

SEOS 2019 Annual Report (AGM)

What was your best experience of SEOS 2019? Members said—

- people enjoying their visit...talking to visitors who were interested in how we created our art
- the blue tits nesting in my sculpture sold the piece to a bird lover!
- sharing the experience with fellow artists and meeting visitors
- having a 10 year old boy visit my artwork, his first time viewing art and having a bag full of 5 p pieces to the value of £1 to buy his favourite piece of art - sadly could only afford a card! But I generously gave him 3 cards and a piece of ceramics (which was not on sale) for £1.00.
- talking about sketchbooks; helping someone make a print; demonstrating; welcoming returning visitors.
- getting lots of appreciation and such a high proportion of sales from relatively few visitors! :)
- excellent sales
- sales, most of which were to friends, plus spending time with and getting to know better my fellow exhibitor.
- meeting people who had come a long way to see us. I had a visitor from Australia
- getting unexpected commission
- being able to open up my own studio for the first time and demonstrating
- receiving compliments about the variety of work I do
- meeting new people with a genuine interest in all of our work and selling two large pieces.
- sharing with 4 top level artists and the visitors' comments/conversation
- selling an oil painting, & meeting a supporter for first time
- camaraderie, interested visitors...and a couple of unexpected sales
- meeting a lady crafter who rears wonderful sheep and goats for their wool on a little farm just a stone's throw from me that I didn't know existed! Having visits from students that I taught eons ago.
- the camaraderie between the artists at our studio
- meeting some lovely and interesting people who appreciated art and craft
- swapping artwork with another artist
- chatting to the visitors and enjoying their enthusiasm for my work
- visitors being pleasantly surprised with how diverse my exhibition was
- gaining confidence from appreciation and sales of my work - support from my family and friends and ex-students - exhibiting with an excellent group of fellow artists - exhibiting just my etching for the first time - previous open studios was my painting & drawings.
- The first sale! Meeting lovely visitors and other artists in the area.

SEOS Annual Report 2019

Welcome

Once again we reach the end of the SEOS year and take this opportunity to review the event and SEOS membership in 2019. This Annual Report and AGM allow us to present our operations and receive input from the members so we can move the organisation forward to the next event.

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1. Chair's Report

We hope that you had a good experience at this year's event. The feedback suggests the majority of members' experiences were Good or Excellent, which is enormously encouraging. I'd like to thank everyone who contributed to feeding back via the link, and also the members who took the time to write at length about their experiences. Communication is the lifeblood of change, and we will be incorporating some ideas for 2020; however, as I am sure you will appreciate, the committee's responsibility is towards the whole of our membership and so not every suggestion can be met.

By far the most popular improvement the participants have suggested had to do with advertising, with a number of people suggesting the road signage should be much larger, that we should look into supplying banners for all areas, rather than this being part of the local ACO marketing. Supplying much larger and more simplified signage that can be seen from a long distance away is also a change the membership want to see.

We've also had a number of people ask us to look into the location mapping, who and where we advertise, exploring publicity in libraries and widening our advertising reach to both national press, radio and TV. These are all things we will consider for 2020.

Three of our respondents talked about reducing the cost for artists who are in a group entry. Unfortunately, whilst this would encourage people to join groups, the reality for most people is that they do not have the space to do this. As groups already have a considerable advantage over single artists in terms of numbers of visitors, to give groups who already have the advantage of space and numbers a further discount would be unfair. We will however, stress to members in the run-up to next year's event the advantages of being in a group.

We've had proposals for greater transparency so to that end we are putting the constitution on the website and the honoraria are itemised on the AGM report this year. We also had a call for ACOs to have block votes for their district. Unfortunately, we as a committee could not see how this would work, not least because it would mean the ACOs attending seven meetings a year. For the coming year, we won't know until January the 31st, 2020, how many artists each ACO will have, but key decisions are made at the September and November meetings. Giving each ACO the previous year's artists block vote is profoundly unfair as some areas can wield a huge number of votes that don't manifest in artist numbers, and vice versa an area (like East Kent this year) can double in numbers yet have almost no say whatsoever.

We will, however, continue to represent the views of the ACOs through their voice on the committee: the ACO Officer. I encourage all ACOs to use this voice. In addition, we will make a meeting with the ACO officers a priority in the planning stages for 2020 to ensure that they can directly inform planning.

Unfortunately, we had a member who allowed other non-paying artists to share her space. This person will not be able to join for 2020.

The committee works all year round to create an enjoyable event. This year I've included a lot of feedback to show just how much members enjoyed the event. It is a delight to read. We have a wealth of talent in the south east and the professionalism of the event, together with its brand recognition, is what makes us South East Open Studios. To hear this recognised by the members is wonderful.

I would, however, like to make a plea for tolerance going forward. The committee, all of whom have full-time commitments outside SEOS, give their all to putting on this event, but what often comes back is negativity. We've had a number of instances where members have shared intemperate and often wrong information via social media, and for some inexplicable reason we are still hearing that SEOS 'failed' in 2018.

It did not fail; the committee made the decision to take a year out, as was communicated on many occasions both before and during the year.

