

BOOTH CAMP 2017

An Outdoor Art Fair Survival Guide

Saturday May 13th, 11:00 - 2:30 pm, Artscape Youngplace 180 Shaw St, Toronto

SUMMARY

Tips for setting up your booth

What to prepare in advance

- Prior to the exhibition, invite your friends or colleagues to your studio to help you create the list of artworks you will bring to the exhibition. If possible, do a mockup of your booth at home to see how the artworks speak to each other.
- Then one week before the show, prepare all the artworks you wish to bring, make sure they are wrapped, priced, and ready to be transported to the exhibition.
- Have a short artist statement on display in your booth, and/or a small write up about your process available for visitors to read.
- Bring a binder with photos and prices of your other artworks this may help since some people are shy to ask about prices. Another way to engage those that come into your booth is to make it more interactive. For instance, if you have an interesting process, bring a laptop or iPad with a video of your process to engage visitors on a deeper level.
- Make sure you have enough tape, hooks, wire, scissors, hammers, zacto knife etc. For more about essential items to bring with you, check out our [5 Tricks of the Trade](#) in our #TOAETIPS.

Setup

- Your booth is your storefront; **do not** clutter your booth.
- Take time to carefully choose where artworks are placed carefully. A clean, bright, carefully curated booth looks most professional.
- It is a good idea to have one 'feature' piece that pops at the back of your booth to draw the viewer's eyes in. Keep in mind the flow of traffic; what will they see first as they are walking by?
- Use unfinished canvas (or heavy white fabric) to cover the black fencing of the grid walls. Curtain hooks can be used to pierce through the canvas and to hang your pieces. Raw canvas can be purchased at [Gwartzman's Art Supplies](#).
- Some artists like industrial look the metal racks, but some types of art require more quiet spaces for display with less of a distractions. This will make it easier for clients to picture what the piece could look like in their home.
- If a piece sells, fill the empty spot with another piece you want to see sell (this tends to work).

- After unwrapping your artworks, **do not** place them on the ground. The concrete at Nathan Phillips Square will scratch your work. You can use small foam blocks or children's foam puzzle pieces to cover the ground in your booth to keep the works from touching the ground.
- Take your booth to the next level by incorporating lighting.
- The tent walls will let light through but they are not transparent. There will be no electricity provided on site and so, one suggestion is to use a combination of 2 Marine batteries, 6 LED lights and a convertor to light your tent. Lighting will help you achieve a professional looking booth without too spending too much money (approx. cost \$300.)

Tips for managing your booth

During the exhibition

- Studies show you have 4 seconds to get someone's attention at an art fair. You can do it through your displays, the layout of your tent, and positive body language.
- Do not block the entrance to your booth, make it inviting, it is most effective to bring a stool and stay perched.. Be alert in your booth – It is not recommended to bring a lawn chair and lounge. Remember that during the exhibition you are a salesperson – whether your main goal is to sell a lot of works or to make connections and build your networks, you must be alert and actively try to achieve this goal.
- You have to be able to speak to someone about your art in 3 sentences to engage with them without overwhelming them. Allow visitors to come into your booth and take a few moments to observe, if you see they are interested in a particular work you can engage them with a little bit more info ie... “What you are looking at here is – tissue paper, paint, layers etc....”
- Put a “SOLD” sticker on your artworks (perhaps even if you haven't actually sold it!) as this can increase the interest of potential buyers.
- Another tactic is to rotate the position of your artworks throughout the weekend to keep your display looking fresh.
- Try to engage family and friends who love your work to help out during the weekend even if they are only able to do so for a few hours. Have a friend stay in your booth to engage with viewers and talk briefly about the work. It is less intimidating to hear “Would you like to meet the artist; they are right over here...” after they have shown interest in the work.

Tips for taking care of yourself on site

- Sunscreen! Water! It's all true, you will be needing these items without a doubt so please don't leave home without them and plan accordingly for the hot July weather, **rain or shine.**

- Bring snacks but be sure to take the time to eat a full healthy, meal. Sneaking in fast-food when you can is not ideal, this won't keep you going for long. Sandwiches are great on the go and easy to pack in advance.
- Take breaks! 3 days on the square can be grueling. Rope in friends and family to sit your booth so that you can take a break, grab a bite to eat, or take a walk to stretch your legs.
- Be helpful to your neighbor artists, many artists have built connections and friendships at TOAE that have lasted a lifetime.

