



25 Ways To Help An Artist

The Art of Low-Cost Patronage

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To Patrons of the Arts

You appreciate ‘the arts’ and imagine that, if you were wealthy, you’d invest in art, donate to support symphonies, perhaps even commission an architectural tribute to your aesthetic sensibilities. But what have you done for art lately? What can you do on a limited budget already split between church, charities, causes and campaigns?

Actually, there are many ways – some free, some financial – to support the artists you care about. Do they share your faith? Your taste in music? Live in your town? Whatever your reasons for wanting to help particular artists, here are a few creative ways you might go about it. Please contribute your own ideas and experiences to improve this free resource for other artists and patrons!

Start now, by telling an artist you like his or her work, and why! Ask great questions....see page 13.

Memo To Artists

People need
to know how
to help you.
You have to
help them!

Offer 'Auxiliary Services'

Artists can make good use of any time you free up for them by babysitting, housekeeping, cooking, running errands. THANKS!

Offer Professional Services

Are you a bookkeeper, writer, attorney, public relations pro, editor/proofreader, plumber, web designer, etc...? Write the artist's resume or bio; photograph his work for a portfolio or web display; fix his leaky sink; edit his grant proposal; organize his shoebox full of receipts. The money an artist doesn't spend for your much-needed help goes toward art supplies, copying, marketing, etc... THANKS!

Memo To Artists

Get organized: Know what to ask for when an offer of help is made, and what task you can work on in 1, 2, 3 hours.

Have your schedule planned well enough to say 'YES', and 'Here's what you could do Tuesday between 6 and 7,' or "Here are the library books that need to go back," or "I'll be in my studio, and I don't care what you manage to clean, it will be a big help!"

*

Track the \$\$ value of professional services, for a number of reasons. You may want to offer trade services back to these professionals.

You may apply for a grant someday, and the proposal will include a bit about who has supported you in the past (these 'donations' really count as public support for your work, or co-sponsorships that give grantors confidence in your work). You may just need the psychological boost, now and then, of pointing to the real investment other people have made in your work. Keep track!

Loan Equipment

What have you got? Air compressor, lawn mower, chain saw, sewing machine, printer, scanner, power drill, miter box, power washer, pickup truck, dehydrator, etc.... Artists are likely to be low on cash for such things, and low on storage space for them. Save them a rental fee, if you can, and put your equipment downtime to good use. Post your loanables in the local Craigslist 'artists' section, please, if 'your' artist doesn't need them!

Scavenge

Ask 'your' artists what to keep a look out for. You'll hit garage sales, estate sales, the recycle store, and other places they'll miss. It doesn't cost anything to help broker a win-win deal for a second hand sale of something an artist needs at a deep discount. Maybe you'll be willing to poll your friends for a few items, or snag good deals when you find them if they are under a certain dollar amount. You'll be helping recycle trash into treasure at little or no cost!

Memo To Artists

Get a list together. If you know what you need, or what you'd put to good use if it came your way, it's a whole lot more likely to appear on your doorstep as an offer of help.

Your needs might grow into a 'tool lending library' (check out ScrapAction.org, Portland, OR) or a link-up service between fellow artists and willing patrons.

People need for you to be specific, so they can determine whether to make an offer. "I wish I had a car" is different from, "I need a car for two hours one day this month. Can you help?"

*

Again: get that list ready. Be as clear as you can, so you don't get unusable finds too frequently, and so your patrons can feel confident they are actually being of help to you.

Check out your local Craigslist, Freecycle, etc...

Memo To Artists

"You can bring old wool sweaters over, if you want," is not as inspiring or clear as, "PLEASE look for dark-colored, solid wool sweaters that cost less than \$10 apiece so that I can make my delightful felted doo-dads. I can reimburse you for as many as 20."

"I could use some odds and ends of paint, if you find any," is so vague no one will bite. "If you see any containers of fabric paint at garage sales, please give my phone number to the seller, or his to me so I can try to get them donated for the work I donate to raise money for the Shelter. If you would, you could show them my brochure, and ask if you could broker the deal by bringing them directly to me. I'll send a thank-you note if you get their name and address."

