



ARTIST INFORMATION

MARGARET RIVER REGION OPEN STUDIOS 2023

We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work, the Wadandi Noongar people, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

EVENT BACKGROUND

Margaret River Region Open Studios is a not-for-profit event. Set up to support the artistic community by giving visitors the chance to meet and talk directly with artists in their studios, see and purchase new work, and be inspired by learning about their creative process. Now in its ninth year the event is the largest of its kind in Australia.

The event is funded by artist registration fees, grants, sponsorship, advertising, and fundraising events. Artist fees account for about a third of running costs. About 70% of the budget goes towards marketing the event. Each year we see growth in visitors' numbers.

The event is overseen by a volunteer board and an event team, engaged to manage specific areas:

Volunteer Board

Jim Davies, Chair
Jacquie Happ, Vice Chair
Susan Montanari, Treasurer
Karen Seaman, Secretary (Artist)
John Miller (Artist)
Georgia Zoric (Artist)
Dominique Monteleone

Event Team

Event Administration: Susie Opie
Website, Social Media and Content: Lizzy Pepper,
Lizzy Pepper Marketing
PR and Content: Janine Pittaway, Bright
Communications
Special Events: Sara Warren
Graphic Design and Illustration: Emily Jackson
Art Direction: Dorothy Davies
Legal Counsel: David McCashney

KEY CONTACTS

Event questions:

Susie Opie art@mrros.com.au

Website and social media:

marketing@mrros.com.au

PR and media:

jpittaway@brightcommunications.com.au



EVENT ESSENTIALS

- Prepare as far in advance as you can and allow time for the unexpected. The preparation and leadup to MRROS can sometimes be exhausting but remember to enjoy the ride, have fun, take pictures, talk to guests, visit other artist studios and enjoy everything that makes our event so special.
- Ensure you are open and in your studio as per the guide and website.
- Check your website and guide listing when requested to ensure everything is up to date.
- Contact art@mrros.com.au if an emergency arises or you have any questions.

CONNECT

- Join our private MRROS artist/ Facebook group to connect, seek advice and share news.
- Attend our artist launch and workshops
- Connect with other artists located nearby, so you can recommend each other to visitors.
- If it's your first event, check out some of our artist videos on our Videos page to get a sense of the event and other studios

PROMOTE

- Read the marketing section at the end of this guide for social media and PR tips.
- Follow, tag and interact with us on Facebook and Instagram [@margaretriverregionopenstudios](https://www.instagram.com/margaretriverregionopenstudios) #mrros
- Promote your involvement on social media and invite your mailing list and contacts to visit you during open studios, share the link to the event guide.
- Update your Artist Listing on the new website – you can update the images, text and add up to 3 workshops/ events.
- Let people know where they can get a copy of the event guide:
 - [Download](#) online
 - Jacksons
 - Visitor centres
- Advise Lizzy and Janine if you'll be holding any workshops or special events so they can promote – and add them to your Artist Listing on our new website.

NEW WEBSITE

- You can edit your artist statement, change images and add up to 3 workshops/events. Please check your placement on the TrailMaker, and email marketing@mrros.com.au if inaccurate.

MRROS COLLATERAL

- Display all provided MRROS signs clearly at your entry point.
- Lay out copies of the event guide, flyers and survey competition cards.
- Keep a copy of the event guide aside as a studio copy for recommending other artists nearby.



MRRROS FUNDING & CHANCE TO WIN FREE REGISTRATION

- MRRROS is dependent on grants for much of our funding (artist fees account for around a third of the event budget.) To achieve funding year on year, we need to be able to produce statistics on the success of the event.