I'm pleased to announce that this year's winner of the draw for Participant Survey feedback (half price entry for 2020) is Sarah de Mattos. Unfortunately, no Visitor Survey responses came in before the deadline so this prize remains unclaimed.

Thank you to everyone who made this year's event a great return for SEOS.

Jamie Walsh (Chair)



2. Treasurer's Report

I am afraid the accounts are not ready as I have had to produce 2 separate years of accounts.

From the information I can tell you is that we have made loss for the past 2 years and if SEOS is to continue we do need to increase our income or decrease our expenses, but there is only so much more belt tightening we can do without affecting the running of SEOS.

During our closed year we had a loss of just over £6,700 and in our last year we have only made a small loss.

All in all, SEOS finances have suffered from our closed year and our new website. We have to start saving money to put SEOS on a stable footing for future years.

Charlotte Landman, Treasurer

South East Open Studios Committee Honoraria

	Name	2018/19	2014/15
Chair	Jamie Walsh	£ 800.00	£ 800.00
Insurance Organiser	<i>Vacant 2019</i>	£ -	£ 50.00
Guide Editor	Terry Ayling	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Website Editor	Mark Welland	£ 800.00	£ 1,500.00
Publicity	Elitta Fell	£ 700.00	£ 700.00
Registration	<i>Vacant 2019</i>	£ -	£ 600.00
Area Co-ordinators Officer	Anna Lambert	£ 700.00	£ 700.00
Treasurer	Charlotte Landman	£ 700.00	£ 700.00
Evaluation	<i>Post discontinued 2017</i>	£ -	£ 200.00
Minutes secretary 6 @ £40	Victoria Wainwright	£ 240.00	£ 228.00
Guide Distribution	Charlotte Landman	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Guide Advertising	Terry Ayling	£200 + 5% of revenue	£ 350.00
Social Media Officer	Victoria Wainwright	£ 300.00	£ 300.00
Newsletter Editor	Elitta Fell	£35/Newsletter	£ -

[illegible]

2018 – 2019 (SEOS 2019)

[illegible]

[illegible]

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1			South East Open Studios					
2								
3		Notes to the Financial Statement for the year ended 30 June 2019						
4								
5	<u>1. Accounting convention</u>							
6								
7	The financial statements are prepared under the course convention							
8								
9	<u>2. Committee members</u>							
10								
11	Each committee member receives an honorarium of £1 and in addition they invoice							
12	for services rendered SEOS. The expenses include mileage allowance at approved							
13	rates							
14								
15	<u>3. Debtors</u>					<u>£.</u>		
16								
17	Committee Overpayment					150		
18	Entry Amendments					35		
19								
20						185		
21								
22	<u>4. Creditors</u>					<u>£.</u>		
23								
24	Accountancy					720		
25	Committee Fees					1,150		
26	Adverting					17		
27	Website costs including hosting & Dropbox					48		
28								
29						1,935		
30								
31	<u>4. Sundry</u>					<u>£.</u>		
32								
33	Card Fee					35		
34	AGM Hall Hire					30		
35	Glue					6		
36								
37						71		

3a. ACO Officer Report

I started my ACO Officer role back in 2018 with some trepidation, having seen a role description but – as a non-artist, merely an enthusiastic SEOS visitor – having no idea what, in practice, that role would entail. I have been much supported and sustained by the helpfulness and energy of my fellow committee members – not to mention their commitment to SEOS. It was fantastic, too, when faced with gaps in the areas to be covered by ACOs, to see individual artists stepping forward to fill those gaps, leaving every area represented. Many thanks to all our ACOs who work so hard to help make SEOS happen.

The general consensus I've picked up on the back of our 2019 event is that those taking part have been very happy to have reopened their SEOS doors to visitors. Above all, artists seem to have appreciated the increase in social media activity this year.

Our initial meeting, though attended by only four of us, was extremely enlightening in terms of how the event works and how useful it can be for artists in generating work (because they have to have sufficient work to actually 'furnish' a show) and sales (with profits higher for professional artists, of course, as there's no gallery/agent cut to worry about). Before the event, it was impressive to see artists working together where possible to produce specific fliers and trails for their specific areas – something that seems to work well in encouraging visitors to make the most of trips to any given areas. That said, one comment was that fliers and trails can put visitors off making the most of the brochures (see ACO reports below).

Most of the queries I received during the run-up to the event covered practicalities – how to submit expenses, one person having to pull out at the last minute, the sort of occurrences you've no-doubt encountered before. No complaints about the new website in terms of ease of use direct to me (though ACOs have had some, see reports), though we were chased to put up various bits of information that had been omitted (banner PDFs if I remember) which, once requested, were immediately posted.

Interestingly, while we might have assumed hot weather was good news, at least one studio reported that their best day was when it rained. Some artists reported their best sales ever.

