From the NAIA Board Chair

The NAIA has observed many changes in the last decade. Membership has grown and diminished in response to the external pressures an organization faces in a changing economy. Disharmony about policy decisions such as having show directors on the board has also affected attitudes concerning membership and volunteer support. We do not have the large number of members and volunteers enjoyed during more prosperous times with many hands to do evolving numerous duties. In response to these realities it became our task to reign in costs and simplify jobs. We do have a workable number of board members but new board members are always needed.

We have been making changes to the nuts and bolts procedures associated with board duties to ensure the best use of limited time. To reduce outgoing revenue we eliminated the Executive Assistant position in the spring and hired a bookkeeper that will also do membership processing. Technology is a wonderful thing when it saves time but too often it can become overwhelming for volunteers to enter track and update data in several programs. We eliminated the online data base management company to further reduce our costs and save time. Ben Frey has been head ing up the efforts to streamline and manage our data and make it easily accessible to those that need it. To better serve our members and further reduce costs thanks to Ben we will soon be adding a PayPal link for fast secure membership payment.

One of the problems most identified by artists are buy sell procedures associated with board duties to ensure the best use of limited time. To reduce outgoing revenue we eliminated the Executive Assistant position in the spring and hired a bookkeeper that will also do membership processing. Technology is a wonderful thing when it saves time but too often it can become overwhelming for volunteers to enter track and update data in several programs. We eliminated the online data base management company to further reduce our costs and save time. Ben Frey has been heading up the efforts to streamline and manage our data and make it easily accessible to those that need it. To better serve our members and further reduce costs thanks to Ben we will soon be adding a PayPal link for fast secure membership payment.

Art shows benefit from having new exhibiting artists each year since new work helps to encourage attendees to return each year with the promise of new discoveries. As a professional artist, I need to be able to return to shows regularly to develop relationships with collectors. As first glance, it might appear that these two ideas are at odds with each other but I think they can actually work quite well together specifically with a strong emerging artist portion of a show. In this context, I consider “emerging artists” to be those artists who are not yet familiar with the art show world. Shows often limit the jury category to artists who haven’t exhibited in more than three art shows or who first exhibited less than a year before and I think those are generally good parameters.

Emerging artists often bring work into the art show world that is unusual or different and often at price points that are more accessible to young collectors. Again, it might seem like having this additional competition would be at odds with my interest as a regular exhibitor but I disagree. I need shows to have a strong base of excited attendees and I need them to come open to the possibility of collecting at the show. New and young collectors are excited to find affordable work by emerging artists and I need them to come open to the possibility of collecting at the show. New and young collectors are excited to find affordable work by emerging artists and I need them to come open to the possibility of collecting at the show. New and young collectors are excited to find affordable work by emerging artists and I need them to come open to the possibility of collecting at the show.

We congratulate artists successful enough to have a production studio employing others. Cottage Industry has a tradition in America there are venues that allow and promote it along with production studios. Most shows have published rules pertaining to what kind of work is permissible. NAIA is not responsible for discovering or researching for offenders though we are sometimes made aware of them. We are interested in shows enforcing the rules of their show as stated in the prospectus. Artists who are aware of infringement must stand up for themselves and other legitimate artists. Contributing solid evidence and informing show directors where to view the information so they may act is important if we are to maintain the confidence of the public in buying original work. Membership has suggested an accessible database file, we have inquired informally with lawyers who have warned about the liability issues. The NAIA continues to look for ways to legally and ethically address this issue. The NAIA serves as the conduit and voice of the artist but we can only do it with your support and membership. Please join now.

~Terry Corcoran

Why Emerging Artists Matter

BY BENJAMIN FREY
MIXED MEDIA ARTIST & NAIA BOARD MEMBER

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2 Revelations from a First-time Production Manager
3 You Want Me to Paint What?
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5 ZAPPcon 2014

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Revelations from a First-time Production Manager

BY JAMES BRUTON
PRODUCTION MANAGER, DES MOINES ARTS FESTIVAL

(De Facto) Job Description: Production Manager, Des Moines Arts Festival

Your job is to build a city that supports 200,000+ people. You’ll have two days (and a limited budget) to bring in and set up electricity, water, communications, trash collection, ATM’s, restrooms, and more. Build art galleries, restaurants, bars, entertainment venues, stores to sell merchandise, hospitality suites, offices, first aid stations, and more. Hire and manage security, construction workers, electricians, entertainers, sound technicians, food vendors, street cleaners, parking attendants, and more. Recruit and manage 1,200+ volunteers and over 30 non-profit organizations.

