

Glen's Art Show Checklist - 5^h Edition

OR: How to set up and run a successful art show

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YOUR JOB AS ART SHOW DIRECTOR

When you take the position of art show director, you have become the advocate of the artists. It's your job to make the art show the #1 item of importance of the convention. Now, realistically, you won't do this, but you do have to fight for your space (don't allow your show to be shoved in a dark closet), your budget (a properly run show can make the convention money in the form of panel rentals & commissions - you've got to spend money to make money), and your people (an art show needs a core staff, as well as large numbers of assistants at certain times - don't let yourself be shortchanged). Your job is not through at the end of the convention, your job is not done till the last artist is paid, the last deadbeat bidder's cheque clears the bank, and the last piece of unsold artwork is returned to the artist.

Too many art shows are considered a very secondary part of a convention - nowhere near as important as the dealer's room, or the dances, or the workshops. While I of course disagree with this reasoning, let me give you this: an art show that is well run may get no notice at all; an art show that is poorly run (before, during, or after) will get a LOT of notice - all bad - and will hurt the convention badly. Work your best to make sure that people have nothing but good things to say about your art show.

WHY HAVE AN ART SHOW?

What can an art show contribute to your convention? It can increase your attendance, for one thing. The more people that come to a convention for whatever reason, the better it is for the con. And there are people who will decide to attend or not attend a show based on the art show. It can increase the prestige & standing of your convention. If your art show is well-received by the artists and bidders (we assume you'll be running a good show), it will make more people want to come back again next year. And, a successful show that comes in under budget can make a pretty penny for the convention. True, those pennies will go towards paying the show's expenses & space rental (you're not getting that large meeting room in the hotel for free, you know), but an art show has a much better chance of paying for itself than most other events in the con. And if you can somehow come up with a profit after all expenses (it happens, but not very often), then you're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!

WHAT YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO DO AS DIRECTOR

You'll need to bring several skills with you as an art show director. If you've not worked an art show before, apprentice with other art shows (or get lots of advice from those who run shows.) Take a good look at the way others run their shows, and learn all the good things they do, as well as the bad (and swear to never do this in your shows.)

First and foremost, you'll need good organizational skills. Keeping yourself (and those around you) organized is essential. You'll need to recruit a dedicated staff (and volunteers at the show), and train them in the procedures you want to use. You might have someone who's "always done it this way" at another show they've worked - listen to them, and if it's better than what you planned, use it. If it's not better, be

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

sure not to let yourself get railroaded. At times you will have to be a master sergeant to keep people on your track. You'll also have to keep an eye on the details - this is very important.

You will have to be able to read and understand floor plans & blueprints so you can arrange your panels in the room given. You'll have to be able to think spatially so that you can get the best arrangement of panels in that room.

You will need to be a diplomat. Artists can occasionally be touchy (both mail-in & attending), staff and volunteers can be contrary (and you do not want to upset these people), and committees can micro-manage. You'll need to distract or ignore people that get in your way, and keep them happy while doing it.

AS SOON AS YOU'VE BEEN APPOINTED

You will need to be interacting with many different people from the initial concept to after the convention is over. You will need to make sure everyone is working on the same page.

BUDGET: You'll need a budget to start off for mailing expenses and other things. Who will you work with, the treasurer or part or all of the committee? If you should need to go over your budget, who is authorized to give you the go-ahead?

HOTEL: You will need to get information from the hotel regarding space as well as get them information as to what you'll be doing with the space. Do you contact the hotel directly, or go through the convention's hotel liaison?

SECURITY: You will be having a lot of potentially valuable artwork at your show - you want to secure it as much as possible. Will you be responsible for providing it with your staff, or will the convention provide it? You also want to make sure that any alarms you might use are okay with the hotel (and who does what if one goes off.)

VOLUNTEERS: Do you recruit your volunteers (not staff, but the "as needed" help) or will the convention supply them from their "gopher staff"?

LOGISTICS: Who will handle the actual moving and transport of the panels, the mail-in artwork, acquiring of consumable supplies? Does your convention have someone who will handle that, or will you have to arrange it? You'll probably have some done by one, some by another. Will you be using a Union facility? Then you may be forced to use Teamsters draymen to handle transport and setup - if so, get all of this arranged a long time in advance.

CASH HANDLING: VITALLY IMPORTANT! Who will be handling the actual money? Will it be one of your staff? If so, then make sure you get a change fund and instruction in how to use the credit card terminal (if being used). If it is the treasurer or one of their staff, be sure that they are set up at the time you need them to be there. If the facility requires that you use their personnel (in the case of some Union-run facilities), make sure that they know what your methods are, and have one of your staff oversee their operations.)