This is how you can help:

- Keep track of visitor numbers and daily sales on the form provided. Return within one week of the event ending for a chance to win free membership and registration for next year's event. Individual answers are confidential and are compiled into overall figures.
- Encourage visitors to complete the visitor survey.
- Complete the post event artist survey.
- Please return your forms and mailing lists within a week of the event ending.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- In an emergency dial 000
- Ensure your 'Emergency Action Guide' is complete and displayed clearly at your entry point.
- It's the responsibility of each venue to ensure that they're providing a safe environment. Risks will be unique to your venue but may include a need to make some adjustments such as:
 - All work and studio contents safely positioned or hung to avoid accidents.
 - Trip hazards assessed and either removed or a clear warning sign put in place.
 - A plan for any dangerous elements in your studio e.g. open flame, chemicals etc.
 - Ensure any dangerous or fragile items are out of reach of children.
 - Secure place for any valuables e.g. cash.
- Ensure you have the following:
 - First aid kit.
 - Hand sanitiser.
 - Phone number and locations of your nearest police station and hospital.
 - Any additional risk assessment, fire or emergency plans or equipment.

ACCESSIBILITY

- People with disabilities have the right to derive the same benefits from public spaces as other visitors and so it's important this is considered. (Please see Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA). Public and home venues will be able to consider this differently but please consider what you can do to improve the visitor experience for all, such as:
 - If you've marked your studio as wheelchair accessible in the event guide, ensure that you don't do anything to compromise it, e.g. trip hazards, cluttered walkways.
 - Remember that not all needs are immediately obvious, for example loud music for visitors with hearing difficulties, low lighting, and small fonts for those with poor vision.



ARTIST SIGNAGE & COLLATERAL

- Consider having collateral for people to take away e.g., business cards, flyers, a list of works and prices
- Create a mailing list sign-up form so that you can keep in touch with visitors who like your work.
- Display your bio and a blurb about your work or techniques used to assist in busy periods.
- We always get lots of requests from visitors for artists to improve their signage, including:
 - Make it easy for non-locals to find you:
 - Make your studio easier to spot e.g., bright flags, bunting or extra signs.
 - Consider purchasing an extra MRROS road sign (one is provided in your pack).
 - Bring your MRROS signage in when you're not open.
 - Make sure all your signage is clearly visible from both approach directions.
 - Label all your work with the title, medium, price and size under the work.
 - Make sure your signage is well lit, large enough and at a comfortable height to read easily.
 - Have an open and closed sign.
 - A sign with your name / artist number / social media handles for impromptu visits.
 - Use red dots to indicate sold work.
 - Do you need a sign to help visitors:
 - Know where to park?
 - Know which door or pathway to enter your studio?
 - Direct people between artist studios if there's more than one on your property?
 - Locate the toilet?
 - Let people know if it's okay or not to take photos or if you want them to ask first.
 - If something is 'no touching' but might be perceived otherwise.
 - Know which areas are private?

CLOSURES IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

- If you are unable to open due to an emergency, please contact art@mrros.com.au immediately. We strongly encourage you to find another way to keep your studio open e.g., having a friend, family member cover for you.
- Some visitors are still likely to turn up, so hang a closed sign (explaining the circumstances) and remove your MRROS street sign.



SALES & PAYMENT SYSTEMS

- Set up an area in your studio where you'll take payments, take order details, and do any wrapping.
- Keep your payment devices plugged in so you don't run out of battery at an inopportune moment.
- Card Payments: Most artists use a [Square](#)
- Reader and the Square app on their phone to take card payments. It's a good idea to set up well before the first weekend with your artwork as 'products' with 'stock levels' in the app to speed up the sales process.
- Bank transfers: Handy for those buyers who prefer to make a transfer via their phone banking app but best to do there and then, or at least take a deposit.
- Cash: Not recommended in terms of security but you may consider for smaller sales. Be aware you can lose customers if that's your only option.
- Receipts: Manual receipt book or invoices if you're not using a system like Square.

ART DELIVERIES

- Please leave your art in situ for the duration of Open Studios and deliver to buyers after the event. It's disappointing for visitors to come to a half empty studio on the final weekend.
- Consider how you'll record buyer details for deliveries.
- Many artists deliver their own work after the event, both locally and to Perth. Others use a specialist art delivery service like [Blue Wren](#).
- Decide if you'll charge for delivery. It's up to you whether you charge or account for it in the price of your work. Artists approach it in different ways and some vary their delivery rate depending on the value of the work sold e.g., free local and Perth delivery for large works but a fee for small works.