Tips on self-promotion as an individual artist

- Your attitude towards self-promotion is important. Many artists find self-promotion uncomfortable, awkward, egotistical, etc. However, the investment is for long term benefits; you are not always aware of the return until later on.
- It is very important to establish goals for the exhibition. Are you looking to make money? Break even? Attract the eye of a curator or to get gallery representation? Network and build connections with buyers and other artists? Leading up to TOAE, or to a gallery opening etc. you must establish a self-promotion plan that reflects your goals for the event.
- Practice writing artist statements and take a workshop or class to improve your skills. (Gallery 44 has one coming up on June 5, 2017 on [Developing an Artist Statement](#).)
- Practice talking about your work and get feedback from those you trust. Other people may see different aspects in your work that reflect their own experiences that may not be obvious to you.
- Update your personal mailing list. Add people who follow your social media, people you have met in other cities etc. and do your research on potential leads. Look into galleries, curators and writers that are interested in work similar to yours, as well as people who collect your kind of work.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to these people. Suggest to take them out on a coffee date, studio visit, or ask them to check out your website. The worst that can happen is they say no.

Marketing Materials

- [Mailchimp](#) is a great free easy to use mail-management system to help you to create and build your mailing list, send newsletters, announcements etc. Mailchimp allows you to segment your mailing list to better track and target your different audiences. (You are able to segment your mailing list into leads, frequent buyers, curators etc.)
- Radio & Community Newspapers – Contact smaller or student radio stations to see if they would like to interview you about your artwork. Community newspapers might be

interested in interviewing you or doing a studio visit, reach out to them.

- Business card work best in the Toronto market and in a pop up setting. Handout business cards to visitors, especially to those who purchase your work.
- Digital Promotion – Share your participation at the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition on social media before and during the exhibition, as well as via email and web postings.
- Services like [Akimbo](#) can augment your own mailing list and social media presence.
Akimbo is offering a 10% discount for TOAE Booth Camp participants! Book by June 30, 2017 by contacting info@akimbo.ca
- Branding yourself on social media and the web is very important. Be sure to cater to your audience and client base – Instagram for following under 40, Facebook for over 40 following etc. is often a good suggestion.
- The Toronto art buyer has to see an artwork about 5-7 times before they will purchase, so a solid digital marketing strategy is a great way to attract and build a following of buyers.

Networking & building client relationships

- Bring a notebook to collect visitors' contact info. You can add them later to your mailing list to let them know about about your upcoming shows.
- Try your best to get their phone number, email as well as home address of everyone you sell artworks to. You can then send a personalized thank you note which is a nice touch and helps build a connection with your clientele for the future.
- Keep a prospect book with notes about the piece your prospect is interested in and try to identify for yourself any barriers that may have impeded making the sale, like transportation, cost, do they want to consult with their spouse? etc.
- After you have collected information on leads who have visited your booth don't be afraid to follow up.
- Didn't respond to your email? Call them! Your job as a seller of art is to remove the barriers of purchasing the art. If it is within your means, offer to ship it for them and this will allow access to the space they are buying art for, and can help with relationship building.

Tips for selling artwork

- Offer to put your work on hold for 30 min-1 hour max. for interested buyers who can't commit just yet. Put a sticker on it to indicate it's on hold. Do not put artworks on hold for longer than an hour.
- Using a payment processing device like the [Square](#) or [Shopify's POS](#) (Point of Sale) can allow clients to pay with Visa or MasterCard and it will issue automatic receipts to the client's email, creating less paperwork for you.

- Be prepared in case of cash sales. \$130.00 for change is more than enough. There are ATMs in city hall and several different banks close to NPS (know where they are so you can tell your potential buyers.) You will also have a list of nearby ATM's provided in the Artist Handbook.
- Make sure you have mobile data if you are relying on these apps as your payment method, there is Wi-Fi at NPS but it is public and not reliable. WE also recommend that you bring a [portable power bank](#) to recharge your battery onsite.