Thanks again for allowing me to be a part of the team for a year. I am now stepping down. I took on the role very much feeling that I was a stop-gap, having heard from a SEOS artist I visited in 2017 that the event I've so much enjoyed over the years was in danger of folding because of lack of committee support. I have always believed, and I think we'd probably all agree, that an artist is best suited to the ACO's Officer role. I know that we will be discussing honorariums. I can say hand on heart that my

honarium of £700 had absolutely no bearing on my desire to help SEOS for a year. Having done the job, though, and now having a solid understanding of what it entails – and seen how much other committee members are doing for lower honorariums – I would recommend a re-think regarding who gets paid what, for doing what, and why.

What now follows are reports from ACO officers. I think any gaps/lack of info in reporting reflects the fact that ACOs believe the info will be collated from the feedback forms all artists were requested to complete, or indeed it may be because they're here and want to speak for themselves.

Many thanks to all once again.

Anna Lambert, ACO Officer



3b. Individual ACO Reports

Area B – Bromley/Westerham/Edenbridge: Alex Gavin

A couple of things to report from the Bromley, Westerham area.

It was good to have a £50 budget for advertising and I made a flyer for my group, making 2,000 copies to spread out amongst my artists.

But there were only 9 of us (one lady pulled out as we were initially 10) and I felt we were all a bit spread out. Forest Green, for example, is a fair way away from Bromley and Orpington at the top of our section.

I therefore wonder if our 'long and slim' geographical area should be halved across the middle so that we become part of the groups to the East of our section in future? Or we just need more people taking part in our area in future, but I don't know how best to drum up "new artist" interest in the local area and would be interested in your advice.

One of my group noted that the weather played a part in her visitor numbers. She also said people used "Brexit" uncertainty as a reason not to buy art. Finally she noted that smaller items such as cards seemed to sell better compared to larger art pieces.

I found (as a first timer) that I was relying a lot on the goodwill of my friends and family to do a lot of the buying. I did well in terms of sales which was great, but I didn't have as much local traffic and didn't have many purchases by local people. (One lady in my group said she had some rather negative comments from one visitor, which was a real shame as it means she is considering not doing it again next year. She was told her art was "too cheap" but not in a particularly nice way. I was very sorry to hear this.)

As you know another lady in my group had to pull out for personal reasons. I notified Anna Lambert and the word was put out on social media. I also crossed her name off all my flyers before I put them through people's doors and suggested my group do the same with their flyers. The lady (Annie) also put up signs at her house saying she was closed. But it is worth noting that this is an issue for some people and that everything possible should be done to help people who have to close their studios for reasons beyond their control.

Being an Area Coordinator (as well as this being my first open studio year) did involve a fair amount of work for me, as I also have a full-time job. But I was willing to give it my all and I did also find it a rewarding experience.

I hope to take part in Open Studios next year if I am able and will consider whether I am able to be an Area coordinator again.

I would be interested to hear any positive stories from other groups about local successes and also any good ways/methods to advertise locally that paid off in terms of footfall/sales!

As I said at the start, I am interested the zones to the east of our area as (certainly if they are more densely populated in terms of artist's studios). I would be interested in our zone being 'split' to join forces with others. Particularly if there are stories of success in their areas. Those from the local area who visited often mentioned that they were visiting as part of an art trail between SEOS studios, so having a good number of studios in reasonably close proximity is clearly helpful to attracting visitors.

On a final note, one of my visitors was a craftsman and furniture-maker, newly moved to the area, so he may be a possible recruit for next year's Orpington offering. I've got his email address in my visitors' book so will be reaching out to him in due course to see if he is interested in taking part next year.

Area C – Sevenoaks: Lawrence Jenkins & Lindy Webster

The success of the event depends on many studios being open on the same day and reasonably close to each other so that visitors are encouraged to visit several studios.

I believe this is most likely to happen in areas that have lively, active coordinators, who encourage the group to work together and support one another as much as possible.

In the past the arts officers of Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks provided that energy. Since then in the Sevenoaks area we have been extremely fortunate in having that bundle of energy called Debra Barr Smith. However, because SEOS missed a year that energy has gone into the formation of Art in June [led by Debra] and that has created a destructive split that could destroy the importance of SEOS in this area. I hope this will not happen.

It does however highlight the importance of the area coordinators and I believe the Constitution of SEOS should be amended to reflect this fact.

Artists generally only have the energy and time to get themselves and their show together. SEOS covers a large area. These 2 observations are fundamental to the failure of finding the people to get together SEOS in 2018 and they remain a danger to future success so an amendment to the Constitution needs to be made to lessen the danger.

I propose that greater powers and rewards should be given to the area coordinators to reflect their importance. My proposal is that they have as many votes as they have artists in their area who are unable to attend the AGM and are paid traveling expenses for attendance at the AGM.

I also propose that there is a link to the SEOS Constitution on the website so that everyone who is interested has complete access. Openness breeds participation. Please note, I do not wish to be area coordinator next year if a replacement can be found.