SUGGESTED THINGS TO HAVE ON HAND

- Red dot stickers to add to sold work.
- Chargers for phone/tablet and payment devices plus an extension cord to keep them plugged in.
- Paper bags or wrapping for any small items like prints or cards.
- Wrapping for post event deliveries.
- Gaffer tape to tape down any loose cords that might be a trip hazard.
- General stationery like blue tac, tape spare pens etc.
- Tools if required to re-fix a hanging.
- Tape measure in case someone wants to measure your work.
- Notebook to keep track of enquiries or contact details.
- Clipboard for sign-up sheets, keeping track of orders and visitor numbers.
- Water bottle, thermos, snacks, and pre-prepared lunch.



YOUR STUDIO: THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

“The event is all about the artist’s studio practice. It’s about your creative space, what you do there and how your studio is important to you. By sharing, you’re inspiring other people, sharing the role creativity plays in your life. Yes, the event is also about selling art but at its core it’s about artists being in their studios, doing what they do.”

Open Studios is all about sharing an authentic studio experience and conversations about the creative process. Our visitor surveys give great insight into what visitors love about the Open Studios experience and certain studios in particular:

- Meeting artists.
- It’s a contrast to an exhibition or gallery environment.
- Generosity and openness of artists spending time and talking with visitors, indulge their questions and explain their process.
- Seeing artists homes, gardens and getting insight into the artist’s life and practice.
- Seeing what an artist studio looks like, it’s not about having the perfect vision of a studio.
- Inspired by the creative community and how many creatives there are in the region.
- Down to earth, authentic feel of event.
- Getting a glimpse behind the scenes of the artist process through what they find in the studio e.g.
 - Early sketches, concept drawings, colour tests, original plates laid out on display.
 - Work in progress
 - Materials and tools laid out as though ready to start work.
 - Inspiration points or photos or sketchbooks from research trips.
 - Techniques used – note even if you aren’t working think about how you could share this e.g., at printing press have materials and plates so you can explain the process
- Extra meaning that comes from purchasing a piece of art direct from the artist.
- Visiting the same artist year on year and seeing how their work develops. Sometimes visitors will visit for several years before buying a work.
- Getting exposed to new and emerging artists.
- Artists demonstrating their process, not just showing their work.
- Workshops and special events.
- Diversity of artists involved.
- Learning about artists they didn’t know about before.
- Excitement at visiting lots of artists and planning a holiday around art.

THE ARTIST EXPERIENCE

These tips have been gathered from many different artists and points of view. Take them as ideas and inspiration but remember that every artist has unique aspects to their studio, practice, work, and pricing, as well as constraints like time and money. Do what’s right for you. Any questions, or ideas you’d like to share, please post in our private artist Facebook group.



GETTING YOUR ART READY

- “It can be exhausting getting ready but remember it’s meant to be fun.”
- “There’s no set quantity of work to be displayed. Some prepare a huge amount, others only a small collection.”
- “It’s easy to put pressure on yourself to create a certain amount of work. The whole point of the event is for visitors to see your studio, not an exhibition. Try to step away from pressure and do what’s right for you at the time.”
- “It’s easy to get excited about doing the event for the first time, you may have heard how successful other artists have been. It’s easy to overcommit yourself with your outgoings. If it’s your first year taking part, you might think of it as a trial year. Experiment, try things out and see how it goes (with less financial outlay) and build on it the following year. You don’t need to do everything in year one.”
- “Don’t put pressure on yourself to be anything you’re not.”
- “I’ve been doing Open Studios a long time and do well, but every year I try to push myself and do something different.”
- “Be cautious about having too many prints on hand, if you have samples you can take orders and deliver them afterwards.”