Source suppliers for tents, banners, beer, wine, soda, water, ice, barricades, fencing, moving trucks, golf carts, radios, fireworks, and more. You’ll have to secure all the appropriate permissions, permits, licenses, as well as insurance coverage. Coordinate with local authorities, regulators, and the fire department to make sure you are in compliance with all city, county, and state regulations. All of this has to be orchestrated so that everyone has what they need, when they need it, or the whole thing could fall apart. This new city must be sustainable for three days while promoting an atmosphere conducive to purchasing fine art. Then you’ll have twelve hours to tear it all down and leave no trace that it was ever there.

If anything goes wrong, it’s your fault. If everything goes smoothly, you get to thank your volunteers.

Friday – January 17th, 8 a.m.

The Deep End of the Pool. It’s 6° outside and the sun broke past the horizon just 22 minutes ago. The sky is dark and the 2014 polar vortex is in full effect. But I have summer on my mind, the last weekend in June to be precise. It’s my first day on the job as Production Manager for the Des Moines Arts Festival, one of two full-time positions working on the event.

I’ve been handed a map encompassing seven square blocks of downtown Des Moines, a production time-line with a list of 960 tasks to accomplish, and a three-ring binder that has 6° of paper crammed into its 5° capacity. This production binder, affectionately (and perhaps sacrilegiously) nicknamed “The Bible,” contains the details of last year’s Festival. I have a very short window of time to digest all this information and produce a Festival that’s not only better than previous Festivals, but better than any other festival in the world. That last part is just my own personal goal, but hey, if you’re going to dream…

I quickly learn that, while I have many years of operations experience, a festival is a world unto its own. Every aspect of the event has to be recreated each year. And you only have one shot at getting it right. Most businesses have time to make a decision, implement a plan, and tweak it over a period of time to perfect the process. There’s no time to tweak during a three-day festival. Not until next year, anyway.

Wednesday – February 5th

Crossed Fingers. Professional artists will always be the cornerstone of the Des Moines Arts Festival, but live music is an important part of the weekend. Friday and Saturday nights draw large crowds to our main stage where national acts headline a full day of programming. Our Festival is completely free to attend, including these performances, but the crowds help generate revenue by quenching their thirst while watching the show. So it’s important for us to book the right bands and have them scheduled far enough in advance to effectively promote the shows.

We discuss potential headlining acts with our booking agent and agree upon a deadline of May 1st to have both nights booked. I’m told that we’ve had difficulty with the timeliness of our agent in the past, but I am assured this year will be different.
I've been a painter all my life. I started painting when I was eight on a Saturday morning when I made the mistake of telling my Father that I couldn't think of anything to do. Before I knew it my Dad had taped up a chunk of canvas, grabbed a staple gun and stapled pieces to the wall of our living room. Then he handed my mother and sisters each a brush and a palette of bright colored paint and we all painted. I still have that tattered old painting of a lion and I always share it with school children when I do demos and art classes for kids because it inspires and excites them.

While I realize this is not the normal behavior of the average family, it was normal in our house and it was fun! It became a tradition. Johnny (my Dad) would bring paints and brushes wherever we went and we would paint together on vacations, at family outings, at the beach, in any season, at any time. If he didn't have canvases we would paint on rocks, or pieces of driftwood, or the backs of soap boxes, or buildings, it didn't matter, we were painting. That's where it started I think.

There are artists who will only paint on certain surfaces but that's not me. I love painting on paper with watered down acrylics, that's my forte, but I have been known to paint on almost anything if asked in the right way. It's Johnny's fault, he told us that if you had paint and brushes then it didn't matter what you painted on, it was still fun to paint. At least that's what I was told.

One of my favorite jobs started out with painting the tables in the dining room of the Southern Cross Club on Little Cayman Island in the Caribbean, and has turned into a lifelong friendship and collaboration with the owner of the resort. Our latest enterprise is the Bacon, Blues and Art Festival that we organize every August on his farm in Indiana. You really never know where a painting job will take you.

