

Exhibiting & Promoting Your Work At Craft Fairs

Many makers prefer to sell direct to their customers at fairs, not just because its effective and cuts out the ‘middle man’, but they enjoy the direct customer feedback, and the social aspect of selling alongside like-minded makers.

When choosing an event, and/or organiser take a look for the following:

- Do they have a comprehensive web site showing a good selection of makers’ work in various disciplines, or is it just the same few images appearing over and over again.
- Is the work shown of a quality you would wish to exhibit alongside?
- Does the organiser promote only handmade work from UK based makers, or do they allow a mix of mass-produced or work from overseas? But beware, most organisers promise only to allow work into the show that is made by the exhibitor, but very few actually enforce this – or even check!
- Do you need an organiser who attracts huge crowds, or fewer numbers of a more discerning audience? The combination of both is always a bonus!
- Does the organiser have good publicity material, and is it kept up to date and fresh?
- Check if the organiser promotes exhibitors’ websites on its own site, and make sure you link yours to the organiser.
- Does it look like many of their exhibitors could be found in the High Street stores, or is the work individual in style?
- If you are unsure about the shows, don’t be afraid to ask questions, and other exhibitors can be a valuable source of information as to the quality of the different shows. But don’t just take the view of just one person, as a show may have been great in their opinion, but less so for everyone else, and vice versa.
- Try and go to a few fairs as a visitor. We will be pleased to send you a complimentary ticket to visit a Craft in Focus event – just ask.

Promoting Your Attendance

No matter how much work an organiser does on publicity, you can still help push yourself. Always take details of customers so you can mail details to them of shows you are attending. Most reputable organisers will offer discounted entry tickets for exhibitors, so do make use of these.

Your Display

Think about your display. Look at what others are doing. Why do some catch your attention more than others? The type, or quality, of event you are showing at may determine the approach of the display. Usually the pile it high approach is not right for the more selective craft fair. Instead be restrained in the amount of work you display, don’t clutter your space, and don’t forget to make good use of height too. If your product is small, then make use of large graphics.

Unless a shell scheme is provided ensure you have a backdrop/screen to your stand. An affordable and simple solution is to cable tie two 6’ x 3’ garden trellis panels together at 90 degrees. Fabric can then be stapled to the back, and even shelves placed across in the square holes, forming a free standing unit for just a few pounds.

Don’t sit behind a book or magazine – engage your customer. They have come to the fair for the experience as well as the products – they want to buy into you as a maker, not just a salesperson – let them know what drives you, your influences and ambitions. Most are not only genuinely interested, they expect to know about who made the work they are about to purchase.