Boosting your Sales with Shopify

- [Shopify](#) is a multi-channel selling platform that allows you to create your own online store to sell your art both before and after the show.!
- Your Shopify inventory can be synced to sell on Facebook, Pinterest, your website other online platforms etc. simultaneously. Keeping track of your inventory is really easy on Shopify because it manages your inventory live and can be updated and added to easily from your phone. SEO on shopify is already optimized, it set you up to receive the best traffic to your website for your audience.
- To make your shopify store successful, high quality photos and up to date store and accompanying website are very important and say a lot about your professionalism and commitment.
- Shopify can be integrated with your existing website platform, such as WordPress, Squarespace, Wix etc. Shopify's integration is seamless and a 'Buy' button will appear on your site that links to your online inventory.
- It can also become an online portfolio, you can bring an iPad or laptop for visitors to look through in your booth during the exhibition, or a great tool for post-chow client follow up.
- Shopify also offers the option to include shipping options for clients with your sales. Shopify is the easiest way to manage International sales since the store can merge through Facebook by connecting your artist or business Facebook page. Shopify is **easy** to do, and the customer service is incredible, they offer 24/7 shopify guru help via telephone.
- Visit their website for more information: <https://www.shopify.ca/> or check out their great online resources to help you [build your online business](#). They also have great customer service with Shopify Gurus ready to help you over the phone 24/7!

How to package your artworks

- Bubble wrap is the main material used in wrapping artworks. Be sure that the bubbles are facing **outwards** this is better for taping and bubbles facing inwards can leave marks and/or damage your artworks.

- Considering hiring a professional to move your works, if you are really struggling, but it is recommended you try doing it yourself as it's the best way to learn.
- Store all your paintings, framed works etc. standing upright (if possible) when transporting them in your vehicle. If that is not an option, you can lay them flat, placing your smaller artworks on the bottom and larger works on the top (otherwise you risk the small works damaging the larger works below).
- Polyfoam is less expensive than bubble wrap, but it does tear more easily. It can be used to pre-make sleeves that fit your artworks by folding and taping the polyfoam to make a pouch that your pieces can slide into.
- Heavy Plastic is another good alternative wrapping material.
- Shadow boxes are a good option for protecting paintings that are more 3-D, thick paint, encaustic etc.
- For encaustic, you can also use cardboard or coroplast to build a box with walls that are taller than the artworks surface, then stretch plastic over top.
- For much larger artworks consider using a mattress bag.
- Be sure to have wrapping supplies at your booth, at minimum a tape gun and bubble wrap. A properly wrapped artwork is indication of professionalism and that you care a lot about your work.
- However your wrap you works, make sure they are completely sealed from the elements.
- Where to Buy Packing Materials:
[Rotblott's](#) - Polyfoam, tape, bubble wrap, mattress bag,
[The Box Guys](#)
[PI Fine Art](#) - will be onsite and they offer framing packing and shipping services for your clients.
- **As an added bonus, [Artverb*](#) is offering 20% off local delivery installation services to TOAE 2017 artists.** Artverb* also ships to and from Montreal, please check out their [website](#) for rates.

Security

- Thefts are usually crimes of opportunity. By removing opportunity, the risk of theft is reduced.
- **Do not** leave your valuables such as, cash boxes, artwork, wallets, purses, unattended in your booth.
- To keep your items safe, keep cash and other valuables on your person in a fanny pack, purse, satchel etc.
- **You should never** leave anything valuable in your car because the parking lot is not monitored by security.
- **DO NOT LEAVE ANY ARTWORK OR VALUABLES ON THE SQUARE OVERNIGHT.** You may

leave your display units, tables and chairs at your own risk. Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition and the City of Toronto assume no responsibility for any loss or damage that might occur.

- In the event of a safety concern, loss of property or any other security related matter, please contact the City Hall security desk at (416) 392-7149, or in person at the security desk located just inside the main doors of City Hall.

Have More Questions?

- Check out our [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) page on our website
- Find more Artist Resources on our [Participating Artists Info](#) page
- Get more tips and tricks by looking at our [#toaetips](#) page
- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) at **@toaart** to get your daily dose of #toaetips