"I need a working Oster (or other reliable maker, steel blade) blender for under \$5 that I can use for papier mache work," beats "blender - 1" on a scavenger hunt list.

You get the idea.

Pay More

Offer to pay more than the asking price, or buy extras to give away. If you knew what artists go through trying to figure out what to charge for their work, you'd give 'em a break now and then by offering more, when you could afford it! Everything 'extra' helps make up for their undercharging, and for the unsold inventory, and soothes the general frustrations of being a starving artist begging for handouts and offering your life's blood in trade. (That's how it feels, sometimes, when you're frustrated!) Anyone you give their work to is a potential repeat customer for their work, and another word-of-mouth channel for promoting it. They might also turn into patrons, someday, if you give them this guide to show how easy it is!

Memo To Artists

Offer ways &/or reasons to pay more. Mention how much you would appreciate it if your buyers could get one for themselves and one for someone else.

Be sure your contact info/artist's bio/next sale event is tucked in for every recipient.

You might have a particular goal you are working toward. Will any extra money received for purchases today go into your continuing education fund, or support a fellow artist, or keep you from being evicted from your studio space, or put your kid in braces, or?

Patrons enjoy the sense of connection they feel to 'their' artists, and to the particular projects their help supports. You could offer to schedule a commissioned work of art in the future for anyone who pays double today. You might explain how you arrived at your price (time, materials, overhead costs, comparison to similar work, ...), so patrons can see how nobly you've neglected to build in any payback for the time you put in on the project.

Is there a non-profit group interested in helping your work? Perhaps your patron could make an extra payment as a tax-deductible donation to the group you wish you could afford to support. Maybe you will donate a work to the fundraiser auction of your patron's choice if he pays half the asking price for it today. You're creative! You'll come up with ideas that fit you, your work, 'your' patrons.

Offer Space

Your empty space may not look like much, or may be very big; you may have constraints to place on your offer (one night only; day-use only; limit 20 guests; no chemicals down this drain; yours for four months only; no nails in walls) but creative people can do amazing things within constraints! Be as complete and specific as you can in articulating what space you can offer, under what terms. The clearer you are, the more likely this situation will be a win-win transaction. You'll learn from one experience to the next how to improve the offer, and the whole interaction. Please be patient with this process, and willing to learn with 'your' artists how to make this work for you both.

Memo To Artists

Cooperate with other artists to share offers you can't make use of (if the patron is willing to open it to others).

Get clear about what your space needs really are for your art work, as separate from your living quarters, or entertainment needs, or storage needs.

Again, the more clear your sense of what you want, the more likely you are to recognize it when it drops from the sky. If no offer arrives, make a proposal for using someone else's space.

You may get a flat refusal, or a counter-offer. Be willing to negotiate terms with anyone who is willing to consider helping you in this way. They may end up finding another arrangement that will work better for you. Help them help you!

Naturally, be the best possible 'guest', honor the 'letter and spirit' of your agreement completely, and find a place on your "Donations In-Kind" list for this generous contribution.

Even if it is experimental, you will both learn from, and grow by it. You'll both be better able to enter into transactions like this in the future.

Volunteer

Offer to help with the artists' show, public events, talks, demonstrations, studio tours, fundraisers, etc... He may need greeters, salespersons, food refillers & servers, set-up & take-down helpers, a master of ceremonies, a guest book/email list supervisor, etc.... You'll get to be part of the fun, and be a huge moral support for 'your' artists, in addition to providing some very important auxiliary help.

Model

Not all models are nude, and not all are gorgeous! Ideally, a model can be still and quiet, and not expect to be entertained for an hour or more. It can be hard for artists to find live models, so this is a cheap way to be of help.

Memo To Artists

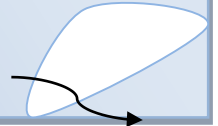
Are you having these events? If so, you should have a clear sense of what help you need. It wouldn't hurt to jot down some job descriptions, to know exact dates and times help is needed, to know whether jobs could be split into shifts for different volunteers.

Articulate any dress code clearly Don't assume you're on the same page about this! If this is important, you must spell it out. Do you really want helpers wearing flannel pj pants at your black tie reception??