I'll never forget that first job in the Caymans. They flew me down, paid for my work permit, shipped my equipment in and escorted me to the most beautiful little cabaña on the beach you ever saw. When I was presented with the tables I was going to paint, I was so excited about the location that I didn't even notice the paint they had bought for the job! Marine Enamel. It still gives me nightmares just thinking about that paint. If you have never painted in your life, marine enamel is the evilst of all paints. While it creates a long lasting, smooth, scratch resistant, beautiful surface, it is one of the nastiest paints in the world to work with. It is gooey, and sticky, and doesn't flow or mix well. It takes forever to dry and if you make the mistake of getting any on you or anywhere you don't want it, you will never get it off. For some insane reason I decided to impress everyone and set the bar high with that first table and I painted a school of 37 yellow grunt on it. What I was thinking? The paint wouldn't flow, the colors wouldn't mix well, but once you start you have to finish. In the next two weeks I painted 14 tables and various little murals on 10 cottage walls. I painted Nassau groupers on over a dozen sea beans and left Little Cayman laughing, exhausted, and covered in paint, with lots of new friends.

Another time I was requested to paint a series depicting life on Hog Island, an island near Boston. The man, who had met once at a show, sent me sets of photographs once a week for a month. The photos would always come by courier and as soon as the delivery person left, I'd call me and ask me what I thought. Every time I told him the same thing. The photos were fine but I couldn't paint from them. I was worried that I would disappoint him so I worked for three days and finished the top of the umbrella. Then it happened. I turned it over. I hadn't really thought the job through apparently because when I turned it over I realized that I would have to paint the back as well because the paint had bled through. I panicked for about half a day and then I went to work again. This time I painted the bottom of the tentacles completely with the little round suckers that the creatures have and all the details of a real live octopus. The umbrella took a total of seven days to paint. It was beautiful when it was done and sold. I hazard a guess that it probably is the most expensive umbrella that anyone will ever own.

I took my entire family on a vacation to the Abacos a few years ago. In “Chevy Chase Vacation” fashion our family always has good reason to laugh when we travel together. This trip was certainly no different. The Bahamas are usually calm and beautiful and we planned to snorkel and dive and fish every day but of course, as luck would have it, a tropical storm headed our way as soon as we got to the island, trapping eight human beings inside a small cottage on the edge of paradise for a few days. Luckily I always bring my paints so at least two rainy days were spent collecting hermit crabs, painting the shells of those hermit crabs, being pinched by hermit crabs and then racing our crabs in the 2013 Hermit Crab Challenge. I have painted on hermit crabs before of course, but the real fun was watching my grand kids and my sons’ paint their crabs starting what I know will become a family tradition for generations to come.

At present, besides the original acrylic paintings on paper that I’m working on in my studio for my show schedule, I am also painting two huge 8’ x 8’ road signs for a local florist. But wonder of wonders, I’m painting signs for a store. It’s a “trade”. My youngest son is getting married in a month and I traded the flowers for his wedding for one of my collectors new shop signs. I’ve worked up and down on one of our Tableau with my hands ached and I’m covered in paint but let’s remember: “You can do it Carroll, it’s just painting!”

~ Carroll Swayze

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THE INDEPENDENT ARTIST | 3
Clotheslines to Canopies: A History of Outdoor Art Fairs in America

BY KATHLEEN EATON
PAINTER, FOUNDER OF NAIA

Editor’s Note: The following is the Foreward from Kathleen Eaton’s recently published, Clotheslines to Canopies: A History of Outdoor Art Fairs in America. Kathleen is a painter and founding member of NAIA.

The outdoor art fair is a peculiarly American phenomenon, an art market unique to this country. Its participants are in an industry that is an art world of its own, with different definitions of success than its own. As the world of art has changed hands, these fairs evolved from small venues featuring only local artists to huge festivals attracting exhibitors and buyers from all over the nation. They are based on a long tradition of outdoor markets where people sell or barter what they produce. While today it is fairly common to find artists selling paintings or crafts in many countries, what differentiates the American outdoor art fair is the existence of an organized fair with advanced publication of dates, times and location. In order to thrive within this structure, exhibitors must travel to market their work. It is free market enterprise at its most basic level. Artists compete for places to exhibit at shows that yield the best sales, and art fairs compete for artists—the best artists if possible. Once a show has an artist that must work there that appeals to the fair’s audience and is priced appropriately, sales must be executed easily.

