

many people to hold shows in their own homes. One woman, after being rejected from a local juried show, decided to invite all the people she knew who were also rejected to show in her condo for a special "Art is My Passion" exhibition. Once again, we saw some of the best work in the city that night.

Protect valuables

First, be sure to remove all valuables from the viewing area. Strangers might not be art fans but criminals checking you out.

Place artwork on easels in front of doors going into rooms you don't want people to enter.

Don't worry about perfect lighting. You are showing work in your home. Chances are your buyers don't have perfect lighting in their homes either.

Send postcards

You can make your own postcards using postcard paper from the local office supply store. Templates are usually available online. These postcards are a bit flimsy and the print quality depends on your printer. The advantage, though, is that you can control the number of cards you make. I recommend sending these postcards inside an envelope.

Another option is to spend \$49.99 for 250 postcards at www.vistaprints.com. You may not think you have a 250-person mailing list, but you'll be surprised at how fast these postcards will disappear.

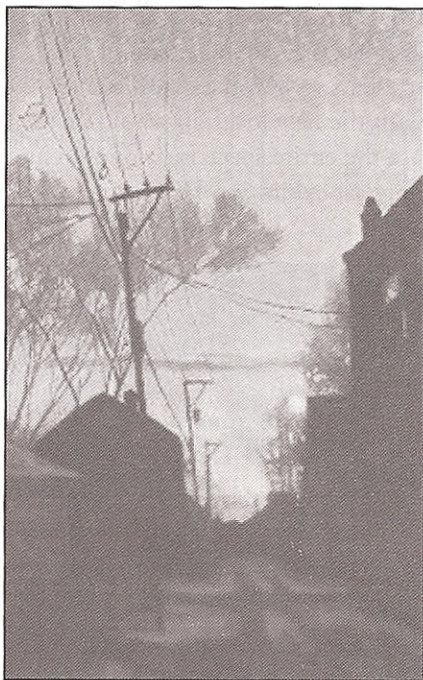
Begin with friends, family, and co-workers. Drop postcards off at local businesses — they always want to support neighborhood artists. Tell your friends and family to invite guests, then give them a couple of extra postcards to hand out.

The goal should be to distribute all the cards. Think of your

postcards as discount coupons — after the event, the coupons expire and you're stuck with them.

Contact newspapers

Art exhibitions are often listed for free in local papers. Sometimes they will even run an article with an image of your work.



*Tomorrow, painting by
Julie Sulzen*

Make signs

Make a sign and place it somewhere near the front door announcing "Open Studio Tonight" or "Gallery Open." I've been to many openings where people will walk by and not come in based on the assumption that it was private. Let everyone know they're welcome.

Provide food and wine

It is cheaper to buy fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese and crackers and arrange them yourself, than to buy a party plate from the grocery store. Making a fruit tray is fun. One

alternative artist opening I recently attended displayed the vegetables in the form of a skeleton in honor of Halloween. It is always the added extra effort that makes a difference.

If you prefer hot food, you don't need to pay for an expensive caterer when you own a microwave. Today the frozen food section contains a number of reasonably priced and tasty bite size foods that can be heated in a matter of minutes.

Wine sells for as little as \$3. Surprisingly, some of that wine is good. Our rule is to purchase wine costing no more than \$8/bottle. Sometimes my wife and I buy wine strictly for the label to create a theme — all animals, oddball fun names, celebrities, etc. It is an art opening, not a wine tasting.

Be flexible about closing hours

People will often stick around much longer than you expect. Don't be surprised if your *Opening* gradually turns into a *Party*. It's up to you whether the doors to the public are closed on time or left open. We usually leave them open for an extra hour or more. We've had many visitors stop by when the Opening was officially closed.

Visits from these latecomers have sometimes resulted in sales. Strangers don't know who is a relative or friend of yours, they just see a happening event and want to join in the fun. Sometimes people are intimidated by galleries, and the combination of art, a party/event, and the home setting often results in sales.

Copyright ©2005 Dan Zamudio. Dan Zamudio and Julie Sulzen (www.juliesulzen.com) live in Chicago. Dan is a photographer/writer; Julie is a painter/illustrator/teacher. They sponsor workshops and art exhibitions in their home/studio.