If you aren't good at logistics planning, ask a patron for pre-event help with all this.

Bonus idea: provide some way your volunteers can give you feedback (yes, even – especially – criticism!) about how this event went, how their part in it played out, what didn't work well, etc... They can provide invaluable suggestions for improving it all in the future. Don't just ask...hand them a feedback form with good questions and an SASE , or a pen!

* Be good to your models





Be respectful of volunteer models' time and energy and constraints.

Ask them before opening a modeling session to your artist pals. Give them tips on how to relax, move, pose, or deal with sudden urges to scratch or wiggle. Be clear about boundaries – how close will artists be getting in order to sketch those details well?

Be sensitive to their needs for heaters, robes, bathroom breaks, refreshments, and position changes.

Do you need to check with an attorney, or artist's support group about whether a signed release will be needed in order to sell a recognizable image of this person?

Maybe you could use a copy of one of your sketches of this model as the image on your thank-you note for their contribution.

And don't forget to track the dollar value of this time on your Donations-in-Kind list!

Spin-Offs

What a compliment, to place a line from my poem on your collage; to create a screenplay from my novel; to let my painting grace your book cover, etc... . Be sure to attribute (and, if possible, link to) the original work, and to obtain the artist's permission for significant usage of his words, images, photos, and such. Derivation is creative, plagiarism is a Very Bad Thing!

Buy Season Tickets

Even if you know you won't be able to go to all the performances, get the tickets if you possibly can, and then treat others to the event. Spread the wealth and you'll be expanding 'your' artist's base of support. You'll be exposing others to the work you support, and to the arts, and to the art of patronage. Plan ahead as far as possible to get this event attended!

Memo To Artists

Creative people are creative about helping each other. Even starving artists want to support other artists. If another artist's work inspires you to create, you both win. Shared inspiration, homage, organic outgrowth, spin-off, whatever you call it, it works!

*

If you are performing on a smaller scale, without the 'season ticket' infrastructure, you could still offer a discount for tickets to multiple performances of your one show, or ask each ticket buyer if he would like to sponsor a ticket for a performance for a low-income audience or student group, or the clients of a particular local charity.

At the very least, let whoever attends one performance KNOW when and where the next one will be, and ASK them to buy tickets now to give friends the joy of coming.

Perhaps tonight's audience gets a great price on advance tickets to the next event, and maybe they'll appreciate an email heads-up a week in advance. Could it be you have a lovely gift-certificate ready for gift tickets, or a nice envelope ready for sending them to others?

Give a Retreat

This is a variation on 'give space', but for the artists' refreshment and recuperation, rather than for his art work. Are you leaving town for a week? Do you have an empty beach house, or mountain cabin? Got an RV you could park for a week by the lake? Renting a house in Tuscany with a spare bedroom? Offer much-needed and seldom-afforded vacations to 'your' artists.

Sponsor a Free Day

Can an artist afford to leave his day job? Often, the answer is no. If you're close enough, ask "What do you earn in a day? If I spring for it, could you take a day off work to further your work in the arts?"

Memo To Artists

Ask, before passing on the offer you can't use to a pal!

Be strictly respectful of any terms, and of the property.

This doesn't count on your Donations In-Kind, but this patron should be mentioned with devotion in any public thank-yous! Any chance a work of your art could be given to grace the space in gratitude?

*

KNOW THIS NUMBER in case anyone asks! (You're passing out this guide to all possible patrons, right??)

Know also what you'd do with such a day. Be ready to get yourself to work on art, if a day miraculously opens up to get away from the grind.

David Allen's books on getting your life and projects organized are great! I get no kickbacks, but if all artists would learn to use his systems (adapted for artworks) they'd be a whole lot more help-able!

See: *Getting Things Done* and *Making It Work*

Gift Certificates

Gift cards, or certificates, for art supplies, office supplies, groceries, local restaurants, gasoline are always welcome. Think of your starving artist pals as you frequent these places. A little here, and a little there add up to a lot of help.

Carpool

Going my way? Podunk, USA may seem boring to you, but my favorite writer may hole up there and be open to having me visit! You may be going for business, but I could sketch in the museum all day! You get the idea: your car trip = affordable travel for an artist with no gas money. Do airlines still have companion fares? Do you have unused mileage points that could become a trip to a writer's conference? Just make it all available, and 'your' artists will make something of it!

Memo To Artists

TRACK these contributions when they apply to the work (art supplies) and not just to you (groceries).

Remember, you are tracking to build your own awareness that someone cares about and supports your work.

You are writing it down so you'll have proof on a dark day that life is brighter than you think.

You are increasing your gratitude quotient, which will make you a happier person, a better artist, and a person it is delightful to help!

Don't forget you can design your own gift certificates for your services, time, art works when you want to practice the art of patronage for other artists!

*

Where would you like to go? Keep a list, with clear reasons. You might even prioritize it. If anyone asks, you'll be ready. If nobody offers a free ride, check out Mega Bus!

Sponsor Training

You may be able to work directly with a non-profit organization offering classes, workshops, conferences to arrange for your donation (to sponsor a particular artist) to be tax deductible. Be sure to discuss this with the artist first – he may, or may not be able to afford to get there even if you pay the conference fee. If you are willing to sponsor a portion, you'll need to work with the artist and his other patrons to be sure the deal can be done before anyone starts forking over cash to the trainers.

Ask

Ask a question that demonstrates interest in the artist as a person, his process, his media, his subject matter, his goals and dreams, his needs....Take an interest in 'your' artist to make a priceless contribution to his well-being! Ask how you can help.

Memo To Artists

As always, know where/when/how much! Dream!

*

Be receptive to questions. People aren't being nosy. They are taking an interest to show their support of you and your work. Don't make them feel stupid about how little they understand art.

Don't be defensive if their questions reveal they can hardly stand, or understand your work. After all, they still are trying to support you, personally, even if they don't particularly like your work!

Have a bio, business card, brochure, &/or artist's statement ready to hand out (preparing it will help you with ready answers to basic questions about your history, motivation, education, etc...).

Can you offer a special pre (or post-)–event 'about me' conversation to interested patrons? Would you be interested in fielding questions right after a performance?

How else can you help educate and form patrons of the arts?

Raise Patrons

Train your kids to enjoy art, to consider the artist behind the work, to ask thoughtful questions, to learn from and respond to art even when they don't 'like' it.

Clear One Wall

Could you make one wall in your home available to hang the work of 'your' artists on a monthly rotation? This could be a great way to help your family and friends get a sense of ownership of your work as a patron. You might consider an insurance rider if you'll hang very expensive works of art. It should be very clear how the artist wants any purchase offers handled. An attorney might be willing to help structure the agreement you make with your artists. As always, a clear statement of intention, boundaries, terms and mutual regard for the parties involved go a long way to creating a successful experience. Be sure to show off the work to visitors, and tell a bit about the artist. Teach others how to connect with artists, as you model this kind of low-budget patronage.

Memo To Artists

Be receptive to the kids approaching your work. Your welcome, your response, is also helping teach them (and their parents will really appreciate it!).

Could you hold a special 'talk to a real artist' event just for patrons' kids and their pals?

*

Seek out opportunities like this to help others develop a positive sense of ownership, vested interest, in your work and your success.

Leave cards or brochures for the homeowner to give guests.

You are helping teach people that art is not just about wealth, but about human interdependence, fun, the joy beauty brings to the home and the soul, and all that!

Commission a Work

Every artist will have different terms, different capabilities. Start small with artists if they are new to handling commissioned work. You'll need guidelines specific to the type of artwork you prefer, of course, but you can get some tips from a composer. At www.nelsonmusic.com, Composer Brian Nelson gives some good advice about commissioning a work of music. He dispels the myth that you need a ton of money to do this, and gives ideas about how to communicate with 'your' artist. It will do the art world good to have more people considering the possibility of doing this at various price points. Sure, you could give another tie, but how 'bout a symphony instead? Can't afford a painting of the old homestead? Commission a pen-and-ink sketch. Wish you could afford to have Grandpa's whole history written and edited? At least spring for the history of his courtship, or his exploits in the navy. Commission a seminar, class, or demonstration from 'your' artists for a special interest group. Keep thinking....