A typical art fair solicits artists to take part in their event, which is usually held during weekends on streets or in a park. After the roster of exhibitors has been established and the necessary plans have been made by the shows and the artists, the fair is then set up, usually in the morning on the first day. A convoy of vans will emerge from the pre-dawn darkness, winding its way through empty streets to a distant destination. As light begins to streak across the horizon, the vans arrive at a pre-determined site and engines are turned off. Drivers and sometimes helpers begin to unload displays, cases, pedestals, chairs, and containers of every shape and dimension. The vans’ contents almost magically begin to appear and form into odd-shaped hills and mountains of boxes and gear. Construction dollsies and wheeled carts are enlisted to transport these mountains to their proper, numbered locations. These are no ordinary van drivers. Rather, they are artists, and artists they must be to transform small empty spaces into galleries, using only canopies, display panels, pedestals, cases, drapes, and fabric. In a matter of a few hours (often less) the artists have set up their work within their allotted spaces, ready to impress the crowds that will hopefully begin streaming through the aisles.

Over the next days, some artists will tally sales in five figures. Others will have no sales and will wonder quietly why they attended this particular fair. Most artists have sales ranging between the two extremes, and almost all artists will spend at least some time comparing notes with their neighbors to either side. The end of the weekend reverses the process and brings the fair to a close, as vehicles are loaded with displays, and, in theory at least, fewer pieces of art. Some drivers will head home, elated or depressed, to produce more work, while others remain on the road to paint in the nearby exhibition. Once the booths are taken down, and the posters announcing the fair have been removed, the streets will become quiet again, and the memory of America’s artists had never actually gathered at all.

Typically artists begin exhibiting at shows close to home to test the waters. If they meet with any success at all, they venture further, seeking the possibility of income in greener pastures across the state and across the country. The growth and success of America’s artists had never actually gathered at all.

Some of the artists and craftspeople that populate this business have incomes high enough that they must work to maintain the illusion that they are “starving artists” rather than extremely successful ones. Many such artists have been able to maintain a middle class life style, raise families, send their children to college and put aside money for retirement. On the other end of the spectrum, other exhibitors are less successful and there is no deception at all when it comes to labeling themselves starving artists, because starvation, or very close to it, is exactly what they do. Yet all of these artists, both successful and not, flout the cliched warning that “it is impossible to make money as an artist.”

Art exhibited at these shows has often been dismissed as unimpressive in quality and sometimes rightly so. While it is true that a few artists who attend art fairs have work in museum collections, that is the exception rather than the rule. The work that is seen at street fairs ranges from the sublime to the just plain awful. The overriding characteristic is that the work is appealing to attendees on some level, and thereby saleable, which can lead to catering to the lowest common denominator.

Art fairs that are heavily juried with many artists varying in quality and sometimes rightly so. While it is true that a few artists who attend art fairs have work in museum collections, that is the exception rather than the rule. The work that is seen at street fairs ranges from the sublime to the just plain awful. The overriding characteristic is that the work is appealing to attendees on some level, and thereby saleable, which can lead to catering to the lowest common denominator.

The book presents an informal history of this uniquely American business. They describe the artists and the ways they operate in this arena, outline the organization of the art fairs and festivals, and explain how they developed. The book profiled in the coming chapters were chosen because of their historical importance, their influence on the business as a whole, or because of their reputation as good—and thus competitive—markets for art.

Clotheslines to Canopies by Kathleen Eaton is available today on Amazon. By using the Amazon link from the NAIA website a portion of each purchase will go to support NAIA at no additional cost. NAIA-Artists.org/resources/marketable - scroll down to Amazon and click more.

The earliest art fairs of record in America that are still in operation began during the start of the Great Depression. The first, founded in 1930, was the Nantucket Sidewalk Art Show—a small local event based on similar street fairs found in Europe. This was the Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit, which started in New York in 1931. Two more followed in 1932: the Rittenhouse Square Fine Art Show and the Plaza Art Fair in Kansas City. These three fairs developed in large cities with established art schools and museums.

The shows started out as small, casual events by artists, art students, and art lovers, but over the years included many more artists, larger attendance, ancillary booths offering food and drink, and became places to see and be seen.