WELCOME PEOPLE TO YOUR STUDIO

- “Be friendly and welcoming to guests as they enter but keep it simple and pace yourself so you don’t burn out. Say hello and introduce yourself as the artist. Let them know how to find their way around and that if there’s anything they’d like to know about the work or your process that you’re happy to talk or answer questions.”
- “People are expecting to see the artist so don’t let them down by not being there.”
- “Be available and welcoming, and careful of ignoring people.”
- “Be cautious about talking too long to some people and ignoring others. It’s okay to say ‘I’m just going to check on these other people over here.’”
- “Don’t be upset if some people just come in and walk right out. Your style isn’t for everyone and that’s okay.”
- “Be friendly and make your studio a welcoming place with chairs to sit on outside.”
- “Double check your opening times in the guide. Make sure you’re open the right days and times.”
- “Be prepared for people to knock on the door when you’re not open. They don’t always read the guide correctly, or they’ll just take a chance you’re there.”
- “If you’re opening at 10am, people will often rock up half an hour earlier, sometimes more.”
- “On days I wasn’t opening until 12 I always had people turn up, and so over the years if I was home on those days I would open early. I often had sales with those customers.”
- “There are some visitors that stay too long or test your limits. It’s your studio and it’s okay to politely ask them to say, leave the dog outside, or let them know you’re closing.”

SHARE YOUR STORY AND PROCESS

- “People love to hear about the skills behind your practice.”
- “Explaining what you do to others can help you understand your own work better. The practice of art is intuitive and visual. It often doesn’t get put into words until you have someone in your studio.”
- “The first year I took part I was convinced I would have nothing to say and within a day or two I realised I could talk ‘til the cows came home.”



- “Create written and visual explanations to help take the pressure off when you’re busy.”
- “Taking part has made me realise I want to share the stories that I’m telling in my art. Selling work in a gallery suddenly seems like missing out on half the fun.”
- “Usually, it’s best to let people find their way around the studio and enjoy it at their own pace. But it’s good to be nearby and let them know they’re welcome to ask questions or have a chat. “
- “Visitors vary wildly in their understanding of art. Some will know nothing about art whatsoever, but that can make for unexpected conversations.”
- “Most people are wonderful but occasionally you’ll get someone that’s tactless. Nothing you can do, expect it might happen occasionally and let it wash over you.”
- “It’s nice to welcome people but give them the space to look at your work in their own time. You can let them know that you’re there to answer questions or have a chat.”
- “Visitors tend to be very inquisitive about the process. Sometimes a visitor asks more than you’re happy to share. Just take a breath and be okay with politely being more vague than they’d like.”
- “You’ll notice patterns of what stories, works or studio aspects people find interesting. If it’s your first time, you’ll find yourself honing your stories as you go.”
- “Keep things true to you. Treat yourself with respect, you’re not a performing monkey.”

STUDIO SETUP

- “The event is all about the artist’s studio practice. It’s about your creative space, what you do there and how your studio is important to you. By sharing, you’re inspiring other people, sharing the role creativity plays in your life. Yes, the event is also about selling art but at its core it’s about artists being in their studios, doing what they do.”
- “I’ll start at the end point of where I want to be with my studio and then work back from there. How do I want people to flow through the space, where I’ll have my desk, how I’ll take money, that kind of thing. Then I try to work out what are my best pieces and to put them in a really good spot.”
- “If you create your work on your kitchen table, be honest about it, there’s inspiration in that too because it’s real life.”
- “Be actively working if you can. Viewers then appreciate what goes into your art and are more likely to stay a while and hopefully buy.”
- “If you’re planning to be working on a piece, make sure it’s something that doesn’t require your full attention and that you can stop and start at a moment’s notice if a visitor arrives or would like to talk.”
- “It’s often not practical to work, nor are you in the right headspace with so many people around. Instead set up work area that shows work in progress or at various stages. Maybe a half-finished painting with paints and brushes nearby, all the materials set up by an etching press ready to start preparing a print. Something with an element to talk about.”
- “I always do a kids activity station with something like Jenga or colouring in. That way parents aren’t distracted while looking.”
- “Organise a friend or family member to help out, when you may want a couple of helpers. It’s good for company and means you’re not alone in your studio.”
- “Make sure your helpers have enough knowledge to be able to talk a bit about your story and processes when you’re occupied with other visitors. Amazing if you can have them on hand to do your packing and help greet people.”
- “The first weekend can be difficult to attend to everyone. Get someone to help.”
- “Helpers are great, but people always want to speak to you.”



