



Open Studios Network

Market Research Report

Completed by Cultural Intelligence Ltd
On behalf of Commissions East

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eastengland|arts

This report comprises:

Overview and main recommendations

Visitor Survey report

Artist Survey report

Workshop report

1 Overview and main recommendations

This section provides an overview of the general themes arising from the research as a whole rather than from individual parts of the study.

This first ever region wide survey of Open Studios obtained an excellent response rate from both artists and visitors ensuring a robust and representative sample. 374 artist questionnaires (52% response rate) and 1,591 visitor questionnaires were correctly completed and returned.

The level of audience engagement and the economic impact of Open Studios on both artists and their communities are very significant. An estimated 31,689 visitors attended Open Studios in the region and the total estimated value of artworks sold or commissioned was £593,000.

The Open Studios network is a very important sales channel for artists. 28% of participating artists' total annual income from sales of artwork was derived from this year's Open Studios and 11% of the artists relied solely on Open Studios for selling their work.

The main reasons cited by artists for participating in Open Studios is to show work to new audiences, make sales and make direct contact with potential customers.

The location of an artist's studio appears to be paramount to success. On average 30% of artist respondents said that less than 40 visitors attended their studio. However, only 7% of artists in cities or large towns had less than 40 visitors whilst, 62% of artists in the countryside had less than 40 visitors.

Whilst two thirds of the visitor respondents had visited Open Studios before this year, 30% were new. Half of the visitors buy from Open Studios and their main motivations for visiting are to meet the artist and see art in an artist's workplace. Visitors tend to be very local and there is minimal crossover between the schemes.

Most of the visitor respondents first heard about Open Studios either through word of mouth or leaflets and guides. Over half said that they would be likely to plan their visit on an Open Studios web site if it was available.

Key target audiences have been identified as follows:

- females aged 45-64
- amateur artists
- visitors to art galleries and exhibitions
- members of Friends Schemes relating to other art organisations

Recommendations

The following recommendations arise not from particular elements of the project but from the study as a whole.

This regional research project has provided a wealth of information on which future marketing planning and activity can be based. The individual schemes will obviously need to take account of local needs and issues, however consideration should be given to the following key recommendations:

Location

It would be expected that city based events attract more visitors than those outside cities and this research supports the assumption that location is important. Open Studios schemes need to consider the location of studios in the countryside and how visitors can be encouraged to visit them. Countryside studios should perhaps be located within a cluster of other studios or on an obvious trail. Suggested itineraries for visiting rural studios (maybe to include a gallery and/or a teashop) could be incorporated into the guide or on a web site.

Buying artwork

50% of the visiting respondents reported that they bought or commissioned artwork. Ways of increasing this percentage and increasing the level of expenditure need to be addressed. One way may be to clearly inform visitors that the artwork is for sale through the guide and at the point of sale. Availability of price lists and/or price labels are simple ways of making sure the visitor is aware of the fact that work is for sale and price ranges. This transparent information may also reduce potential awkwardness for visitors who may feel too inhibited to enquire about the price of work.

Supporting the artist

It is very important to communicate the findings of this research to existing and potential Open Studios artists. Not only can the research be used as a tool for conveying the importance of participating in future research and other relevant findings but also as a way of demonstrating how artists can maximise expectations of their event.

Distribution days, seminars, written guidelines and post scheme social get togethers are all useful ways of communicating with and helping the artists. Apart from the supply of posters, invitations, guidebooks and signage etc., further guidance or training could be provided on some or all of the following:

- maximising access
- including opening days and times on outdoor signage
- clear pricing techniques and information
- other methods of promotion

- improving the visitor experience e.g. provision of refreshments
- guidance on promoting their event to local target groups

Target markets

Defined target markets have been identified in the research (see above Overview).

Suggestions for targeting these markets include:

- joint marketing initiatives with local Friends Schemes e.g. distribution of posters and leaflets in local theatre and joint mailing campaign
- distribution of promotional material and/or mailing campaigns to arts societies, art classes, adult art colleges etc
- regional/national press coverage in media with matching target markets e.g. Country Living and Suffolk Journal may have high readership of females aged 45-64. The research provides evidence of relevance to their readership

Fundraising

The level of audience engagement and the impact on the regional economy created by the Open Studios network is significant. The research should be used to provide crucial evidence for fund raising through local, regional and national bodies.

Dissemination

There is huge value in the findings from this first ever regional research project and the information should be disseminated to the wider arts sector. Suggestions include:

- Publication of the report and distribution of relevant elements of the research to national and regional arts bodies
- Approach editors of selected arts publication to publish a feature
- Distribution of press release outlining key findings to other arts media
- Selected elements of the report to be published on a web site
- Communication to all potentially interested parties that the information is available on a web site