After World War II, new shows appeared all over the country, as if the population was ready to come into the business at a point in their life where they are accessible places to view art, and to meet and interact with others. The shows profiled in the coming chapters were chosen because of their historical importance, their influence on the business as a whole, or because of their reputation as good—and thus competitive—markets for art.

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-The Independent Artist

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As I have said many times before, I have been an artist my entire life and I have been doing shows almost that long. It’s obvious that not only do I love creating art but I am also deeply entrenched in this business we call art. Making things that are visually related because every facet of the art show industry affects my life directly. I love making art and I love selling my artwork. I am very aware of the symbiotic relationship between art show directors and artists. Art shows are a vital, thriving, behind the scenes network where artists are able to take a break from the daily hustle and bustle and their knowledge a good resource for show directors who work basically on one show each year and are in “the know” per se, much more so than show directors before, but instead they are just people, like you and me. Artists vent and hash out problems and issues they run into. I always ask them what they do to resolve their issues and how important the way you present yourself and your work are to the success of the art show.

WHY GO TO A CONFERENCE?

There are many reasons to go to a conference. I believe the art world is always trying to learn something new every day, so for me going to a conference is a learning experience. As I said, I have been to three ZAPP Conferences and one NAIA Conference. I’m always a bit daunted with all going in before I worry that there won’t be enough offered for an artist but I always leave with a lot of new knowledge and am happy that I took the time to attend. I enjoy the ZAPP Conference because for the first time in my life the topics are familiar and most importantly, you get to network with artists and show directors in a unique, casual setting. No longer are the sessions filled with talking about how to run the imposters. The artists are on the street, they learn how to investigate and hopefully help to root out the imposters. The artists are on the street, they are in “the know” per se, much more so than show directors who work basically on one show each year and have no opportunity to see what the artists see. Artists talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly as it relates to art shows. This makes the artists and their knowledge a good resource for show directors.

The Revolution Will Be Digitized: Websites That Make Art Sale

This session was informative to artists because it covered how to re-design and improve a website to reach desired audiences and tips for making them more audience friendly.

Problem Solving for Events:

This was directed toward show directors and committees but seriously folks, where the participants discussed the changing audience, business growth strategies and the overlap between communities, hosted services, radio, TV, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and offered insights into how to create a media strategy that will work for your show or your artist studio from planning and programming to execution.

ZAPP SYMPOSIUMS: BUILDING BRIDGES AND MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS

This years Symposium was a high energy session where the participants discussed the changing audience, marketing, economics and the growth of strategic value. Aside from understanding the need and barriers, the session presented three distinct facets of communication within the art industry:

1. Communication in the Art Show Community: This session was informative to artists because it covered how to re-design and improve a website to reach desired audiences and tips for making them more audience friendly.

2. Communication between and artists and show directors.

3. Communication between Artists and Show Directors.

In this part of our session we tried to quell the myth about show directors NOT being fire-breathing dragons! Discussion was lively between artists and show directors discussing the many good ways to approach each other and the many negative ways of approach that might spoil the success of a situation. The famous mythical “Black Ball List” was even discussed.

Preview of the new NAIA Publication: How to Run a Great Art Show

Ideas From The National Association of Independent Artists

Introduction: In today’s world there seem to be art shows in every small town in America. Some are large festivals run by professional staffs; some are small and intimate, organized by passionate volunteers. Regardless of the size or shape of the event, all art shows need the NAIA as the ultimate guide to assist show directors and their committees and boards improve and tweak their art shows and festivals, both new and old.

WHAT THE NAIA IS DOING FOR YOU

NAIA Presents: Open Communication and the Art Show Industry:

A NAIA session at the ZAPP Conference was very well received. It was standing room only and the question and answer period afterwards was lively and informative. Four NAIA Board Members participated: Ben Frey, Stephen King, Sara Shambarger, and myself. The message of the session was clear. It is the key to making the art show industry better for everyone in communities across the nation.

The session presented three distinct facets of communication within the art show industry:

1. Communication in the Art Show Community: Communication within the Art Show Community is a vital, thriving, behind the scenes network where artists are able to communicate about everything show related and how to solve problems that arise along the way and what they do to resolve their issues. The NAIA showcased the new publication, “How to Run a Great Art Show.”