Area D - West Malling & Wrotham: Victoria Wainwright

Personally we had our best year ever in the six years we have done it in frog lane. Although our numbers were lower we had visitors who had come from quite far specifically to see us. We made a lot of sales and had a lot of great feedback and interaction. I also had two studios, completely on their own and very isolated from other artists who reported doing very well. The rest had mixed feelings about their experience with higher hopes of numbers and sales with one studio very disappointed with the turn out as it was way below previous years. This studio did have a banner right outside and lovely work plus a facebook interview but limited parking. Frog Lane has parking issues too. If you don't know that we can find somewhere to park it is quite off putting. We also had visitors who did not want to visit the studio a few doors down to us and vice versa with one visitor coming in to ask for directions without even looking around. We had some very nice comments about social media because they liked seeing other work by the other artists.

Area E – Tonbridge/Hadlow: Sarah De Mattos & Lucy Prescott

On behalf of the Tonbridge, Hildenborough and Hadlow area, I think the overall consensus was good, and for some people better than last SEOS. I have given our area plenty of opportunities to let us know if they were not happy with anything and I have had no responses other than a couple of thank yous! Although they may have said it all in the survey! As is the case most years, we had very little help from other artists.... although we are very grateful for those that did make the effort, especially the the newbies that helped us with the initial collating.

I get the impression that most people that have done SEOS before aren't interested in the whole collaborative effort of working together to make the event work.... they seem quite happy to let others do the hard work, and they just collect their boxes when they are ready! I think maybe one of the problems is that once everyone has signed up in December/January, everything goes quiet for a while and then there is a mad rush to get everything organised in the last few weeks before the event!

On a positive note, the Social Media coverage was good this year (Instagram/Facebook etc.) and those that did step up to the mark were great! But as with most things in life, I'm sure we could all improve next year! Best wishes, Sarah

Area F – Maidstone: Carole Robson

The only feedback I have had, post event, is that SEOS 2019 varied from very successful to very few visitors. The main feeling about low numbers of artists taking part in Maidstone was that more advertising really needs to be done in the late autumn next year, just before joining up. It was suggested that it could be done as an Open Call to artists on all the social media, as is done for exhibition entries and given lots of profile.

Areas G, H, I - Rochester / Sittingbourne + Canterbury/Whitstable/Herne Bay: Janet Aldis

We all filled in the report as required via the newsletter and website.

I have enclosed a few comments from my members and myself.

1. I had a similar number as last year without SEOS, but most of them were more local to me as I was the only one in the Dover area which appeared to have an impact on those coming from a wider area as they did last time.
2. I had a successful SEOS but only because I had an invitation evening for friends and followers. Managed to sell 9 paintings and gained two Commissions on that one evening. SEOS gave me an excuse to do this but I could quite as easily have done it without.
3. As far as SEOS was concerned, I only had three visitors in those three weeks and sold two cards! So SEOS did not work for me. I think the main reason is there are not enough artists in my area to draw visitors to visit several in a day. Therefore I shall think seriously before joining SEOS in future.
4. I was the only artist in the whole of Medway to do SEOS and hence saw hardly anyone and mainly people I knew. By comparison I had a better response for Medway Open Studios and sold more cards, a print and another visitor interested in a painting.
5. As ACO I keep trying to recruit in all 3 areas, but as mentioned on the website questionnaire, all the areas have local Open Studios, and a much lower cost and people are not prepared to do both; their own and SEOS
SEOS don't take on board a reduced fee for a group of artists, even if we hired a venue to help those without suitable spaces, or confidence, the cost would be far too much with insurance etc. if we pay for SEOS membership at the individual cost. For what SEOS provide, we have to take quite a lot of sales to justify it.
I have been pointing this out for the last 15 years, and have always been told that it is not cost effective for SEOS, well it isn't for the artists either.
In addition to SEOS Publicity I personally spent £300 on additional publicity and consequently my personal experience was good, but I could probably do it without membership of SEOS.

I fully support SEOS and as a retired teacher, I am committed to the Arts in every sense and have a reputation for helping and supporting people but I am finding it increasingly difficult to justify membership of SEOS.

Area J – Hythe/Folkestone/Rye: Gabrielle Argent

See Area M, below.

Area K – Ashford: Alison Olorunsola

I visited all the studios in the Ashford area on the first day where possible and all the artists were feeling very positive. Those I have spoken to since were pleased with the number of visitors and sales. Artists were particularly pleased with the high quality of the guides. I also visited a number of studios outside my area especially where there were only one or two artists or artists exhibiting for the first time. The main problem seemed to be the solo artists some of whom were unhappy about the low number of visitors. Those more established artists don't have the same problem as they have built up a following. It appears visitors are opting to visit studios with a range of artists as they feel it is better 'value'. A suggestion might be that before applying (on the website) artists could be advised that asking a friend or two to join them could improve visitor numbers. On the initial leaflet there could be an email address for those who would like to exhibit but have no suitable studio space to be linked up with somebody else. On the other hand, some very large studios are making it hard for the rest. Could there be a limit imposed by SEOS? As ACO I have found a few aspects frustrating. The area boundaries were changed from 2017 so that for example Bethersden was no longer in the Ashford area and this led to a serious mix up. When the total list and all the details arrived in February it took a long time to sift through all the information to find out who was in each area. Could we not just have a simple list of the artists in our areas? Some artists were not happy with the current boundaries, Rye being a very good example. It would be useful to have a timetable to allow us to plan ahead and a clear list of what we are expected to do as ACOs. For example, I appreciate that artists are busy people and decided not to call a meeting until I knew when the guides would be available and to combine meeting as a group with the collection of guides, etc, thus ensuring that everybody would come. The distribution of guides was very complicated. Would it not be fairer to allocate a specific number of guides to each area depending on the number of artists? We all know that some people work harder than others in getting the guides out there and the ACO could allocate to those who volunteer to help. In the Ashford area I allocated one box to each artist and one box to each studio. The rest were given to volunteers who had offered to take to specific places. I hope this meant there was less wastage. It did however mean that I did not have the detailed list asked for by SEOS until after I had collected the guides and had the meeting. The