VISITOR NUMBERS

- “Opening weekend is always the busiest. Many of the more serious visitors keen on buying work come opening weekend. They want to get in and see the work first.”
- “Different artists and studios will have a varying number of visitors for different reasons. Remember it’s not the quantity of people that come, but the quality of the experience you offer.”
- “You’ll have very quiet periods or days but it’s funny how sometimes it will be dead quiet and then all of a sudden lots of cars turn up at once. Enjoy the quiet moments and have a cup of tea!”
- “Visitor numbers can be affected by all sorts of things. You never know, don’t get obsessed.”
- “If you’re just starting out, it can take a few years to build your audience and sales. Don’t set yourself too many expectations, enjoy the process.”

SALES

- “Trust the process, you don’t need to emulate a gallerist.”
- “People either fall in love with a piece or they don’t. You can tell them about the work, share the story but you don’t need to sell it. If anything, it’s your story that helps them across the line.”
- “It’s not always about an immediate sale, concentrate on creating memorable experiences and engaging with people. Several years can go by, but that person may eventually return to purchase a work because they fell in love with your studio or another work that first time.”
- “People often look around and then return to buy, so don’t be discouraged if there are not many sales in the first few days.”
- “Don’t limit yourself to only thinking about it being work for sale. The benefits can be about future commissions and growing your reputation.”
- “Keep your work in place for the entire event so those visiting at the end can see everything - you may get commissions or at least be advertising yourself for next time. Treat it like a two-week exhibition, not a clearance sale.”
- “Don’t be surprised if they ask for a discount. It’s okay to say no.”
- “Don’t compare yourself with other artists sales. I aim to get the entry fee back and everything else over that is an exciting added bonus.”
- “I have found that each year my visitors and sales have grown with a number of repeat customers.”
- “Some years I do really well and other years, less so. You can’t really predict how it’ll go.”
- “Good to have an up-to-date folio of work if you want to promote that you do commissions.”
- “Think about whether you want to take commissions and how you’ll handle them. You should ask for at least a 50% deposit with no refund once you have commenced the work. Also agree to an acceptable completion date.”
- “The most stressful time was when I was wrapping purchases. I felt that I was ignoring those who were viewing. Even though I was totally approachable about delivery after the event, I’m going to be more inclined to ask clients to not take their work with them. I’d rather deliver than experience that awful feeling of ignoring people whilst I wrapped.”
- “It’s a good idea to set up a packaging station for small items, streamlined so you can do it as quickly as possible. You can get waylaid wrapping while people are queuing to talk to you, and you don’t want them to leave.”
- “Keep good sales records to help plan for next year.”



SELF-CARE, EMOTIONAL HIGHS & LOWS

- “Open Studios is not about being in your comfort zone. It’s natural to feel vulnerable and exposed.”
- “Every year it’s the same thing. First, I think no-one might come, you know, bread and butter anxiety. I feel vulnerable, exposed, nervous what other people will think of my work. I judge myself harshly. Every year it’s a huge emotional journey.”
- “Seeing a visitor’s face light up as they connect with your work is incredible, it’s so empowering.”
- “Look after yourself. The lead up to the event is exhausting and talking to visitors for two weeks, while a great experience can take it out of you.”
- “Talk to other artists and be honest about how things are going, we all experience highs and lows.”
- “Enjoy all the diverse, interesting and thoroughly lovely people who come to view your work.”
- “Pace yourself, it’s okay to hold back a bit and not give as much to everyone.”
- “Don’t feel like you need to do things a certain way because of how other artists are doing things, how much work they’re creating, or how they set up their studio.”
- “Drink plenty of water, it’s easy to forget. Don’t forget to sit down and give your legs a rest.”
- “Prepare all your evening meals in advance. I never get to eat lunch, so I have a good breakfast.”
- “Bring a big water bottle and your lunch or at very least, fruit and snacks that are easy to eat.”
- “Find a way to stop for a cup of tea occasionally. If you’re sharing a space, help each other out.”
- “Keep smiling. Expect everything. You never know what will happen or when it will happen.”
- “The more organised you are the better, it can be busy and tiring.”
- “Keep it simple, do what you can.”
- “It’s a great event. Enjoy it.”
- “Visit other studios on your days off. When I do it, it makes me feel a real part of the event as well as being inspired and having fun too. I know one artist who makes sure she buys something each year from one other artist. Loved hearing about that support.”
- “Visiting other studios and being part of the artistic community is one of my favourite parts of the event. It’s also kind of comforting to see we’re all as exhausted and as each other by the end.”