2. Communication between Artists and Show Directors.

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There are many reasons to go to a conference. I believe the art world is always trying to learn something new and I always try to glean some new knowledge from the sessions I attend. Let’s face it, where else in our world can we sit down with the director of Cherry Creek, Artisphere, Des Moines Art in the High Desert and Coconut Grove, drink wine and discuss the issues of art shows! The ZAPP Conference, that’s where! It’s priceless!

The NAIA was asked by ZAPP to present a session at the conference and I was excited to be there to talk to both artists and show staff together in one room. We had worked hard and LONG after the conference. I spent the day before the conference, scrambling around putting our presentation together and setting up the room. I had sent much of what I needed to the hotel ahead of time. I was able to take a break around some of the great sites that the city had to offer and do some networking before the conference started.

Once our setup was complete I was able to pick and choose which session I would attend in the next two days. There are a lot of topics to choose from at the ZAPP Conference and I wanted to make the most of my time there.

ZAPP CON 2014 TOPICS:

America The Beautiful: A Business Case for Diversity:

This session discussed the changing diversity of the country’s population and how it is going to affect the way we thrive in the art show business.

How to Charge More Money for Your Artwork (And Get People to Pay)

This session revolved around real ideas about creating lasting value for your work and maintaining and growing that value to create more income.

Public Portfolio Critique:

This is the most popular session for artists at the ZAPP conference. Artists are invited to submit their slides and an open panel of jurors discussed their presentation, critiqued the images and provided valuable feedback.

Strategic Media Planning and Implementation for Events:

This session discussed the many new and improved marketing opportunities (social media, web based communities, hosted services, radio, TV, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) and offered insights into how to create a media strategy that will work for your show or your artist studio from planning and programming to execution.

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Emerging Artists, continued from p.1

attend, they will grow to become loyal attendees and eventually will be able to collect larger works but artists whom they enjoyed but couldn’t afford early on. And to keep them coming back it is important to have new work each year. Of course, I don’t want to have so much turnover that I find it impossible to jury into the show but when there is too little new work at shows attendees will feel that they know what they will find and perhaps skip a year or two of the show which is certainly bad for me. So there has to be a balance where collectors are encouraged to return each year with the expectation of new discoveries and yet enough returning artists so that they can familiarize themselves with their favorites and return to buy something that they might have been considering for a few years.

Art shows can use a strong emerging artist program to achieve this balance. In addition to providing fresh and unexpected work in a show, emerging artists are often connected to the communities where the show takes place. In general, the best shows for me have strong attendance and a sense of community pride in

ZAPPcon, continued from p.6

erate with each other. Festivals contribute to local economies and foster a sense of pride within communities… community members report a strong sense of civic pride associated with festivals.”

There are new art shows and new show directors each year and there are many different challenges to running a successful art show. The details can often be complex. The better the show is, the more the community will benefit from its existence. This informative guide is designed to help sort out some of these complexities and to aid in creating an event that will be successful for the organization, community, and artists who travel long distances at great cost to participate.

How To Run A Great Art Show is being distributed throughout the country to art festivals, large and small, in the hopes that it will give those individuals in charge of the projects and committees, artists and show directors from across the country. The project was directed by Carroll Swayze.

How To Run A Great Art Show covers a wide range of topics and presents the “best practices” for a successful event. Contents of the book include: Why Buy Original Art?, Where to Start, Show Size, Show Location and Layout, Community Involvement, Introduction to Your Artists, Show Director Tips to Check for Buy/Sell, How to Identify Buy/Sell, Reproductions or Original Art Only?, The Difference Between Original Prints and Reproductions, Communication to Committees & Volunteers, Communication to your Artists, Show Set Up and Tear Down, Show Parking, Show Security, Safety, Enforcing Rules, Artist Amenities, Show Director and Committee Hotlines, Contingency Plans for Emergencies, Show Director’s Checklist, and References.

Attention Artists: If you know of a show out there that could use our book and the information that it offers to improve their event, please contact me at CarrollSwayze@naia-artists.org with their name and contact information and I will send them all the information.

~ Carroll Swayze

The NAIA Action Line is one of memberships most valuable tools. Action Line is available to NAIA Artist Members to assist in resolving specific issues or problems that the artist member may be experiencing with an art show related to the NAIA’s official list of advocacies.

The focus of this Action Line is to address matters that run at cross currents to the NAIA’s advocacies. In warranted cases, the NAIA may also assist artists with matters outside the advocacies. However, this is not a place where vague and nonspecific accusations about shows or a show director are appropriate. For example, general complaints about rising booth fees, application fees, etc., can be addressed on the NAIA Member Forum. To learn more about the NAIA and Action Line, visit the organization’s website - www.naia-artists.org.

JOIN US TODAY!
By Credit Card through our web site www.naia-artists/member

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If paying by check - Make Check Payable to: NAIA
Mail to - Lianne Robinson, NAIA Treasurer
1125 US Hwy 1
Sebastian, FL 32958

ACTION LINE
www.naia-artists.org
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for two more intern positions that open up in May. It’s a long and discouraging process, but we finally find two that are talented and, for a mere pittance, willing to work until their hands bleed.

Tuesday – March 25th

One of our two interns has decided that helping produce a Festival isn’t in her future after all. Great. Time to start interviewing again.

Wednesday – March 26th

A Little Nervous. I attend my first “Street Use” meeting at City Hall. This meeting is attended by members from the Des Moines Police Department, Fire Department, Parks & Recreation, Public Works, Traffic & Transportation, City Manager’s Office, and about half a dozen more officials from around the city. They are all local, all very professional, and all for shutting down the streets for five days. The answers I give will determine whether I get a thumbs up or thumbs down to close the streets. Everything seems to go well. Apparently I’ll know for sure sometime in June.

Saturday – March 29th

Inferno. The historic Younkers building, a downtown Des Moines landmark built in 1899, burns to the ground in the middle of the night. I happen to be in Chicago for the weekend and get the news via a text message. Why did someone bother to notify me? Because the smoldering pile of rubble that was once the beautiful Younkers building is adjacent to our office. And since the two buildings shared a wall and an open walkway, our building is off limits...indeedinately. Perfect. Everything I’ve accomplished during the past two-and-a-half months is either smoke damaged, water damaged, or both.

We move into a temporary office space the following Monday. It will take a few days to get computers and email up and running, but at least we have a place to work.

Thursday – April 10th

Office Grab. Because the safety of our previous office building is still uncertain, we are given ten minutes to race into the building and grab what we need. The whole time I feel like I’m in an episode of Supermarket Sweep, except that I’m wearing a hard hat and protective eyewear. I grab my files and last year’s production crew members backing a 26’ Flyer truck into (and destroying) a fence. Oh, and I’m still waiting on some of my banners to be delivered.

Thursday – June 26th

Thunderstruck. With only two days to set up, every minute counts. But when there’s lightning all around, you have to make sure everyone is away from metal scaffolding and that the banner-hanging crew puts down the 10’-long lightning rods they’re carrying. Necessary measures, but that lost time further compresses an already tight timeline. When the lightning stops, everyone races out and tries to get as much done possible before the next batch of storms comes through. This happens about five times throughout the day. By 11 p.m., everyone is soaking wet and tired. We decide to retreat to our hotel rooms three blocks away.

Friday – June 27th, 7 a.m.

Where Are My Banners? The Festival opens in four hours and we still have six hours of work to accomplish. Earlier this morning, thunderstorms dropped an inch of rain on the site and there’s a lot of standing water to clean up. After a quick on-site breakfast and production meeting with our staff, the production crew and an amazing group of volunteers that make up our Event Management Team, everyone rushes to work and makes the impossible happen.

I get the rest of my banners about an hour before the Festival opens. We rush to get everything hung before crowds of eager festival-goers start to arrive. By noon, food vendors are serving lunch to office workers from nearby buildings, artists are engaging with buyers, musicians are entertaining crowds on three stages, and I’m walking around the site inspecting some of the sites and making sure each person has what they need. The Festival is in full swing and everyone seems to be smiling. I’m really proud of our team.

Friday – June 27th, 10:30 p.m.

The Best Laid Plans. Rain and foot traffic today, and over the past few days, has turned the grassy areas of the site into a muddy mess. We decided to postpone one entire section of the site due to safety concerns. This means abandoning one of our performance stages and cancelling all of the entertainers that were scheduled to perform. It also means relocating a handful of sponsor tents to other areas of the site. We head back to the hotel around midnight.

Saturday – June 28th, 7:30 a.m.