online feedback form was fine but we had not been asked to keep a daily tally of visitors. On the whole though the experience was excellent!

Area L – Tenterden/Headcorn: Rowena Williams

We had best open studios ever probably at Smallhythe because it worked having just 2D work - people came to see paintings and stayed looking for a long time. There was a big range of styles for them. Had about 250 to 300 visitors? Everyone sold a reasonable amount too. It was lovely painting together too. But mixed responses from other studios and I think overall numbers were really down. Due to economic climate, too many open studios these days but also I think by having a year off lost momentum so if you are going to keep going I strongly suggest you do it every year. It works having slightly smaller area but more people would drop out if you do it biannually. I think brochure is key and people should not be encouraged too much to do trail maps. Someone was giving out Northiam trail maps to my students but not giving them the brochure!!!

Many people commented how special it was to see us all at work...I have been to studios where someone demonstrating consisted of a painting propped on an easel and nothing more..Carol Mitchell felt it was much more fun and successful sharing rather than doing it at home on her own.

Re posters and arrows A3 works better than A4 for visibility. I visited many studios where people had put out one sign near their studio and nothing else. I found several quite hard to find. Someone suggested A3 posters saying South East Open Studios rather than studio open so that they can be left up for the three weeks. So fewer, bigger posters?

How about stipulating days open? Maybe everyone opens Fri Sat Sun for three weeks?

Area M – Haywards Heath/Hastings: Gabrielle Argent

From those who responded to my end of event enquiries, the consensus was that the event had been a positive experience. 70% of artists in M & J groups formed 'Art Trail' fliers and helped one another willingly. Many visitors were new to the artist and those artists who shared a premises attracted good numbers and sales. From my perspective, the signs were very helpful, although the 'Studio Open' sign was misleading for some of the 'closed' days. It might be an idea to have a space where dates and times can be added by the artist for 'passing' traffic. There needs to be an effort for 'art trail' people to try and open on similar days to maximise on destination travellers. Visitors came to Northiam from as far as Dartford, Medway and Worthing. The PR and Marketing we did as a group paid off and my personal experience – as a first timer - surpassed expectation.

Area N – Cranbrook: Felicity Flutter

We live in a world where people lead very full busy lives, so I was not surprised to hear that in some places visitor numbers were down this year, but some reported their best sales ever, while one artist had a TOTAL of 5 visitors despite being on a trail map.

Regular visitors to SEOS appear to concentrate on a different area each year. We had a number of visitors from abroad!

Experienced SEOS artists with two or more at a venue were happy with their events and did better than new artists.

Two new groups, one in Mayfield and one in Crowborough were disappointed with visitor numbers. One artist from the latter group sent a very critical email - Assumed Crowborough would be listed under Tunbridge Wells. "The stopping of one year did plenty damage in my view. The marketing was lousy!!! The guide book should be available printed much earlier. The guides were not dealt with professionally at all! It was full of mistakes even though we related the information to Jamie and Terry well in advance and we spoke about it before it was in the guides."

Lots of praise for Victoria and her social media posts.

The usual complaint - Very expensive for a group to exhibit. "Don't like the logo at all - looks like children's 'art attack' programme"

Area O – Tunbridge Wells: Maria Turner

I did hold a post SEOS meeting with only 7 of us there, although I did receive some email feedback also. So please note that the comments made are from only a representative voice, not everyone.

Publicity

Online brochure good though particular individuals unhappy with geographical location put under. I emphasised need for submission of some up-to-date studio shots to all.

Whilst social media efforts appreciated, there was strong criticism of the lack of artist name against imagery on Twitter etc. It was also thought that publicity should be filtered through earlier and the SEOS brand advertised as a whole more, through editorials and local radio. It was also mentioned that sponsorship could come from more commercial companies who may like to affiliate with the arts.

One particular artist came away from the meeting quite upset unfortunately. I think she felt, because the group was small, vocal and already knew each other, that the views expressed were going to be represented as the views of the whole of TW group, and she was confused by my role. I tried to assure her that I would feedback but emphasise these are the view of some only.

On visitors numbers, overall it seemed quiet. A few artists said that their visitors came from their own extra efforts, e.g., pvs, personal invitations etc.

I did not get a feel of overall sales to other years.

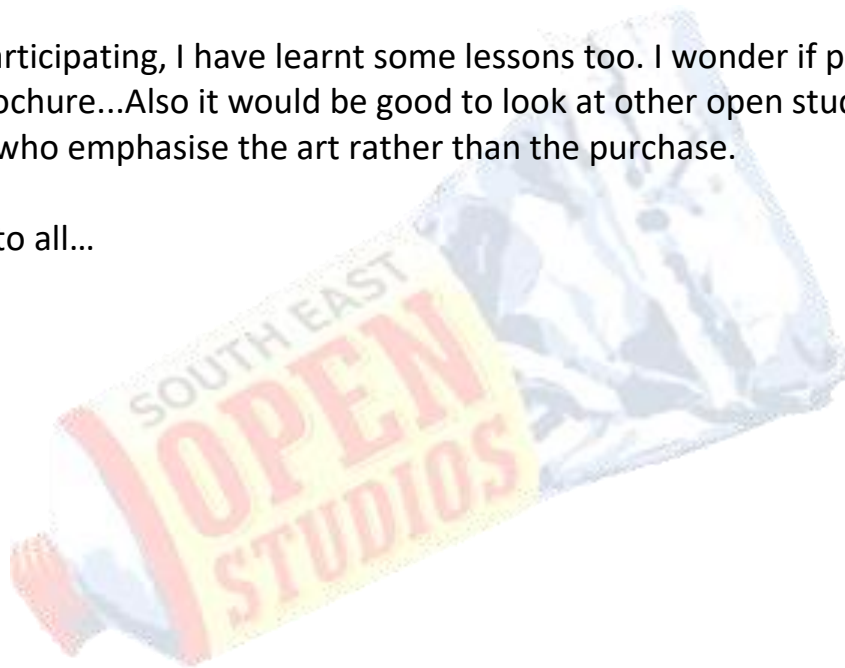
From my point of view, I feel artists do not look carefully enough at the webpage on the hints and tips for artists or use the social media links etc provided.

I came on board a bit late, so didn't have a meeting before things got going. This I think is really necessary just to direct artists on what extras they can do. Perhaps there could be an email sent out of the artists web page material.

Also, it would be really useful to split the area role so that one person could deal with area publicity and another distribution etc.

As an artist participating, I have learnt some lessons too. I wonder if prices should be left off the brochure...Also it would be good to look at other open studios in London and Brighton who emphasise the art rather than the purchase.

Thanks again to all...



4. Website Officer's Report

Following the year out required to assess the 2017 SEOS website, a new much simplified website has been produced. The organisation of the site now has a focus on two primary audiences, the participating artists and their visitors.

The hosting of the website currently resides with the original hosting company and uses the same wordpress based theme to build and present the site. It has had its support infrastructure updated in the form of the latest PHP and Wordpress.

For visitors, we have used a 3rd party plugin to manage the studio location map. The guide is also in a digital format hosted on the site. There are both navigable and unique page URL versions of the guide.

Local trail maps were incorporated by those studios who supplied them.

For artists we have a resources page which includes Downloads and Guidelines. These took the form of the SEOS rules, guidelines, hint and tips document. There were social media templates, signage and other graphics, versions of the SEOS logo, example trail leaflets and details on Insurance cover.

The committee also felt that there should be more social media engagement, so a 'Share with Friends' feature was added to allow all site visitors to share any page on their social media platforms.

Signing up was managed by Google's own forms, which takes away the responsibility from the SEOS host server.

Moving Forward

Although the site does not hold artist or visitor information, a suggestion for next year would be to make the website HTTPS compliant by purchasing an SSL certificate. The SSL certificate encrypts the site, providing a more secure connection. It also overcomes the 'This site is not secure' message found when using the Google Chrome or some other browsers.

Mark Welland, Website Officer

5. Publicity Officer's Report

Marketing Summary Report

With no marketing budget to follow, I simply continued with the Spirus list of places for advertising. It would be useful to have some sort of budget and, if possible a list of local papers and magazines (from the ACOs perhaps) of each area.

Press Releases and Adverts

1. By liaising with SEOS committee members, the 2019 Press Release was created.
2. To create short editorial excerpts ranging from 50 words, 150, 200 words, 300 and 700 words to appear with adverts/online.
3. We negotiated and booked a number of paid for advertisements and advertorial – outlined below.
4. Some sites also included free listings.

Paid for Advertising

1. To liaise directly with the publications, supply the adverts and copy as required prior to deadlines:

Publication	Advert Details	When	Cost + Vat
Tunbridge Wells Lifestyle Mag	1/4 page vertical: 110mm deep x 74mm wide. 1 will also include free listings in the What's On pages for the event. 2 months full colour advertising.	Apr/May edition with listings in same edition	110.00
Wealden Advertiser	Front Cover: 2 column x 6cm - 98mm and What's On: 1 col: w47mm x h70mm Advertorial: 300 words and images. Paid for ¼ page & got ½ page	June edition May edition	250.00 59.85 205.00
Wealden Times	1/4 Page colour: W90mm x H130mm.	June Edition, distributed 31st May	160.00
Kent Online News	No reply to email		
Index Magazine Twells (WKent)	1/8 Page 91mm wide x 63mm high.	June	140.00
Index Magazine Twells (Kent)	What's on entry - 50 words provided.	June	25.00