Memo To Artists

Please do not accept a commission unless you have excellent communication skills, and the discipline to ensure the work gets accomplished according to the guidelines you and your patron form for its execution.

You'll be hurting the chances other artists will ever get commission work if you renege on your promise, turn out shoddy work, or fail to appreciate the patron's vision for the work.

It might be a good idea to have another person (a writer, perhaps) enter the conversation and help articulate clearly what the patron's expectations, needs, and hopes are for the work.

If this is a long project, you may want to provide for intermediate evaluation steps so that progress can be directed by feedback along the way.

You are helping to teach patrons how artists might interact with and serve their own needs, so please don't be defensive about their need to have some control of this work. As with all the other arrangements, a win-win transaction might be experimental, and a little clunky at first.

Honor the Work

Mention works of art as often as possible in conversation without becoming obnoxious! In letters, emails, blog posts let people know about 'your' artists. Pay special attention to living artists, as the dead ones need much less of your patronage and support! If you aren't talking about art, you aren't deeply enough interested in supporting it.

Show Up

Just being present to a work of art is an important aspect of patronage. Read the book! Look at the painting! Come to the show! The destiny of a work of art is to be *received*, not just to be paid for. Please help that happen, especially for 'your' artists.

Memo To Artists

Mention your patrons. They are not just riding on your success, or basking in your glory.

They are models to others of the art of patronage. They deserve to be recognized and appreciated for their role in your life and work.

They might appreciate links to their own sites, causes, or work. Pay special attention to the live ones! If you aren't talking about your patrons, you aren't grateful enough for their support.

*

Receive, deeply, the real gift of the mere presence of your patrons. The destiny of a work of art is to be received, not just to be paid for.

Unless you *get* how important their presence is to your art, to your process, you won't make the human connection that draws them to increase their investment in your work.

Trade

Think of ways 'your' artists might be helping you. Help with theme parties, improving your marketing materials, hanging art in your office space, teaching classes for kids like yours, brainstorming with your for fresh ideas for your own work, giving a talk for your book study or rotary group, etc.... We can develop more of an 'ecosystem' approach to spreading the wealth, if we try. Approach the art of patronage with 'your' artists and see what other ideas you can come up with together.

House Concert

Fran Snyder, www.concertsinyourhome.com has a great guide to hosting concerts....in your home.

Memo To Artists

You might think your patron's theme party, or brochure is beneath your fine, artistic sensibilities and skills, but it might be a great experience to do something completely outside your box that turns into a trade for something you value.

*

Musicians should send for the house concert info, too, to help promote this form of patronage, and to have your own copy if people start offering to host house concerts for you. What a great idea!

Promote the Artist

What magazines do you read that might be interested in 'your' artists? Drop them a suggestion, or query an article if you freelance. Who do you know with a spare room, an empty wall or warehouse, a stash of unused wood scraps? Ask others for the help 'your' artists need. Host a get-to-know-you gathering in your home for them. Give friends their brochures, or send the links to their sites right before Christmas buying starts. Do all the social media hornblowing you know how to do. Feature their artwork on your blog. Take note of spaces you pass through that seem empty, or that already seem disposed to hang local artists' works. Don't assume 'your' artists see and know everything already. You are probably in some very different places. Ask your church to host an art show. Suggest 'your' artist as a speaker for club meetings. Add a gallery page to your blog site with very little effort. Who knows how much any one thing will help sales, but everything you do will help the artist's morale.

Memo To Artists

You have to help people help you. Nobody has a clue, and so you must be an artist and an educator, plus whatever your paying job is!

Give this book to people who can use a few good ideas for supporting you. You may make and distribute copies as long as they are not sold, and the text is left as you find it.

I'll put out updated (and still free) editions if readers contribute their own ideas and experiences of being patrons, or being patronized (in a good way!).

This book is an official 'act of patronage' so, of course, I'd be delighted to hear if it has helped.

By the way, I'm not selling anything, or collecting data to market something to you later. This is it...the opening gambit in what I hope will be a conversation.

R.S.V.P.!

Special Thanks for Your Help Compiling This Collection

to

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