, manage your expectations. Sometimes, there is a serious intent on the part of the gallery (hopefully you will know this already), but sometimes they are just keeping an eye on the scene and/or want to get to know you and your work better. Be professional, be prepared, show them you are serious about your studio practice (they like to see a trajectory) and that you are organized and easy to work with.
- **Collector** - Having a collector or buyer in your studio can be a bit more pointed than someone interested in your overall process. They are looking to collect work, and this can, in my experience, lead you to feel a bit more vulnerable, especially if you are uncomfortable talking through a direct sale (more about this later). Again, preparation is key here. Be confident about your work. Be able to talk directly about what it is about. Don't show work you aren't ready to talk about or let go. If you are represented by a gallery, be transparent with both the gallery and the collector: let them know that this is not a back door to buying your work.

## The Invitation

- email or in person
- if they don't know your work already, give them an opportunity to get to know a little about you before the visit. Send a link to your website or a few images.
- be patient - depending on who you are asking, it might take weeks, months or even a year to schedule a visit
- don't badger them - be respectful!

## Once you've invited them....

- **Time/Duration** - Make sure you've agreed on a time for the visit to start and that you both have an idea of the duration (most studio visits last about an hour but they could go shorter or, if the chemistry is great it could go longer). Be clear on this on the front end and make sure you are covering everything you want to cover in a timely fashion. But, respect their time and know that if it goes well there is always the possibility for more conversation in the future.)
- **Research your visitor** - get to know their work, what have been doing lately. If it's a buyer, find out what artists they collect. Having a little background on your visitor will help move the conversation along in the studio.

- **Conditions:** If your studio is in a dangerous part of town, schedule it during the day. If there is no air conditioning and it is summer, do it early in the morning or late afternoon. In other words, consider the comfort of your guests. You want them to be comfortable enough to give their full attention to your work.

## How do you set up your studio?

- Do I clean up my studio?
- Refreshments - have water available for sure, but don't go all out on a buffet spread. Keep it simple.
- Have seating for your guest
- **Finished work** - I think it's nice to have a few current, finished pieces on display, easy to see (not buried in a lot of clutter)
- **Works in progress** - it is great to have a few works on progress available to view if you are comfortable showing that. We all enter into various phases of confidence and insecurity in the making of a piece, so keep that in mind. But having works in progress gives someone an idea of your process and the way you think through a piece.
- **Have examples** of other work available to view on a computer or printed out: Installation views of exhibitions, pieces in collections or site specific work, work that has already been sold or is available elsewhere.
- **Volume** of work shown - don't get everything out, it can be overwhelming both visually and time-wise. Select a strong sampling of work to show and keep it simple. Be prepared to pull more from the racks if someone asks - don't go digging around in the back of a closet or a big pile of work - this can be a waste of their and your precious time.
- **Documentation/Takeaway** - have documentation available for someone to take with them if they like (show invites, business cards, a short bio). Have these available for your visitor to take, but there are those who don't like to take things with them.
- **Photography** - if you don't want photos of your work taken or you don't want them posted, then state that in advance, in a nice way.
- **Music** - yes or no?

## How do I structure the visit?

- **Welcome** - the first thing to do is make your visitor comfortable. Offer them a beverage, ask them if they need the restroom before you start, etc. Make sure they are comfortable so they can fully engage with your work.
- **Articulate your work** - after welcoming your guest and offering them any refreshments, it's time to start the conversation about the work. You don't need to give a long speech about your whole artistic history, childhood, accomplishments, just a simple and direct explanation of what the work is about. You can use this opportunity as well to set up any parameters you have in mind for how you want your visitor to interact with your studio space.
- **Guiding the conversation** - most people prefer for a studio visit to be organic, as opposed to a structured, lecture-like experience. This doesn't mean casual, but keep in mind that someone is entering your space to be in conversation with you and your work. Let it flow. Sometimes, a little silence is good. Guide your viewer in the looking process, don't push them through.
- **Process** - sharing your process is a great way to make both yourself and your visitor comfortable. It's fascinating to see how someone sets up their workspace, how they work materially, how they think. Again, don't overdo it here. Keep in mind the duration of the visit and let them explore a little.
- **Chronology** - guide your studio visit like a narrative. You want to connect the dots for your visitor, give them a sense of the development & trajectory of your ideas, the unfolding of the process, how each work fits into a larger story. Think of the visit as having a beginning, middle and end (but obviously, be ready to improvise).

## What if it is a group situation or an open studio?

Open studios tend to be more social than individual visits. Be prepared for the fact that people are socializing with one another just as much as they are engaging with your work. As an artist, it can be strange to have that kind of energy in there, but it can also be fun. Make sure you make everyone who walks in know that you are the artist and that they're welcome to look around and ask questions. Have a friend or colleague in there as well to help out if you think you'll feel overwhelmed.

## Sales

- **Respect Gallery relationships**
- **Be Consistent in your Pricing** - this goes for whether you are represented by a gallery already or are selling on your own.
- **Presentation** - have at least part of your studio set up in a way that best shows the work, no matter the price point.

### If you *are* selling directly:

- **Control your space.** Avoid letting collectors or interested people rifle through your work - they'll only make a mess and they might damage the work.
- **Be prepared** - know your pricing structure, & set it in advance. Keep it consistent. Avoid waffling about how much you want for a work or make up prices on the fly. Have a written reference handy. If you are participating in an open studio type event where many collectors/buyers are passing through, have a list of work available with pertinent information including the price.
- Be able and *available* to talk directly with potential buyers about the price and value of the work. If it is an open studio situation, keep in mind that while it's fun to chat with your friends in your space, all visitors should be welcomed in. You might miss out on something if you're not paying attention!
- If you wish to offer works for sale but are uncomfortable talking about \$\$, have a friend or assistant available to help.
- Never undervalue your work! If you sell work at a discount (or work that you feel is unfinished or not up to par), you may regret it later. Sometimes the fragments and failures are the most valuable tools you have as an artist in the studio.
- Offer work in a variety of price ranges. An affordable sale might lead to a bigger one later!
- Be willing to work with buyers who seem hesitant to buy. Offer to work with them on a payment plan. If you don't know them, be prepared to offer an agreement for them to sign, or hold the art until it is paid for in full and then personally deliver it. Protect yourself!
- Don't forget the paperwork! When you make a sale directly, print out two copies of an invoice form, giving one to your collector and keeping one for your records (see Art/Work Chapter 2 for sample invoices)

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### • **From Art/Work: Playing the Dealer:**

- *It's good to allow for different interpretations of your work - but without letting the collector walk all over you. To that end, tell the collector what you were thinking when you made the piece, but try not to limit other readings*
- *Asking which pieces the collector likes and why can help you learn more about the collector's perspective, find interesting points of discussion, and even discover a new way to look at your work.*
- *Don't be afraid to say no. If your work is meant to hang a certain way, for example, don't be shy about saying so.*
- *Never say that you don't like one of your pieces or that one is worse than another. You could be talking about the one piece the collector likes. If you dislike a piece that much, don't show it in the first place.*
- *If you don't want to sell one of your pieces, mark it "not for sale." Don't price it in the stratosphere as a way to dissuade buyers. Occasionally we see artists do this; the only effect it has is to undermine the pricing of their other work. Buyers get disappointed when the work they like is sold or otherwise unavailable.*

### **What is Value to you as an artist?**

Is it all about sales? Representation? Critical acclaim? Keep in mind this quote:

*Value is an interesting part of art. Pricing is a long-term goal and that's the thing to talk about. It depends on what kind of artist you want to be. In this market, you can be a short-term artist and know how to play a certain role. But there are many ways to be important, with modest prices, and have a great influence on other artists, affect society, be an interesting person, use your position for social consciousness, and lead a really interesting life." -Andrea Rosen, Andrea Rosen Gallery, NY*