Index Magazine Canterbury	1/8 Page 91mm wide x 63mm high.	June	120.00
Index Magazine Canterbury	What's On entry - 50 words provided.	June	25.00
Aspect Country Lifestyle Mag	Full page advertorial and a 1/4 Page colour: W92mm x H133mm + online.	May (for June)	225.00
Inside Kent	1/4 Page 91mm w x 133mm high. Free listings in June.	May	110.00
Inside Sussex (now online)	Victoria took care of this		
Kent Life Magazine	1/4 portrait 133 high x 93 wide.	May (for June)	180.00
Magnet Magazine (music)	Committee decided this was not for us		
Verve Lifestyle Magazine	No reply to email or phone		
What's On	No reply to email		
Kent Online News	No reply		
INGENUE Arts Mag & Web	1/4 Page colour + 200 word Art Trail feature. Mag: 1/4 page W108mm x H73mm. Editorial of 200 words and a couple of high res images for the editorial element.	Spring Issue. Art Trails, Open Studios feature	110.00
Kino Digital Cinema	Felicity Flutter deals with this one.		
West Kent, East Kent, Surrey Women's Institute Mag	1/8 Size advert is 65mm high x 90mm wide £65+vat. If we book x2 adverts, one in each magazine, we could get a 5% discount on a pre-payment invoice. Included in W&E Kent 'Days Out' feature.	May for June	100.00 100.00 100.00
National WI mag	Not for us – too huge a range to be useful		
Sussex Living	'Spotlight' advertorial 3 pics + 100words	May	100.00

SAOS	Swapped ads – W34mmxH99mm		
Art in June	Swapped ads – W128mm x H92mm		

Thoughts and Ideas for 2019

New images for next year would be good!

The more targeted press releases can be, the more likely they are to be published. As I said at the start, more LOCAL magazine contacts would be very useful, as well as the county-wide magazines and papers.

Elitta Fell



6. Guide Adverts Officer's Report

We couldn't find anyone to fill this role so being Guide Editor it was sensible I took it on but I'm hopeful we can fill this position next year as the busiest time for this role coincides with the busiest time for the Guide Editor.

Because of this I couldn't devote as much time as I would have liked. I got a list of around 100 possible advertisers - some who have taken space before, from Sue Taylor Lowen who did the Guide Advertising role in 2017. In early January I emailed them all with details and prices and waited for the rush of keen advertisers. By early February I had about 4. With the deadline of 14th February fast approaching I had to do something different. I went back through the last two or three years of guide and found phone numbers of advertisers and called them. This was much more successful. Most were very positive about us and many booked space. By the cut off date I had 14 advertisers, a similar amount to 2017 although a long way short of the 30 or so we have had in the past.

If a bit more time was devoted to this and perhaps advertisers other than those connected with the art world were explored, I'm sure we could increase the numbers. I would suggest that next year we get the ACOs involved. Each one could be asked to supply a list of at least 10 possible advertisers in their area and it would only take one in each area booking space to bring us back up to around 30.

I look forward to handing this over to someone else for 2020.

Terry Ayling

7. Guide Editor Report

This year's guide went together fairly smoothly although it required more work than previously. The reason for this is that it wasn't possible to extract some of the necessary information from the new website automatically. This meant that more time had to be spent on each artist entry before it was ready for print. I'm hopeful that we can streamline some of this before next year's event.

One of the lists I used to be able to extract from the website was an 'Index by Medium'. It was not possible this year and it would be good to know this was noticed or if visitors complained it wasn't there. If so we can look at bringing it back next year.

One thing you may have noticed is that a number of the pictures in the guide of artists at work and visitors browsing had already been used in previous guides. I had very few new pictures to use from 2017 so had to go back to ones I had used before. If any of you here have pictures from this year please send them to us or if you are an ACO can you put out a call for pictures from your artists. It would be good to have a fresh set of images to use for 2020.

Lavenham Press printed the guide again this year and did a good job. They are very easy to work with and cheaper than any other printer. Having our guide printed in Suffolk seems a bit wrong but I can't find a printer in Kent or East Sussex to compete with them. Principal Colour from Paddock Wood who have previously produced the guide, quoted it again this year and could print at a similar price to Lavenham but would have to send it out for binding which made them much more expensive. Lavenham can do it all in house.

At the AGM in 2017 I was asked by a couple of members if I had considered using Solopress to print the guide. Solopress are an online printing company who over the years I have used a lot for leaflets, flyers, letterheads and business cards. They are very good and their prices are competitive. At the beginning of the year I thought I should give them a go and I asked them to quote based on the 2017 guide. At the same time I asked Lavenham Press to quote again. Lavenham came in at around £9,500 which was about what I had expected. Solopress £17,400. Solopress, being a fast turn round printer specialising in leaflets, flyers etc. are not really interested in doing this type of work and I think they put in a high price so that if we had been silly enough to go with them they would have made a nice profit on the job.