POLICIES: You will be handed some guidelines by the committee, some rules by the hotel. It is your art show, don't let others tell you how to run it, but you will have work with them. If you cannot bend to them, or they try to micro-manage you, you may not be the person to be running this particular show - and if so, be sure they know why.

Arrange for pegboards (you will probably have to make them, unless a VERY local con {read: one within pickup-truck distance} has panels you can rent. If you rent, check into insurance for the panels. If you do not know how to make proper panels, FIND SOMEONE WHO CAN. Not too heavy, not too wimpy). A

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

standard double-sided 4' x 4' pegboard panel using 2" by 2"s should cost around \$10 each. And when getting pegboard, avoid the painted kind - get the regular brown variety. White painted panels may look good in your activity room, but when hanging artwork, the brown provides more contrast when hanging light-coloured mats against it.

Don't let yourself get caught in the "If we make them fancy, they'll look better and last longer" loop. You can spend lots of money for metal frames, or quick-disconnect systems, but unless you really need the fancy features a more expensive system offers, you're just wasting money. Keep in mind that sooner or later, panels will get damaged somehow. If the construction is such that repair is simply not possible, or it would be a high cost, then the relative value doesn't mean anything - you're just spending more for your panels than other shows. The thought of "Well, these will last for 30 years" is nice, but will the convention be around in 30 years? And if not, when you go to sell the panels that you can't use anymore, a buyer isn't going to pay more than what they could make a new panel for in the first place - so you won't get much of a "Fire Sale" price. Besides, you want people to go "Pretty artwork" rather than "Pretty panels" anyway...

Don't forget that you'll need enough hooks & clips for your artwork. Get regular "J" hooks (the small kind), and an assortment of both small and medium "bulldog" clips. Hooks can be found at any hardware store (although you'll have to special-order large quantities of similar hooks), the clips can be found at any office supply store.

6 MONTHS OR MORE BEFORE THE SHOW

Arrange for local drop for mail-in artwork. If at all possible, have it at one of your art show personnel's home or business in the city the art show will be in. Be certain to send a note to the artist telling them that their artwork has arrived safely after it has been received...

Decide on limitations for mail-in artwork - mail-in artwork requires more staff to hang & take down artwork. For a small show this would probably not be a problem, but for a larger show the sheer amount of handling may be more than your staff can handle.

Decide on art placement given number of panels & size of room. Doing a layout beforehand can save you a LOT of time and trouble the day of setup. 10 hours of planning before the convention is infinitely better than trying to do it in the first 2 hours of setup - because you don't have those 2 hours to spare! Get accurate floor plans from hotel engineering to work from. And remember to keep everything within local fire code - you may think it's a waste of time, and it's good enough, but if the fire marshal comes to visit (and they do surprise inspections), having an layout that is not to code gets your art show shut down.

Whenever possible, try not to make each individual art show panel too cramped. Try to avoid making bays that are too tight (if only 2 people can stand in a bay, it's cramped.) Wider bays not only make for better viewing of the art, it makes for better security by having better sightlines - less chances for the sticky fingers to lift smaller pieces of art.

Plan on the size of your show - a show that's crammed too tightly looks as bad as a show that's only half filling a room. Try to make your show JUST FIT into the area you've got. If you know that you won't have a giant number of sold panels, then scale back the actual size of the show (but have a fall-back in case a truly gigantic number of artists come in at the last minute.)

Decide on panel limitations (ie: number of panels per artist) based on secure art show estimates.

Prepare pre-show mailing list. You can get contacts from other art shows, from the ASFA membership list, artist's web site, or cards from artists showing at other art shows. Be prepared to get some mail back - you'll always have a bad address creep in - even if it was a good address when you got the address in the first place.

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

Decide on “associate” or “supporting membership” fee for mail-in artists (if any).

Estimate total costs & decide on panel fees & sales percentages (do you want “per-piece” fees, or “per-panel” fees?)

Estimate mail-back fees.

Prepare registration paperwork (includes printing & mailing, allow sufficient time for Canadian residents...)

Decide on the “level” of rules for the show: strict rules (and strict adherence to them) make an easy show for the staff; some artists will complain, lax rules makes the “lazy” artists happy, is hell on the art show staff. Strive for a happy medium.

Never use a rule (for any part) that can be considered “arbitrary”. Each rule has to make sense. And if any rule might make you as the art show director look biased (say, a bidding rule that allows you to cancel out other’s bids when you yourself are bidding on the same piece), go over that rule with someone else to make sure it doesn’t appear biased. Always listen to others on rules, even if you think they are wrong - if you are thought of as a dictator, that reflects badly on the show. Always be prepared to defend any of your rules - show how they help the artists & bidders - if you can’t show this, why do you have the rule in the first place?

Censorship: or rather, what will be allowed. Certain municipalities will not allow certain things to be displayed. That, or you just don’t feel comfortable with higher-rated art. Decide what you will accept, and if there are any restrictions, decide how you will explain them. If you will accept “adult” artwork in your show, give your artists some idea of what your break points will be (even if they will only be general guidelines). As a general rule, “family” sections go up to PG-13 (that is, no more than butt shots, and light sexual situations), “adult” sections are R and above (any frontal nudity, intense sexual situations, any “sex acts”, violence or torture). Under most municipalities’ regulations, pedophilia or bestiality is not only unacceptable, it’s illegal. In any event, the art show director is the final authority on what will be allowed in the show. But if there are going to be any restrictions, spell them out well in advance - do not wait till the artist gets there before telling them half of their artwork can’t be shown in the show.

Jurying: **DON’T!** A juried show is a show that may or may not have prejudicial people in charge, but if you tell one person he can’t put THAT particular piece of artwork in the show (not for content, but because “the committee” just doesn’t like it...) you will have a PR nightmare on your hands...

Decide on a “apply by” date, or use the “never full” philosophy. Setting a date to have all requests in makes estimation of space allotment easy; causes “lazy” artists to bitch. The “never full” philosophy make the “lazy” artists happy, penalizing the ones who followed the rules; is also MUCH harder on the staff. You want as much paperwork done beforehand as possible. Strive for a happy medium.

Prepare quick primer on proper mounting, shipping, & protection of artwork. If people don’t want to work at protecting their artwork, it’s not the art show’s fault if the art gets damaged. The art show can only be held responsible if the artist has made reasonable efforts to protect their artwork.

Do you wish to have “Quick Sale” or “Direct Sale” sales at your show? This is where the artist has stated a price (always higher than the minimum bid) that they are willing to sell their artwork for a set price to the first person who wants it. If someone places a bid down that is not a quick sale bid, the possibility of quick sale is void (since it has already entered into the silent auction process). This can help the artist move older pieces, but it can also get them less than they might have if it went to the voice auction - be sure they are aware of what the process involves, and if they want to have quick sales on their pieces, that they put an appropriate value down for each piece. If they put down a price that is sure to sell it, but they won’t be happy with the price, it’s their fault for putting a price that was too low. If you have quick sale, decide

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

whether you want to sell the piece the instant the buyer wants it, or to hold it till the end of the show (you can have gaping holes in your show if they take it off the board).

Be sure that the artists know that their minimum bid is the minimum they will be happy with. If they start with an absurdly low bid (say, \$1) in the hopes that it will spur a bidding war, they need to be ready in case it sells for the absurdly low bid. They set the minimum bid; if it won't make them happy, then it's their fault if it sells low.

Make sure that the artist knows that only 4' x 4' worth of artwork will go on a 4' x 4' panel. If they send much more artwork than they have purchased space for, you'll have to decide whether to only hang as much of their artwork as you have space for, or give them more panels space (assuming you have it to spare) - and charge them for the extra space.

Decide on a final deadline for mail-in artists to get their work to you in time for the show - but give it a little wiggle room so that if they send it late, it at least has a chance of getting to you in time.

Arrange for a separate room for the auction.

Inspect room(s) for proper lighting, obtain auxiliary lighting if insufficient (check with hotel on power requirements).

Prepare bid & control sheets, arrange for mass copying.

Prepare liability statements (no glass, arrange for insurance, art show is not responsible for damage to artwork {assuming reasonable care is taken by the art show, of course...}, etc...)

Determine "abandoned artwork" policy. If an artist (attending) does not pick up their artwork before the show closes, what will you do with it? If a bidder does not pick up their artwork before the show closes, will you try to get the unsold artwork back to the artist, or will you go after the bidder for payment (as well as a fee for mailing the work to them.)

Will you be having a print shop at your show? You'll need to arrange a separate display area for the prints, as well as someone to man the actual "print bins". If you have a print shop, you will need to have the ability to accept cash (and possibly credit cards) at all times, not just at the end of the show during checkout.

Arrange for separate bank account for art show funds **OR** get an assurance from the treasurer that art show funds will be off-limits when placed in the general fund. Art show funds **CANNOT** be touched until every artist has been paid in full. The commission (if any) the art show collects is collected **AFTER ALL** the artists have been paid, not before. If art show funds are used to pay other convention bills before total disbursement to the artists, it's embezzlement (as the funds do **NOT** belong to the convention, they are being held in trust for the artists).

4-6 MONTHS BEFORE SHOW

If your convention has a web site, you will want a section for the art show. Use it to advertise your show, get information, disburse forms (in the form of PDF files), and advertise your artists (with links to their web pages - and they can put links to your site on their web pages - good advertising for all!) When you have finalized rules for bidders, put them up as well.

Decide on number of bids to auction. You want the number high enough so that your auction is a reasonable size. Too high, and you limit the auction sales. Too low, and your auction will go on, and on, and on... An ideal auction is no longer than 2 hours (assuming about 2 minutes per piece - but if you have continual action on a piece, let them ramp it up as high as they want!)

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

Decide whether you wish to assign panel locations or “first come, first serve” (you will get grief with either). If all locations are equally good, assigned spaces are fine. Working to solve any problems with a location (with lighting, change in layout, whatever) must always be done, but realistically, you can only do so much. IF, however, over 20% of spaces are “bad” (due to poor lighting, bad placement, etc...) first-come, first serve is the ONLY method to use, lest you get MUCH noise from the artists. More noise than having a bunch of bad locations, that is...

I have been giggered for saying that any potentially bad locations would be allowed in the show - that if there is a problem, just fix it! A great idea in theory, but in actual practice, it's not YOUR display area - it belongs to the hotel or convention centre you're dealing with - and you can only do what they will allow you to do. Sometimes you just have no choice - and if the area is just too bad to use, use that for informational signs or flyers. Try your best, but if bringing in klege lights or other high-wattage/high heat lights is the only way to light up an area - and it makes the banquet manager pop a blood vessel - then you'll be limited in what you can do.

Fluorescent lighting is cheap, low in wattage and heat, but most bulbs are not colour-corrected - they shift to the blue or green. You can get colour-corrected bulbs, but they aren't cheap. Halogens are good for colour, but they are hot, glaring, and high wattage - you can use them for bounce lighting, but there can be a safety issue. Regular incandescents are generally colour-corrected, but are not as efficient as either fluorescent or halogen - that means more heat for the same amount of light. You'll have to work out this with the hotel if you have to put in additional lighting.

Are you going to have awards? Decide what they will be and make them up LONG in advance...

Unless you are insane, your art show will not have insurance on the art in it - it would be a liability NIGHTMARE. That's up to the artist, if they choose to do so. Be sure that they know any insurance is up to them, and NOT the art show. The art show will take reasonable care, but cannot certify that nothing will happen.

Decide on the possibility of “After Auction” sales. If you intend to have them, be sure to get artists permission before selling their artwork. As a rule, after auction prices are the same as minimum bid - some artists may not want their artwork sold at minimum after the show is over (if no one was willing to bid on them during the show). You have to allow the artist the choice. Be sure to make the forms crystal clear as well.

(downside: after auction sales will pose more paperwork in the form of sales tracking).

Decide on monetary acceptance (for bidders):

Cash (downside: need secure storage till deposit, also change).

Travelers Cheques (downside: very few).

Personal Cheques (downside: you need to impress upon buyers that you **WILL** go after bad cheques).

Visa/MasterCard (downside: need local account to handle transactions).

Discover (downside: harder to find service).

Amex (downside: **HIGH** charge per transaction, sometimes long delay in posting funds).

Debit Cards (downside: must have V/M basic to get debit access).

From Sales: (downside: dependant on sales & others monies going through).

Remember that if you get a bounced cheque or charge-back on a credit card, you cannot pass that along to

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

the artist. You have sold their artwork, therefore you owe them the money. It's up to you to go after the deadbeat bidder to collect the money.

Don't forget that in all likelihood you'll need to collect sales tax on art show purchases - be sure that you can float the art show sales under the umbrella of the convention's reseller's permit. If you don't need to collect tax, verify that. If you do, be sure to tell the bidders what the tax will be (so you don't have the problem of "WOW! That artwork is \$100 - and that's exactly what I have!") They'll be a big letdown if you pop up some tax on them unawares - and an even bigger letdown for you if you find out about it AFTER the show...)

Prepare accounting package to handle art show funds.

Make sure you set up your financial accounting PROPERLY. If your state requires you to collect sales tax on art show sales (and I don't think that ANY state will exempt this), then it is up to YOU (that is, the convention) to collect the sales tax and disburse it to the state - do NOT try to pass this on to the artist (in most states, this would be illegal anyway). If you take a commission, you take your cut from the artist's net, NOT from sales and taxes (ANY accountant would have a fit if you tried to do this). And unless there is some overriding reason to do so, don't require your artists to file W-9's with you - this only adds a VERY unnecessary layer of complexity to your paperwork, requiring not only you to file paperwork with the IRS, but send them 1099's at the end of the year. Just send them proper accounting of their sales, and make it THEIR responsibility to set things right with the IRS. If you keep the proper records (which you have to anyway), then you don't need anything else to prove you did your "due diligence".

Prepare database to track physical artwork. Are you going to use a computer to do this? If so, either use a program that is tried & true (such as ArtiFacs or the equivalent), or use a system that has been tested A LOT beforehand. DON'T test the program at the convention. Use a system that will NOT allow you to skip fields - it may slow you down a bit on data entry, but you WANTED that information - DON'T skip it. Don't go for a W98 Access program or a Hypercard Mac system simply because "I can make it with exploding boxes and I just got a book on how to make relational databases!" - they blow up WAY too easily, unless you've done it MANY times before. Simple, basic, tested is what you want. Stability is VITALLY important over fancy features. And it HAS to have error checking & conditional reporting capabilities.

If you are using a computer, run it in parallel with your paperwork. NEVER depend solely on the computer to handle all your data - expect it to fail. Enter in all the data from your forms so you can speed up the process - but computers are not fool-proof - if it fails and you have no paper backup, you are toast. Use your computers more as a parallel accounting system - having accurate information after the show is far more important than having instant information during the show. And after you've entered all the information in the computer, don't throw out the original paperwork until all cheques have been cut and all conflicts are resolved - you may need to refer to them again.

Prepare your forms. Make them READABLE (don't use 4mm high boxes or the like...) Make them make sense. Make them streamlined (don't add any more information than you honestly need...) Make control sheets, bid sheets and NFS sheets (if needed). If you are going to have a print shop, do you want to have separate forms for that? Regular photocopied forms are the simplest to make, NCR forms can be more versatile (but cost more, and may not be useable next year...)

When making your forms, make sure to ask for all the information you need, and none of what you don't. Bid sheets need to have space for the artist's name, artist number, piece number, title, media, minimum bid, and quick sale or after-auction price (if your show is using this.) Then a section that has a space for bidder number and amount bid (with enough rows for the amount you have going to auction), with a section for winning bidder & amount at the bottom.

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

Artist control sheets need to have the artist's name as well as artist number, address, phone, and e-mail. For the individual piece data, you want the piece number, title, minimum bid, a section to check in and out each individual piece, the winning bidder number, and the selling price. You will also want to have a section at the bottom to note the number of pieces in and out, initials for the artist to show they checked in their artwork, as well as checked out unsold art, and an accounting section to show total sales, commissions, shipping fees (as well as amount sent in for shipping, if any), panel fees charges as well as panel fees paid, and then the grand total that's going to the artist.

Bidder control sheets are similar to artist control sheets, with name, number, address, phone, e-mail, as well as a line stating that they have read the art show rules and agree with them. You then have a section for the art they purchased, art control number and price. And at the bottom you have a section for the accounting, showing total purchase price, sales tax, and amount tendered. If paying by cheque or credit card, you might want to get some information on that so you can match the buyer sheet to another piece of paper in the till.

You might want to add a note that copyrights & publishing rights are NOT included with purchase. These are separate discussions, of which the art show has nothing to do with.

Estimate artist check-in time **& STICK TO IT.**

For the final close-out of bidding, decide on how you want to handle the final bids. Will you use a "Pens Down!" model, or a wave of art show staff pushing people out before them, marking the final bids as they go? Either way works, but decide on one and let the bidders know which it will be.

Arrange for art show informational mailing (includes mailing of ALL paperwork to artists).

Recruit assistant & bonded person to handle money.

If you are going to need signs, make them well in advance, or arrange with the convention to have them made for you.

2-4 MONTHS BEFORE SHOW

Determine final closeout & auction times - and once set, don't change them. Will you have so much in the auction that you'll need 2 auctions? Make preparations for that if you do.

Arrange for security to handle sensitive or delicate artwork.

Bag check: a sensitive subject. If you check bags, you are responsible for the contents. Checking larger bags or purses is automatic, checking small purses or belt packs is potentially dangerous: "Where's the \$500 that was in my purse?" Suggest that smaller packs be allowed in, but with the proviso that they be inspected on the way out. If someone won't allow inspection, don't allow him or her in.

Cameras: decide what you are going to do about them. Make people check them, watch people like a hawk - it's up to you, but people can't take pictures of the artwork...

Will you be using a cash register to handle the money? If so, make sure that it's programmed with the proper tax rate, and that anyone who will use it is fully checked out on the proper operation. Be sure to have some spare paper tape on hand as well. And be certain that whoever has the register know when you'll need it at the show.

Arrange for house phone, radio or pager to keep in constant touch with art show during convention (or simply do not leave the art show during operation).

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

Will you need power? Be sure the hotel supplies it WHERE you need it.

Arrange for large staff to assist in setup, mail-in art hanging, & breakdown.

Prepare forms & tracking information for bidders at the show.

(Do you wish to have a “contract” for liability in case of bid skipping?)

Coordinate your times with all other departments. In the beginning, you want to make sure that you have enough time for setup on the first day that does not clash with the dealer's room (since dealers are often artists, and they need to set up in both locations - don't make them decide either/or). Never make the closing times of the dealer's room and the art show the same - it can hurt both. Your closeout times **MUST** be different than your dealer's room closing times **OR** major programming events - don't force your bidders to decide between one or the other - you will hurt your sales this way. Likewise for the auction - be sure to schedule it so that it will end **BEFORE** the dealer's room closes - often times if someone does not get what they are bidding on in the auction, they will go back to the dealer's room for a print of the piece, or something else they were waiting on “If they had the money for...”

Who will be transporting your panels & artwork to the show? If it's not a member of your staff, check with logistics to be sure that they will have a large enough truck and enough people to assist with loading & unloading, both to the show, and taking things back after the show is over.

Arrange for judges if you're having awards.

Recruit a good auctioneer for the auction. A good auctioneer can keep things lively, and can keep figures straight. **MUST** be absolutely impartial, no one gets more or less consideration than any other. Best if they know a lot of the people in the audience, they can play off them. Don't pick “I was first”; you don't have the luxury. You have to pick who can do the best job, even if you have to track that person down and convince them to do the auction.

If you can't handle it, arrange for a PR person, because you **WILL** get someone complaining at you during setup...

1 MONTH BEFORE THE SHOW

Coordinate with hotel to provide for proper security during closure. If you are going to have motion-detector alarms in place during times when the room is secured, be certain that the hotel knows that if they enter the room without an authorized person from the art show, that alarm will go off (that is, no cleaning crews during the night).

Arrange for local shipper to return unsold mail-in artwork (if it's not going to be you).

Arrange for adequate “gophers” during the show.

Arrange for adequate convention security for the show in operation.

Arrange for adequate “consumable” supplies (**REMOVABLE** tape, pens, hooks, clips, highlighters, etc...)

When using highlighters (to mark bid sheets), make sure you have enough of each colour, and be sure that everyone knows what colour is what. You'd generally want a colour for pieces going to auction, pieces that went to the highest bidder (non-auction), & pieces that did not sell during the show (and hence might be available for after auction sales). You might also want a separate colour for quick sales - figure out all your possible categories and assign a colour to that category.

Confirm with your hotel liaison the times you can occupy your room(s), and when you have to vacate the

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

room(s). If won't do if you're planning on having the room till midnight Sunday for a leisurely breakdown if the hotel is planning on setting up for a next-day event at 6PM Sunday evening.

Verify that you can actually secure the room. Look for air-walls that are not secure, side passages that someone can slip through (or hide in), doors that will not securely lock from the outside. If you cannot TOTALLY lock your room down, you will need to have someone in there at night (so you may need a rollaway bed from the hotel).

Arrange for "chain locks" or "sonalerts" for secure doors in the art show. If you're not staying at the hotel, arrange with your hotel liaison to be on call in case there's a problem with the art show room overnight.

2 WEEKS BEFORE THE SHOW

Arrange for adequate "shipping consumables" for mailing artwork back.

If you're having awards, PICK THEM UP NOW!

Confirm with logistics that all items will be picked up & delivered at the right times & places.

Confirm adequate supply of consumables.

Confirm all hotel arrangements.

If you are using computers, test them before you leave for the show and then when you get to the show.

If you are planning to network your systems, do a dry run BEFORE the show with ALL the components in the network - including all printers. If you haul everything to the convention and something doesn't work with something else, all the tools back in your workshop won't do you any good at the convention.

Will you have an Artist Guest Of Honour at your event? If so, then you want to be sure that they have their art show spaces right up front, or in a preferred location. Wouldn't do to hide them in a back corner...

If you are assigning spaces, now is the time to start figuring it out. You would be advised not to release the assignments before the show - you'll be deluged with people wanting to move.

DAY AFTER FINAL MAIL-IN ART DEADLINE

Contact artists that you have not received art from, check to see if it has been sent, and try to make last-minute arrangements (if possible). You can have them express their artwork to the hotel, but if you do that, check with the hotel first. Some will charge for accepting packages, and will only hold them for so long.

1 WEEK BEFORE THE SHOW

Collect all mail-in artwork that has arrived so far, examine for damage, enter the data if possible.

Inspect pegboards for damage, check for adequate supplies of hooks & clips.

Arrange with hotel for safe-deposit box for art show funds.

Confirm adequate number of tables & chairs for work area.

Arrange for adequate "munchies" for your staff & gophers.

CONFIRM large staff to assist in setup, mail-in art hanging, & breakdown.

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

CONFIRM large staff to assist in setup, mail-in art hanging, & breakdown **AGAIN**.

Arrange to occupy to art show function space ASAP upon release by hotel & begin setup.

DAY BEFORE THE SHOW

Arrive at least 1 day prior to initial setup to inventory artwork, supplies, & paperwork.

Will you need a phone - will it need to be an outside line? **CONFIRM** with the hotel, and arrange to test it as soon as they can install it - you don't want to test it when you really need it...

If you are accepting credit cards via a VeriFone system, **VERIFY** you have a clean phone line - a direct ("Dial 9" - not through the hotel switchboard) line required. Make sure it will be active when needed (most hotels will give you a house phone for no charge, but charge a daily fee for outside line access, plus a charge per call. You don't need to be paying for any more than you're using).

Bring tools to assist in setup & repair of panels.

DURING SETUP

Go over ALL paperwork with staff & gophers for check-in.

Have that floor plan for the layout you want and make sure everyone follows it.

Be prepared to have someone go charging out at the last minute for replacement hardware for your panels.

Go over your "auction paperwork" procedures with your staff. You'll need:

Auctioneer

Person to handle paperwork at the auction. Takes down piece, artist, final bid, & final bidder number.

Runners - LOTS of runners. Several for the show, and at least 4 to shuttle art from the auction back to the art show for processing.

Coordinator - handles the paperwork back at the art show.

Director - in the art show room, making sure that all art coming back from the auction goes to the proper place (needs to know ALL the art & ALL the artists). **CANNOT** be the auctioneer, they'll be too busy...

DURING CHECK-IN

Make sure your volunteers know the check-in procedures.

Be prepared (assuming you have unsold space) for new artists to come in and ask for space. Not only will you need to handle their paperwork, you will need to have somewhere to put their panel fees.

When you open the art from artists who've mailed in, be sure to look through the box for all paperwork as well as any cheques for fees, return postage, etc. Be sure to note on their paperwork any extra funds slated for return postage - if you take their return fees out of their sales when they sent in money for it, you'll be hearing from them.

Check every piece of art to be sure it's in its proper area of rating (if this applies to your show).

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

If an artist has something heavy (say, a large framed piece of art), make sure it can be hung safely. If it's a framed piece, it must have a hanging wire - just hanging it on the frame is an invitation to disaster (especially if it's got glass in it). If the artwork cannot be hung safely & securely with a bulldog clip, then the responsibility for hanging the artwork safely is the artist's, not the art show's.

Make sure the artists have turned in and signed all their paperwork. And make sure you can read their writing.

Make sure that you have CURRENT addresses for the artists. Whenever possible, get a phone number & an e-mail address (if there is a problem afterwards, you will want to contact them).

Be certain that every piece of art has the name & address of the artist on it (usually a business card will do fine), as well as the title & any show-specific information (piece number, minimum bid, etc...) If there is no identifying information on the artwork, how can you tell what the piece is & who made it?

Whenever possible, have the bid sheet attached to the artwork - not only is this easier on your pegboard, but it keeps the proper bidsheet with the artwork it's assigned to.

Make sure that the media the artist says the work is actually IS the media they are using. If it's a hand-coloured print, don't call it an original. If it's a photo-print, don't call it an original. If it's a computer-generated print (as from a ink-jet or colour laser), it's not an original - you can make exact duplicates in unlimited quantities. These items can be classified as limited edition prints, but they are not originals.

When filling out the control sheets, be certain that the prices on the bid sheets match the prices on the control sheet. If you're dealing with mail-in art, use the prices on the bid sheet if there is a discrepancy (since this is what they wanted the public to see, you have to assume that this is what they want to use).

A few tips for hanging mail-in art (and you can pass this along to the artists that are there): If you have many pieces that are matted in similar size, it's good to "stagger" the pictures, so that you don't have an unbroken row of artwork. If your eye will "slide" along the art, it could slide right off the panel to the next one - if you stagger every other piece (hang it an inch lower, etc...), then the eye has to stop and reset for each piece - and so you can be sure that the bidder is actually looking at the artwork. If there are different colours of matting, don't group them by mat colour (a row of black, a row of blue, a row of white, etc...) - you want to make the eye stop on every piece, so make them contrast as much as possible. And a final trick if you are dealing with heads - if the face is looking left or right, try to position the pieces so that they look into your panel. If you have 6 pieces on the right side of your panel looking off to the right, and 6 on the left side looking off to the left, then all your pictures are more interested in what's going on on someone else's panels - make them look at your own stuff.

When hanging mail-in artwork, try to avoid hanging "like" artists together. A bunch of elves, a bunch of dragons, etc... Stagger them throughout the show, it's better for all the artists. If attending artists want to do, don't stop them - they may be friends.