### **What happens after?**

- **Get out of your studio!** A Studio visit can be intense and overwhelming: invigorating, confusing, exciting, deflating. Take a break, go for a walk, let the conversation sink in and percolate. Give comments about your work time to settle before you jump back into it.
- Again, **manage your expectations.** Don't expect things like shows or sales to happen right away, if at all. In the case of open studio events, it can sometimes feel like a void after a studio event, but chances are you have made an impression and certainly have given people an unusual experience that they will remember.
- Most important, **follow up!** Especially with an arts professional such as a gallerist, curator or collector, send a thank you note. They have taken time out of their schedules to visit with you and always appreciate an acknowledgement of that. Include any additional information that was promised at the end of the visit. Down the road, if you have shows or other professional achievements to share, share them, but don't bombard. Be open and generous, not needy.

## **HUSTLE - Successful Studio Visits**

### **Art/Work - Heather Darcy Bandar & Jonathan Melber**

[https://smile.amazon.com/Art-Work-Revised-Updated-Everything/dp/1501146165/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115280&sr=8-1&keywords=heather+darcy+bhandari](https://smile.amazon.com/Art-Work-Revised-Updated-Everything/dp/1501146165/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115280&sr=8-1&keywords=heather+darcy+bhandari)

### **Mapping the Intelligence of Artistic Work - Anne West**

[https://smile.amazon.com/Mapping-Intelligence-Artistic-Work-Anne/dp/0983472505/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115365&sr=8-1&keywords=mapping+the+intelligence+of+artistic+work](https://smile.amazon.com/Mapping-Intelligence-Artistic-Work-Anne/dp/0983472505/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115365&sr=8-1&keywords=mapping+the+intelligence+of+artistic+work)

### **Living & Sustaining a Creative Life - edited by Sharon Louden**

[https://smile.amazon.com/Living-Sustaining-Creative-Life-Working/dp/178320012X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115427&sr=8-1&keywords=living+and+sustaining+a+creative+life](https://smile.amazon.com/Living-Sustaining-Creative-Life-Working/dp/178320012X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115427&sr=8-1&keywords=living+and+sustaining+a+creative+life)

### **Inside the Painter's Studio - Joe Fig**

[https://smile.amazon.com/Inside-Painters-Studio-Joe-Fig/dp/1568988524/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115453&sr=8-1&keywords=inside+the+painter%27s+studio](https://smile.amazon.com/Inside-Painters-Studio-Joe-Fig/dp/1568988524/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115453&sr=8-1&keywords=inside+the+painter%27s+studio)

### **The Studio Reader - on the Space of Artists - Mary Jane Jacob & Michelle Grabner**

[https://smile.amazon.com/Studio-Reader-Space-Artists/dp/0226389618/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115501&sr=8-1&keywords=the+studio+reader](https://smile.amazon.com/Studio-Reader-Space-Artists/dp/0226389618/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490115501&sr=8-1&keywords=the+studio+reader)

## **Links**

### **If you are the host:**

<http://www.edwardwinkleman.com/2008/07/tuesdays-aside-studio-visit-strategies.html>

<http://www.edwardwinkleman.com/2005/08/studio-visit-best-practices.html>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hilary-harkness/art-studio-visits\\_b\\_1859731.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hilary-harkness/art-studio-visits_b_1859731.html)

<http://www.gyst-ink.com/studio-visits-open-studios/>

<http://www.artbusiness.com/orvztzm.html>

<http://joannemattera.blogspot.com/2010/02/marketing-mondays-studio-visit.html>

### **If you are the visitor:**

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/artiquette-7-tips-visiting-artist-studio-474974>

### **Selling:**

<http://www.artbusiness.com/openstudios.html>

<http://www.artbusiness.com/how-artists-sell-art-directly-to-collectors.html>