

Art Show

From Worldcon Runners' Guide

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Art Show

Key Problem areas

The perennial major problems of the Worldcon art show are:

1. Changing the number of bids to get to auction

Whatever philosophy you want to use to determine how many bids are necessary to get a piece to auction is fine. But once you have determined that magic number, ***do not under any circumstances change that number once the art show has opened to the public.***

Every time this rule has been violated, the committee has gotten lots of grief with little to show for it.

2. Long, slow checkout lines to pick up art

Other problems that have sometimes occurred include:

1. Aisles too narrow.

If the aisles between panels are too narrow, a number of problems result. The first and most important is that the dreaded Fire Marshall will not approve the plans, or when he shows up on site (and Murphy's law says he will), he will shut down the art show and if he gets angry enough, possibly other areas of the convention as well. Connected to this is that fans in wheelchairs will not be able to get through easily.

An esthetic problem caused by narrow aisles is that you can't stand back enough to see the art properly. This results in lower sales and raised gripes from both attendees and artists. It is not enough to have good art at your art show, it must be properly viewable!

A worst-case scenario would be the 1995 NASFiC, which had a maze of zig-zagging panels that at one point had only twenty-six inches of clearance at waist level. Stu Hellinger noted that you were awarded a piece of cheese if you made it to the end.

A best-case scenario would be something like the Milwaukee Gencons, which have ten feet of space between panels. Unfortunately, not all concons have that much space to work with.

2. Lighting is too dim.

This is an especially dangerous problem if an SF con has not used those facilities before.

If possible, see the room when another convention is using it, to get a feel for how well lit things are when the room is in use. Also, be sure to inspect the room a couple of weeks before the con to make sure all the light fixtures are functioning, and if a number of them are out, have the hotel liaison kick the facility hard.

3. Room was mismeasured.

You went and believed the hotel again, didn't you? **sigh**

NEVER TRUST THE HOTEL! ESPECIALLY NEVER TRUST THEIR FLOOR PLANS!

Floor plans often lie. Sometimes they are drawn up from the initial architecture plans before the facility is actually built. Sometimes they are affected by remodeling. Sometimes they were just drawn wrong by the graphic artist, or the graphic artist was given bad information by the hotel's sales staff. Sometimes the measurement numbers have a typo in them. Sometimes there are pillars or electrical junctions poking out into what looks like clear space on the floor plans. Whatever.

Please note that the above may not affect how the Fire Marshall views your proposed layout. Fire Marshalls review a lot of layouts, and they may not catch an error made due to a misreading of the plans—they are more concerned with sightlines and clear paths to exit doors and such. So don't trust the Fire Marshall to catch an error in the hotel floor plans, either.

For critical rooms (dealers, art show, masquerade/Hugo ceremonies), have your own people take their own measurements well in advance of the con (a year out, at least) and compare them to the floor plan figures.

4. Poor security.

Art show thefts do occur. Most occur during the day. An art show is especially vulnerable if you have no bag check system, by which people must check anything that could hold purloined art. This check must be at the entrance, and must be easy to use. A typical system uses numbered cards (playing cards have sometimes been used) and clothespins; the attendee is given a number (or card) that matches the one attached to the item—this avoids the problem of someone deciding they would like a new purse (and its contents).

For night time security at a large art show with lots of expensive items, sleep-in fan security is not adequate—what happens if a theft occurs? Preferably, you should have armed, off duty police officers; at a minimum, bonded professional security. Whatever you do, the after-hours access list should be kept to a VERY few people—the more people who are (even theoretically) allowed in after hours, the uglier things will be if a theft does occur and the concom (and police) start having to figure out and interview possible suspects.

Print Shop

The situation re prints in recent years has evolved into a tradition of having prints available in a Print Shop that is adjacent to the art show proper. The tradition that has also evolved is to have ASFA run the print shop in return for a portion of the proceeds.

Artifacts

One of the best ways to expedite rapid checkout for pickup of art is to have the system computerized. The best software that is out there is a program called Artifacts. Artifacts has been used at several regionals (ranging from 500 to 3000 in size) and one Worldcon.

Best of all, Artifacts is free!

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