My 8 a.m. production meeting will have to be delayed. Turns out two sponsors were on our interview list. I haven’t even had coffee yet, but somehow I manage to talk about the world-class art that should not be missed as well as the great lineup of music still to come.

Monday – June 23rd

Iowa Everglades. It’s been a wet June. We’ve had 7¼” of rain so far and we just got a little more yesterday. The chalk lines are still (mostly) visible, but the grassy areas of the site could use a solid week of sunshine to dry out. I don’t have much hope that we’ll get two tents in two days.And instead of sunshine, the forecast calls for thunderstorms at the end of the week. Some could be severe.

Wednesday – June 25th, 9 a.m.

Game On. The streets are closed and the Festival site is teeming with people building this thing, planning that, and moving whatever. I will spend the next five days with the ear bud for my cell phone stuck in one ear and a speaker mic for a two-way radio sprouting from the other. Often I’ll be talking into both at the same time, answering questions and coordinating the build-out of the site. There are a lot of moving parts, but the load-in and initial setup goes fairly smoothly. Well, there was that one little incident involving one of my production crew members backing a 26’ Flyer truck into (and destroying) a fence. Oh, and I’m still waiting on some of my banners to be delivered.

Your are going to pass a difficult test.

Week of the Festival

The Festival opens during the week of the event. This production crew, and an amazing group of volunteers that make up our Event Management Team, everyone rushes to work and makes the impossible happen.

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come. I'm even able to discuss some of the sustainable practices we implemented into the Festival.

Saturday – June 28th, 4 p.m.
Take Cover. Kansas is experiencing tornados and quarter-size hail. There are heavy rains with wind speeds of 55 MPH in Nebraska. And it's coming our way. We decide to close the Festival for a few hours to let the storm pass.

Saturday – June 28th, 7 p.m.
After a three-hour onslaught of wind and rain, the entire team is scattered across the site opening tents and cleaning up pools of water. I turn around and see the streets once again full of people. The sun has broken through the clouds and there is an amazing, buoyant energy that seems to permeate the entire Festival grounds. And, as if on cue, the most beautiful rainbow I've ever seen appears high up. It's going to be a good evening.

Saturday – June 28th, 10 p.m.
Proud. I'm on the phone with my Fireworks crew. As the headlining band hits their final note, I give them the go-ahead to light up the sky. I look across the crowd and see thousands of people staring at the shimmering lights. At that one, defining moment, I let out a little smile and say to myself, "I did that."

Radio silence is one of the best sounds during a festival. It means that everything is taken care of and there are no emergencies to attend to. But I break radio silence to thank everyone and to remind them to look around the site that has come together under some difficult and intense circumstances, "You did that."

Sunday – June 29th, 7:30 a.m.
Lucky. I'm tired. Really tired. I'm driving to the site this morning because I may need my car to transport a val. It means that everything is taken care of and there is a sense of hope. I turn around and see thousands of people staring at the shimmering lights. I smile and say to myself, "I did that."

The forecast was right. Heavy rain and hail beat down on us mercilessly while we load the final items into the trucks. In all, we get almost 4” of rain and hail over the course of the event.

Monday – June 30th, 4 p.m.
Release. The last piece of equipment was just picked up a short while ago and I am having a beer with one of my production guys. I feel beat up and utterly exhausted, but I'm finally able to relax. I get an unexpected hug from behind. It's my wife. I completely break down in her arms.

Monday – September 29th
Recognition. Two months have passed since the Festival and everything it gave back to me. I can't wait until next year.

Acknowledgement. The past 8½ months have been a physical and emotional roller coaster ride of successes and setbacks. There were certainly times when I felt I was in over my head. But that's when the only choice is to fight harder than ever to stay afloat. I continue to grow as a person and am forever changed by the challenges I overcome. To look back and see what's been accomplished, it's clear the struggles were worth it.

Not everything went right this year, and much of it was my fault. But a lot of things went as planned. In so many ways, I have our volunteers to thank for that. Without them, there would be no Festival.

I have been guilty in the past of asking the question, "What do you do the other 362 days of the year?" The simple answer is, "Prepare." Prepare, so that during the three days of the Festival, all 200,000+ guests, artists, entertainers, volunteers, and sponsors have an amazing experience they hope will never end. And just maybe, if you can pull it off, you'll be rewarded with the Best Festival in the World.

~ James Bruton