



Advice for Surviving a Selling Event

Attending a week long selling event takes a lot of preparation and planning, as well as stamina.

The advice in this factsheet is provided by textile designer James Donald and sculptural willow weaver Lizzie Farey, who have both sold their work at Chelsea Crafts Fair, as well as other selling events.

They discussed their experiences and gave their tips for survival at the Crafts Council briefing for exhibitors going to Origin: the London Craft Fair in 2006.

These tips, however, can equally apply to any selling event.

James Donald – www.pickone.co.uk

- You have to be really comfortable. At Chelsea Crafts Fair (which was in Chelsea Town Hall which was always very hot) he always hired a fan as it made both him and visitors more comfortable so they spent more time at his stand.
- Bring a high level stool so you can perch and still have eye contact with the customer
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes
- Eat well, have a good breakfast and have loads of water to stop dehydrating
- Check out the nearest supermarket on the way in to bring in your lunch
- Make friends with the people beside you – very important, especially when you've drunk a lot of water!
- Plan the stand display in advance, where everything is going, display cases and what is going in them. Make a plan of the space – cut it out of bits of paper and try it out to make sure it works.
- Less is more – no clutter means the customer can see what they are looking at.
- Consider who is beside and opposite you – you need to be aware of what is around you so it might be worth getting in touch with them before you go
- Have a storage unit for paperwork, pens, water, packaging etc. If necessary these could be bought in London at Habitat or Muji. Do you know anyone doing the second week so that you could share the cost of the units?
- Have a space where you can write orders and pack purchases
- Difficult customers – keep smiling and never lose your cool. Listen to them. They may actually have a point.
- Be firm if a customer is making unreasonable demands – is the job actually worthwhile?
- Source press contacts for magazines, papers etc from www.publist.com Target smaller newspapers who like writing about local people.
- Publicity handouts – trade information for press pack, artist's statement, do on a computer and get printer to print on glossy paper. What do you want to convey? Make handouts easy to understand, easy to carry and easy to store. Try to make A5 as not too heavy or too light. Think about the scale of these things.

- Make sure your website is updated as people who go away with information will then look at the site
- Add links pages to your site as this increases traffic.
- In your price lists include postage and packing. Do landed price – the price a piece costs, then include postage and packaging. Find costs for national and international delivery at www.postoffice.co.uk
- Do price lists in different currencies - £, Euros and Dollars. Yen may also be a good idea. Use an online currency converter such as <http://finance.yahoo.com/currency?u> to work out prices in foreign currencies. Once you've worked out prices always round up.
- Expect the best and be prepared for the worst.

Think about what you want to have with you and plan ahead. Things you may need to bring with you...in NO order what so ever!

- Calculator
- Pens/Pencils
- Rubber
- Publicity Material
- "Origin" Postcards
- Hand out for the public – artist's statement, contact details
- Press pack – press release, images, artist's statement
- Display material/photographs for walls
- Pins or hooks for hanging material on the walls
- A storage facility for all the money and cheques you will take in!
- Credit card machine. He uses www.123send.net a London based company that are affordable and efficient. There are other companies so Google them to get the best deal.
- Facility for storing Business cards
- Stapler and spare staples
- Order forms with one or two carbon copies
- Previous publicity from magazines if applicable
- Packaging material
- Price lists
- Any cleaning materials, ie, for cabinets etc

Advice for Surviving a Selling Event Continued

Lizzie Farey – www.lizziefarey.co.uk

The first time Lizzie went to Chelsea Crafts Fair she was ready for the worst - but it didn't happen - and she enjoyed it. The organisation was second to none, and there was a great camaraderie between Scottish makers and other standholders. It was a success financially; however, someone opposite her didn't sell a thing during the week.

Her advice:

- Don't have any financial barrier between you and the public – have a range of prices.
- Takings should be 10 times the cost of your stand. Almost half her takings are commissions.
- Aim high, they have a lot more money than we have.
- Magazine editors cruise around so have a press pack available
- Find a good photographer to work with for good publicity shots.
- It's quite useful to wear something bright as you think they'll remember you but they don't. It's also very very crowded so it helps if they can point you out. They want to make you out in a crowd.
- They know what they like and don't like and they're not afraid to tell you. Just smile.
- Never undertake something that you don't really really want to do. "Could you make me a lobster pot?" "But it's not what I'm doing." Steer them round to what you make.
- Once they decide they want something give them your time. Find out what they like about it, what they don't like, what space it's going in, is it on the wall? The time spent will pay dividends as the most important thing is your time and they'll remember it afterwards.
- Write everything down in one place – name, address and add something which you can easily remember them by. Agree a price and usually include delivery and insurance.
- Never give discounts.
- Timescale – you'll have Christmas ahead of you – so she starts her commissions in January. Be good and let them know if there's a delay or a problem.
- For Americans put dollars on prices and include delivery. Work out cost, tell them it's ready, and get whole amount in advance. Ask for payment using Swift –you give them all the information – name, sort code, a/c no and bank's swift code a/c no - and they use it to transfer money and pay you. Your bank will charge for a US cheque - so if payment by cheque build it into the prices.
- For a commission people do expect to pay a deposit. She asks for a round figure £50/£200. Give them a receipt.
- Don't judge people by their appearances.
- She puts her prices by her work. James Donald doesn't put prices on his work so he can engage with customers. If someone wants to buy a piece of work on your stand that makes it look good - ask them if you can keep it to the end of the week offer to pay carriage.
- Never commit to exhibitions with galleries until you can check them and find out as much as you can about the gallery. Never be intimidated into feeling inferior by a gallery. Is exhibiting with that show worthwhile? Sometimes it is very good for the career, like Origin.

Useful Contacts

Cultural Enterprise Office

The Cultural Enterprise Office provides a specialist business development service for individuals and businesses in the creative industries. They have offices in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh and provide an enquiry service, a professional development programme of seminars, training and events and offer individual advice surgery sessions. Find out more at

www.culturalenterpriseoffice.co.uk

Business Gateway & Business Gateway International

Business Gateway provides help and advice to anyone starting their own business or wanting to grow their business. Business Gateway International offers a range of services, training courses and events to help develop an international business plan and access new markets. Find out your local contact by calling 0845 609 6611 or visit

www.bgateway.com

Local Craft Development Officers

Craft Development Officers are based across Scotland and create a channel between makers and the audience. To meet local needs each post is different so one officer may focus on an individual activity while another may run a wider development programme. Find out more about local development officers at

www.craftscotland.org/craftdevelopment.html

Information taken from presentations by James Donald and Lizzie Farey at a briefing event organised by the Cultural Enterprise on behalf of the Crafts Council for makers selected for Origin: the London Craft Fair 2006.

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