TIPS FROM OUR MARKETING TEAM

MEDIA & PR

JANINE PITTAWAY, BRIGHT COMMUNICATIONS

Janine has been part of the MRROS family since 2018. She provides communications planning, publicity, media management, and content creation, working closely with the rest of the team.

Janine's career in PR and marketing spans 30 years, with the last 10 based locally. Her business, Bright Communications, specialises in creating effective communications for organisations large and small. Tourism, travel, the arts, hospitality, and not-for-profits are industries she loves working in and her services include strategic communications planning, publicity and media relations, community relations, issues and crisis communications, and copywriting.

Janine commences work 6-9 months ahead of the event, however media activity peaks from July to September. She prepares and distributes media releases around key milestones such as: callout for artists, artist numbers confirmed, event guide available, event commencement and event results. She also spends much time raking through artist registration information for interesting story ideas to pitch to target writers and journalists across travel, the arts, and lifestyle media.

JANINE'S TIPS

- Keep an eye out for Janine's callouts for information on email and the Artist Facebook group email.
- Provide Janine with background and information that she can include in pitches for stories and pieces of editorial. You can do this via your registration form or by email in the event leadup.
- Provide Janine with high quality, compelling images of yourself and your artwork. This will increase the likelihood of a media pitch being successful and you being featured.
- Janine welcomes artists contacting her direct with story ideas, angles, or updates about their practice. News ideas could be anything from major commissions, taking on timely themes in your work (COVID, climate change, Ukraine etc), collaborations with venues or other artists and picking up on trends.

Contact Janine via email jpittaway@brightcommunications.com.au



SOCIAL MEDIA & CONTENT

LIZZY PEPPER, LIZZY PEPPER MARKETING

Lizzy is a highly experienced freelance marketing consultant. As the brains behind our social media and digital presence she's a core part of the Open Studios team and. Her role includes:

Curating photos from artist registrations and social media.

Creating photos & videos incl. 6 new videos this year and a roaming photographer on Saturday 9th September.

Writing, creating, and sharing content on social media with facts about the event, artists and studios.

Managing the website and newsletters (excl. the event guide which artist Emily Jackson Design)

Contact Lizzy via email marketing@mrros.com.au or in the artist Facebook group

LIZZY'S TIPS

- Follow MRROS on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/mrropenstudios>
- Follow MRROS on Instagram [@margaretriverregionopenstudios](https://www.instagram.com/margaretriverregionopenstudios)
- Create and share content before, during and immediately after the event to make sure your visible to visitors.
- Tag MRROS on all your artist posts if you're happy for your content to be shared. A tag triggers a notification and allows Lizzy to share your content. Lizzy curates a selection of content based on what's been shared.
- Like and comment on MRROS and other artist's posts. It helps content appear more often and your handle will be more visible to others.
- Over time Lizzy's got to know the MRROS audience and focuses on posting and sharing the kind of content they find engaging:
 - Content themes that capture the MRROS spirit:
 - Creativity
 - Warm welcomes
 - Portraits of artists – happy, at work in their studio
 - Art
 - Studio scenes
 - Technique / process
 - Open studios visitors
 - Intriguing and interesting images e.g., abstracts, beautiful art
 - Honest and authenticity
 - Smiling or relaxed body language to indicate a warm welcoming studio
 - Landscapes that inspire and showcase our region
 - Types of images:
 - Quality images with authentic colours / no filters
 - Booking a shoot with a photographer or swapping skills with a friend is a great idea if you have trouble with the above.
 - Full size images (no white borders)
 - Natural, good quality light.
 - Neatly photographed art – good light, easy to distinguish the art



• Types of information / stories:

- Interesting facts that engage a curious audience
- Authentic stories that give a sense of connection
- Theme ideas: art, studio, inspiration, life, family, place, client feedback
- To give you an idea of what does well, below are the MRROS posts that got the best audience reach in the last 12 months:

