

# *Artists Helping*

## **Event Workbook**



Allan Jones takes a break from trying to retrieve items from his second floor bedroom after his home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in Gulfport, Mississippi.(AFP/Getty Images/Joe Raedle)

Alyson B. Stanfield

**StanfieldArtAssociates, Inc.**

5968 El Diente St.  
Golden, CO 80403  
303.273.5904

[alyson@artbizcoach.com](mailto:alyson@artbizcoach.com)

<http://www.artbizcoach.com>

<http://www.stanfieldart.com>

<http://www.artbizconnection.com>

<http://www.artbizblog.com>

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This material is intended for use by those who wish to organize an art event to contribute to disaster relief for Hurricane Katrina victims. It may be copied and distributed for those purposes.

#### DISCLAIMER

While every effort has been made to provide you with the most thorough and up-to-date information, it should not be considered complete in any way and should never be a substitute for sound legal counsel when needed. Each individual artist should make informed decisions based on circumstances unique to his or her situation.

## Setting Goals

I would like to raise \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help with disaster relief for hurricane Katrina victims.

To do this, I will involve \_\_\_\_\_ (#) artists.

### What will motivate you to achieve your goal?

If I attain my goal, I will feel:

## Involving Others

**Form an alliance of like-minded people to help you reach your goal.** An alliance can be formal or informal, although I firmly believe that the more organized it is, the more powerful it is. It can be anything from an official 501(c)3 nonprofit organization to a group of dedicated artists that commit to meeting twice a month. The most critical criterion for setting up an alliance is that all members must have the same goal for the event. They must be on the same page. If even one member thinks the group's focus should be elsewhere, it will break apart and its effectiveness will wither away.

Getting others to help will provide you with **emotional and professional support**. At the same time, you'll be getting more involved with your community and cultivating excellent contacts.

Your alliance might include:

- A nonprofit. The recipient of your donations might be included in the planning or be able to provide a mailing list, but you should not count on them for actual manpower.
- Other artists.
- Art agencies (arts councils) and artist organizations.
- Art departments at schools and universities.
- Art museum staff or volunteers.
- High school art students.
- Anyone else who wants to help, but doesn't know how to do it.

Some examples:

- Ask your local museum to turn over lobby space on a weekend for your sale. Be sure to include them in all the planning and decision making. This is best done with the director or development or public relations director.
- Organize the high-school art club to hold a sale of their own in their school. Work with teachers, the principal, and the students to make a difference.
- Ask your local or state arts council to help you find a building lobby for your event. They can help you publicize it as well. Politicians would be great to add to an alliance that includes a government agency.

## Possible Venues for Your Event

Private Homes

Municipal & Government Buildings

Airports

Sports Stadiums

Libraries

Churches

Banks & Corporate Offices/Lobbies

Hospitals

Shopping Malls

Parks

Book Stores

Coffee Houses and Restaurants

Retail Stores

Artist Co-ops

Non-profit Spaces and Art Centers

University Galleries

Commercial Galleries

Museums

## Format

The different formats you might choose for your event could include:

- Outright sale (sales price listed for each item)
- Live auction
- Silent auction
- Ticket price to get in the door (with 100% of that price going to relief)
- Raffles

How will the funds be distributed?

- Will you allow each artist to set their own contribution amount or will everyone have to contribute the same percentage (say, 50% of sales price)? Or will they be outright (100%) donations?
- Will there be minimum bids (if an auction)?
- Which organization will be the recipient of your generosity? See a list of well-known and qualified agencies at [www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping](http://www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping).

Whatever you do, state on everything (flyers, emails, labels, front door), who is getting the money and how it will be distributed. I get very annoyed by statements such as "a percentage will go to help." As a donor, I want to know--EXACTLY--what percentage! An example:

"100% of all ticket sales and 50% of art sales will go to the American Red Cross to help with relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina."

## The Artwork

**Decide who will be included:**

- My work only.
- Any artist who wants to participate.
- Artists I select/ask. Figure out what your criteria will be: friend, like-minded, works complement, but don't compete. It's important to establish this criteria. These are your boundaries and, if you decide to limit your participants, you must be able to say "no" to others and tell them why they are being excluded.

Keep an inventory of all items. Use the inventory and artist donation forms provided at [www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping](http://www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping)

Make sure artists are aware of charitable donation limits. A short article on the subject is provided at [www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping](http://www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping)

# Installing the Artwork

The exhibition space is . . .

\_\_\_\_\_ linear feet (or meters)

\_\_\_\_\_ square feet (or meters)

Special considerations / architectural features:

Supplies / hardware needed:

Need separate price tags or auction sheets with starting bids.

Pedestals (and vitrines<sup>1</sup>) needed:

Labels needed:

- Artist Statements
- Individual Labels
- Auction ballots if you are doing a silent or live auction
- Separate Stories / Definitions / Explanations:

Place a good-looking book (with plastic sleeves) out on display with the following:

- Business Cards
- Brochures
- Invitations or Postcards to Previous Exhibitions
- Artist Statement
- Articles about the Artists' Work
- Biography
- Résumé
- Photos of Work not on View

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<sup>1</sup> A vitrine is the Plexiglas covering that sits on top of a pedestal and protects the three-dimensional contents (your art!).

## Object Labels

- Use title graphics. These are often called vinyl lettering and can be made inexpensively at most sign stores.
- Create an introductory label that introduces your exhibit (what is called a "curatorial theme"). It should be in language that is didactic without using "art speak."
- The goal for all of your labels should be to get people to look at your art. The same rule, by the way, should apply to your artist statement.
- At a bare minimum, your labels should include your name, object title, date, and mediums/technique. In a one-person exhibit, your name need not be as prominent on labels and you might, instead, make the title larger and put it before your name. When showing with other people, distinguishing between artists is more important and names should probably be first. If your titles give clues to the content of your work (such as the location of a landscape), figure out some way to make them stand out. Traditionally, artworks are italicized, but you could, instead, make them bold, all caps or larger than the other text.
- Use fonts no smaller than a 14 point for easy viewing. Choose simple, easy-to-read fonts. Nothing funky or fancy! For better readability, do not justify the margins and use only one space after punctuation.
- Labels can be printed on cardstock and stuck on the wall with rolled masking tape or something like Elmer's Tack removable adhesive putty. For a more polished presentation print labels on regular paper, adhered to mat board with spray glue, then cut out with a mat cutter.
- Remember that you are creating a composition when you install your work. Unless you write longer labels, make all labels the same size in order to be more aesthetically pleasing when the gallery is viewed as a whole. Try to match your label paper to the wall color so that the labels don't stick out too much. If the wall color is anything other than white, you can also use clear printer labels and stick them on the wall. True story. When I was a full-time curator I was obsessed with matching labels to the wall color. Do you know how many different colors of white there are?! When we decided to repaint all of the galleries, I first went to a local paper distributor and selected good quality paper for my labels. Then I had our preparator match the wall color to the paper. It might sound a little obsessive now, but they were darned handsome.
- Place object labels to the right if at all possible. Large sculpture may require that you place a label on the nearest wall or floor.
- Hang all labels at the same height and use a level to make sure they are even.
- If you have information you want to share, but it isn't appropriate on a wall label, consider putting together a portfolio or scrapbook. This might contain your résumé; brochure; articles about your work; testimonials or personal letters from your collectors and buyers; invitations to previous exhibits; and even related ephemera that might help you connect with people. For example, if you are a fiber artist, you could have a bunch of copies of sewing and weaving projects for kids. Parents could just take one. Of course, on the bottom of each copy is your website and contact info!

## Promoting Your Event

Don't forget to post on all of your promotions where the money raised will be going and how (%) it will be distributed.

Inform this organization of your event:

<http://www.theatre.lsu.edu/Hurricanerelief/Front.htm>



Advertising

Invitations / Postcards<sup>2</sup>

designed by:

printed by:

mailing deadline:

design deadline:

print deadline:

Flyers<sup>3</sup>

Should be easy to read and answer who, what, where, when, why, and how. Include an artwork and print in color if you can. A sample flyer is provided at

[www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping](http://www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping)

posted at these locations:

Email Notice (as soon as you have particulars)

Email Reminder (a few days before event)

Sample email text is provided at [www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping](http://www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping)

Press Release

A sample press release is provided at [www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping](http://www.artbizconnection.com/artistshelping)

Be sure to have photos of artwork available. High-resolution digital images should be fine.

written by:

edited by:

Send email immediately—use plain text and do not include any attachments. In the subject line, put "Press Release: <Heading of Your Release>.

Send hard copy also if you have time.

sent to:

follow up phone calls:

Phone Calls /Personal Invitations:

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<sup>2</sup> Keep your invitations with you at all times. Hand them out to people you meet and ask them to bring a friend along.

<sup>3</sup> Post flyers (which look like your invitations and other printed material) at appropriate places: art venues, art-friendly retailers, and places that want to help.