From a security standpoint, be certain that you have good sightlines down aisles. Avoid any possible "dead corners" that someone could get into and steal artwork with no way for anyone to see him.

DURING THE SHOW

Maintain adequate security & man the desk for any questions.

Be prepared for an artist or bidder to request an early checkout (or sales) in case they have an early flight back - plan accordingly.

Get plenty of sleep at night, you'll need to be "on call" any time the show is open.

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

Have a LARGE staff on hand during final closeout, highlighters ready. MOVE the people out of the show, don't take any nonsense. Allow for final bidding to auction of a contested piece, but once that's done, MOVE the people out of the show...

When bidders fill out the bidder control sheets, make sure that they fill them out LEGIBLY, and sign them. If they won't give you a phone number, you might want to restrict them to cash only sales (if a cheque is bad, you will want to get in touch with them.) If they won't sign the sheet stating that they have read and understand all the show rules, don't give them a bidder number - it could be a false bidder.

AFTER THE CLOSEOUT, BEFORE THE AUCTION

Collect all artwork for the auction, collate all the information, and post a list as to what's going to auction.

Be certain the paperwork for the art is with each piece.

Go over auction procedures again; confirm staff for auction.

THE AUCTION

Prepare for a short period of intense "busyness", be standing by for an emergency.

Have the times art pickup can begin, credit cards accepted, and any other vital information announced right before the auction. Have someone there who can register potential bidders who waited till the auction to get their number.

Allow some time between the end of the auction and the start of the checkout, you want to be sure everything is in its place so there will be no delays.

CHECKOUT

Have a LARGE staff on hand to process a rush of people.

Have at least 2 people who can handle money.

How will you handle collection of artwork? You can either take all the sold artwork and stack them by bidder number (using your staff after final closeout but before pickup), or you can have each bidder escorted through the art show with an assistant collecting the artwork they have bid on. The first way can potentially make checkout faster (since everything is in one location), but can allow for greater errors (if one of bidder 16's pieces got slipped into bidder 61's stack, it can be hard to find the proper one). The second way requires you have more people available at checkout, but it puts the responsibility of collecting all the artwork on the bidder (best to create a worksheet for them to use to track their bids and locate them if they won) - if you are allowing after-auction sales, it allows them to see more artwork that they might buy.

Have a separate person to handle artists checking out unsold artwork.

Begin collecting unsold mail-in artwork, begin packing for shipment if possible.

As soon as panels are cleared, begin breakdown ASAP (as the hotel will want the room back PRONTO) - inspect & repair damage.

When final checkout time is reached, collect "abandoned artwork" and disburse as procedures permit.

Glen's Art Show Checklist – 5^h edition

AFTER THE ART SHOW

Deposit all cheques & cash, confirm credit & debit card transfers.

DO THE PAPERWORK! DON'T SLACK ON IT! DOUBLE CHECK IT!

Mail back any unsold artwork.

Ship the pegboards back to storage. If they need it, plan a repair session for damaged panels.

After adequate time to allow confirmed processing, disburse cheques ASAP. If there are bad cheques or disallowed charges, **GO AFTER THEM LIKE GANGBUSTERS!** This money belongs to the artists, not the art show, and the art show cannot take their cut UNTIL all artists are paid in full.

An art show that gets cheques out to artists within 2 weeks of the show is great, within 4 weeks is the norm, within 8 weeks is acceptable (barely). If it takes longer than 8 weeks to get the payments to artists, you'd better have a VERY good reason why it's so late - or you'd better be prepared to take a LOT of well-deserved heat for it.

Be sure to let the artist know who bought their artwork (generally on the control sheet) - it's required by law in some states. Give them just as much information as they need - sending them names & addresses of all the bidders is overkill, and a violation of the privacy of the bidders. Just the names of the purchasers of their artwork is all they need. If they need to contact the purchaser, you need to be prepared to be a go-between to get them in touch with other - and then it's up to them. The purchaser should have the contact information on the artist anyway - as it should be on the back of the artwork.

Arrange a time with the treasurer to cut cheques. Do as much of the paperwork as possible beforehand (copying control sheets, addressing envelopes...) so that as soon as the cheques are cut, you can mail them off with their paperwork.

Prepare mailing list for next year's convention.

Go get 3 pints of Guinness. Drink them. Pass out.

Is this listing all-inclusive? Hardly - it's just designed to touch on the highlights of the things you'll need to consider. The way I do something may be the total opposite of the way you do something - which is fine, as long as either way works. There are some things here that you may never have to deal with at your convention, and probably a few that I've never had to deal with, making you say "Why'd he forget about <blank>?" Use this as it was designed - as a checklist to jog your memory - I do!

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