## Being a Terrific Host or Hostess

- **Dress nicely and look like the artist**, but be comfortable. Your demeanor will reflect onto your guests.
- **Remember that you are the host.** You should make everyone who enters feel welcome at your event. If you can't be at the door at all times, assign others to help you greet people.
- **Get someone to take care of a sales desk.** You're the host and artist. You need to take care of people.
- **Treat everyone the same.** Every person that enters is a potential buyer.
- **Consider refreshments.** Hot food must be kept hot and you might need a refrigerator for cold food and beverages. Best plan: again, keep it simple! Don't forget plates, napkins, cups, sugar, cream, and eating utensils. Ask for these to be donated to this great cause!
- **Do everything possible to make sure you make it easy for people who want to buy from you!**
- **Give everyone a receipt of sale.** If you are selling original artwork where copyright is at issue, your receipt should be much more official and lay out copyright retention. If it's not already on a tag, be sure to tell your new collectors how to care for the work they are purchasing and offer hints on hanging, installing and/or framing.
- **Offer free delivery for large items and be prepared to help hang or place those works for your collectors.** Better yet, if someone is wavering on purchase, offer to bring it to their home and find a perfect spot for it.
- **Have plenty of business cards on hand** and place them in plain view.
- **Place a guest book out and encourage people to add their names to your mailing list.** Be prepared to tell them the frequency and type of mail they will be receiving, be it invitations to openings, newsletters or e-mail.

# After

## Evaluation

Sales:

Attendance:

What was the best thing that happened?

What will you do differently next time?

Constructive comments received:

## Following Up

Send thank-you note within one week to everyone who helped with installation, hosting, cooking, mailing, etc. Don't forget reporters who wrote an article for you:

Follow up with buyers and with others who expressed interest. Send these people a personal note immediately:

- Add new names to database and email lists.
- Update inventory and make sure everything is accounted for.
- Add to résumé.

# Task Rundown

## *Artworks*

Who has the final decision as to whether something will be included or not?

How many works will you be able to install?

Are they of the quality you want?

Is there a work you can use as a focal point?

## *Guests*

The more people involved in the planning, the bigger the guest list will be and the more help you will have to organize all of the tasks that need to be done.

Update your mailing list regularly, perhaps as often as once a week when you start planning. Put it on your calendar and just do it! You don't want to have everything in order and no one to invite. Will you advertise and invite everyone? Or will it be a closed event by invitation only? Be sure you look into legal issues in your city or town before you have a huge event open to everyone. Also, if you charge for something (such as liquor), there are often additional legal issues attached.

What is the maximum number of people you can have?

How many do you expect?

Are there any special accommodations you must make, such as physical accessibility?

## *Space*

How many linear feet (wall space) do you need for two-dimensional works? Are you able to hang them or do you need easels (if it's in someone's home)?

Will you need pedestals for three-dimensional work? Are you able to show sculptural objects without being afraid that they will be damaged?

Is there sufficient lighting?

Do any of the works require special installation or electrical outlets?

Can you guarantee the safety and security of the artworks? Should you be concerned about insurance?

## *Time*

Do you have sufficient time to plan a successful event? The longer you have to plan, the more successful your event will be, but you are obviously responding to an immediate need and must work quickly.

How long will the exhibit be installed? (It might last only as long as the event.) Speaking of which, how long will the event last?

## *Sales*

Are you prepared to accept cash, checks, and credit cards?

Do you have receipts for your customers?

Can you enlist the help of friends to take control of sales so that you can be with your guests?  
This can also free you from bargaining and being constantly interrupted if you lay down the rules in advance and your helpers know your limitations.  
Is there an area that you can clearly designate as one for sales so that people know where to go to get service?

#### *Invitations, Advertising & Public Relations*

If it is open to the public: Will you take out advertisements? Or could you get by with posting flyers? Someone needs to be responsible for press releases and follow-up calls.

If it is private: What will the invitation consist of? Be as clever as possible and make the invitation stand out in a crowded pile of mail. Who will address, stamp & mail invitations?

#### *Installation / Deinstallation*

Who will hang the work? When does it have to arrive? Be sure to include a checklist of the artworks and have the venue sign off on a condition report.

What are the restrictions on hanging or placing the work? Make sure you have all of the tools and hardware necessary to install the artwork. Don't forget to check the lighting after the work is installed. Beware of hot spots on paintings, reflecting glass, and shadows that compete with the artwork's aesthetics.

Who is responsible for taking down the work? When does it have to be picked up? What happens to the work if artists don't pick it up on time?

#### *Hospitality*

What type of food and beverages will be available? Do you have all of the serving capabilities for these? Hot food must be kept hot and you might need a refrigerator for cold food and beverages. Do you have access to a large coffee urn?

Remember plates, napkins, cups, and eating utensils.

Place a guest book out and ask if people would like to be on your mailing list.

Remember that you are the host. You should make everyone who enters feel welcome at your event. If you can't be at the door at all times, assign others to help you.

**You can find excellent guidelines for hosting an open studio on the Web site for the Society of North American Goldsmiths.**

<http://www.snagmetalsmith.org/infocentral/professionalguidelines.asp>

# Timeline

Not all of these will apply to your situation. Pick and choose what you need. If you are participating in a studio tour with other artists, be sure to add their deadlines to this checklist.

<b>DO IT NOW</b>			
<b>✓</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Pointers</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
	Set realistic goals.	<i>Write your goal in your journal and have it always in the fore of your thoughts.</i>	
	Plan a budget.	<i>How much can you afford to spend? Where are your spending priorities?</i>	
	Select artwork.	<i>Make sure there is enough to accommodate customers of various income levels and tastes. Create an inventory sheet that you will use for sales.</i>	
	Confirm venue for exhibit.	<i>Get the name and contact info for the one person at the venue who is assigned to work with you.</i>	
	Discuss all arrangements with contact person.	<i>This includes sales, dates and deadlines, insurance, security, opening reception, advertising, and other items on this list.</i>	
	Sign contract.	<i>If you're having your exhibit anywhere but your own home or studio, you should have a written letter of agreement with the other venue.</i>	
	Make sure artwork is photographed and that there is a master inventory list.		
	Print invitations.	<i>Print invitations only if you have time. Otherwise, rely on phone calls, e-mails, newspaper postings, and word of mouth. If you do print invitations, make them special. Add hand-painted elements, seal with a bow or wax or something out of the ordinary.</i>	
	Print publicity material.	<i>Have promotional brochures or flyers ready to hand to people that describes you and your work and reminds them of upcoming events. Put together a notebook with plastic sleeve inserts that details your accomplishments (magazine articles, resume, statement, etc.).</i>	
	Address, stamp and deliver invitations.	<i>Mail invitations or hand deliver. If open to the public, send out a press release and direct it to the person responsible for the arts calendar in your local paper.</i>	
	Print price tags or auction ballots.	<i>Make them all the same so the event looks cohesive.</i>	
	Organize sales materials.	<i>Gather your credit card materials and cash box, if needed. Have plenty of receipts on hand and handouts about your work.</i>	

Get someone to help you.	<i>Ask a friend or family member to help greet visitors and make them feel comfortable. Also, designate someone to be the keeper of the sales records.</i>	
Consider decorations.	<i>This is probably somber, rather than festive, but some sort of decorations will be welcome.</i>	
Plan refreshments.	<i>Have something for your guests to eat and drink so that they stay awhile. Keep it simple (but special) so that you don't add stress to the event.</i>	
Organize a hands-on activity area.	<i>Have guests, especially kids, try their hands at something similar to what you do. Make it easy, cheap, and something they can take home with them.</i>	
Look into extra insurance.	<i>Are you covered for your work, studio and exhibition space? Do you have liability insurance for your guests?</i>	
Post information on website.	<i>Don't forget to have an online version of your invitation complete with map and, perhaps, a press release.</i>	
Send out press releases.	<i>Use the sample press release provided on the ArtBizConnection.com Web site.</i>	
Deliver and install artwork.	<i>Double check to make sure artwork is installed nicely, is well lit and that prices are in view.</i>	
Have friends invite friends.	<i>E-mail everyone you know with the details and have them send out at least five personal invitations to their own friends, whom you may not know. Use the sample email announcement on the ArtBizConnection.com Web site.</i>	
Designate a sales area.	<i>Set aside a specific area so that guests know where they have to go in order to purchase something.</i>	
Write down your affirmations.	<i>Get your journal out and envision your success. Be confident in your approach!</i>	
Devise a way to count visitors.		
Clean.	<i>Enough said, but don't forget the bathroom.</i>	

<b>LAST MINUTE</b>			
<b>✓</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Pointers</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
	Have plenty of business cards available.		
	Get refreshments ready for opening.		
	Put out a donation box.	<i>Ask for cash and checks that will be donated directly to the certified relief agency of choice.</i>	
	Put out your guest book.	<i>If you are asking people to sign up for your mailing list, be specific about what they can expect. Many people are reluctant to give carte blanche to more mail or email.</i>	
	Wear a nametag.	<i>To be more customer-friendly, you and your helpers should all wear nametags. Put the word "sales" on the tag of the designated salesperson for your open studio.</i>	
	Display your sales tax certificate in your studio.	<i>Show customers that you are legally set up to collect sales taxes.</i>	

<b>AFTER</b>			
<b>✓</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Pointers</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
	Pick up artwork.		
	Write personal notes to appropriate people.	<i>Send thank you notes to your helpers and customers. If you made a good contact that you didn't know previously, follow up with an "it was nice to meet you" card. Don't forget the media people who gave you coverage!</i>	
	Update your inventory.	<i>Take stock of what you sold and make sure everything is accounted for.</i>	
	Evaluate.	<i>Evaluate things that worked and things that need work. Make cogent notes for what you can do better next time.</i>	
	Update your résumé.	<i>Add your exhibition to your résumé. Open studios don't really have a place on a résumé unless you have made it into an incredibly special event that includes planning with others in the community.</i>	