Finally, considering that half the committee were new this year and the website was rebuilt, I think the whole event went pretty well. I look forward to 2020.

Terry Ayling

8. Guide Distribution Report

This year's guide distribution went well as in previous years. The guides were delivered in one lorry load which worked a treat and with the help of my parent the guides were neatly packed in the double garage. This year we had 29,000 guides printed. In addition to the usual posters, arrows, car stickers etc we had leaflets from Kent Adult Education that made good bookmarks in the guide. I would like it to be minuted that we as SEOS extend a big thank you to my parents for the help lifting and shifting the guides.

Charlotte Landman, Guide Distribution Officer



9. Social Media Report

The social media role has completely changed since I initially took it on as a challenge to myself. I have learned so much. Even since last year the social media machine has grown significantly and continues to do so, from posting every few days to several posts a day, working within the various algorithms. It is no longer possible for one person to undertake this huge role.

In some ways it has been much easier as I have had more content. This year I had access to the dropbox with every artist's image. Faced with the daunting task of how to share each artist impartially, keep the feeds interesting and varied, manage to post every day and manage such a huge task, I devised a cunning plan.

I decided to concentrate on creating a varied and highly visual Instagram feed by sharing each artist individually with name and hashtags. This was a huge task as I don't know individual artists work so I had to match up names from the dropbox, not alphabetical with my printed list. I wanted to make sure that every artist had a moment at a key time on this superbly visual platform. All 213 artists were shared.

I also put every artist onto twitter and Facebook in batches of four, trying to make the batches look enticing, with the artists named on Facebook. I also did separate general posts with Mark's template, (a Facebook banner and Instagram template were available on the website) plus posts offering half price entry and a signed copy of Carole Robson's book *Expressive Landscapes*. Neither were interacted with so the prizes were not won.

Each artist had the opportunity to have an interview on Facebook and thank you to all those artists who sent me back interesting copy. It is really essential that social media constantly has copy to use. This piques the interest of our visitors and hopefully will send people your way. I have had a lot of good feedback from visitors and other organisations on our interesting feed and how much they have enjoyed seeing glimpses of other work, not in the guide ,in progress or peeks into studios. A big thank you to all of the artists who maintain their own platforms, especially Instagram as it has given me loads to repost. Do continue to interact by using #seos with news of your upcoming exhibitions, accolades or just new work that you are excited about especially if you are joining us next year. My job is made a lot easier if I have something to shout about!

I used planoly and tweetdeck to set up my posts and scheduled before the event, 60 posts on Facebook, 45 on Instagram and about the same on Instagram. I then tried to check the feeds every day for messages, interaction from artists and also interacting with other pages. There is still so much more to be done. The role is constant, requiring interaction every day and it is not always possible, especially

with a full time job to keep ahead, noticing messages or things that have been tagged whilst I have been otherwise engaged so thank you for your patience. Your notifications will not be immediately noticed due to this but also sometimes because there is a queue of posts from other artists waiting to go out. We have to be careful to obey the rules of these platforms and not flood post. So if you want something shared that day try to post to your feed a good few hours before or even the day before.

I decided to do some promotion posts using the online guide, photos of artists at work and three videos with work from Tim Harker, Anna Thompson and Mark Welland. Videos seemed to go down particularly well with Mark's video reaching 6846 people. There were 5 Facebook (plus Instagram) posts and 7 Instagram boosts at a total cost of £170. The promotion was aimed at visitors in every area with an interest in any of the media listed in the guide e.g., painting, ceramics, glass etc.

I propose that the social media job is split into two roles and that two new committee members join us. I suggest that they devise a promotional package for the artists where artists get equal opportunity. It is important that we remain impartial but I did reward all of the artists who put work up on instagram by reposting it. I would encourage artists to set up an instagram page to use before and during the event. Most visitors report that they come because of three things, the image in the guide, there being than one artist and somewhere to park. If I choose one of my castles as my guide image people come for the castles but may not realise that I do jewellery. The fact that I share with Jamie means that people come with an interest in etchings which I also have up. My instagram page shows other examples of my work so that visitors can get more of an idea of my range.

I appreciate that some artists don't like social media. I do not use it personally at-all and you can set up a business page very easily. It is difficult to advertise artists separately " under the banner" without specific copy but also because you need to share everyone equally and not single any artist out.

I have tried hard to be as fair and impartial as possible and not be seen to recommend any specific individual. However it is important to have feayures for the feed so artists can help themselves by sending in photos/videos (you will be tagged) which can be used in promotions. You can also send a cohost request to Facebook for your event ie preview.

However having successfully built up our Instagram profile to over a 1000, 500 since June I would like to get someone else in with new fresh ideas to take over what I have started and use my extensive experience as an ACO and being on the committee to swap to being the ACO Officer. I will be available to advise and I really look forward to the ideas that they might have for next year. You will be informed of

these via the newsletter as well as social media. Each artist is on the newsletter list automatically when they apply with the email address on their submission (do check your spam boxes).

Thank you artists for your wonderful work. I really enjoyed seeing your photos! And in particular the videos taken!

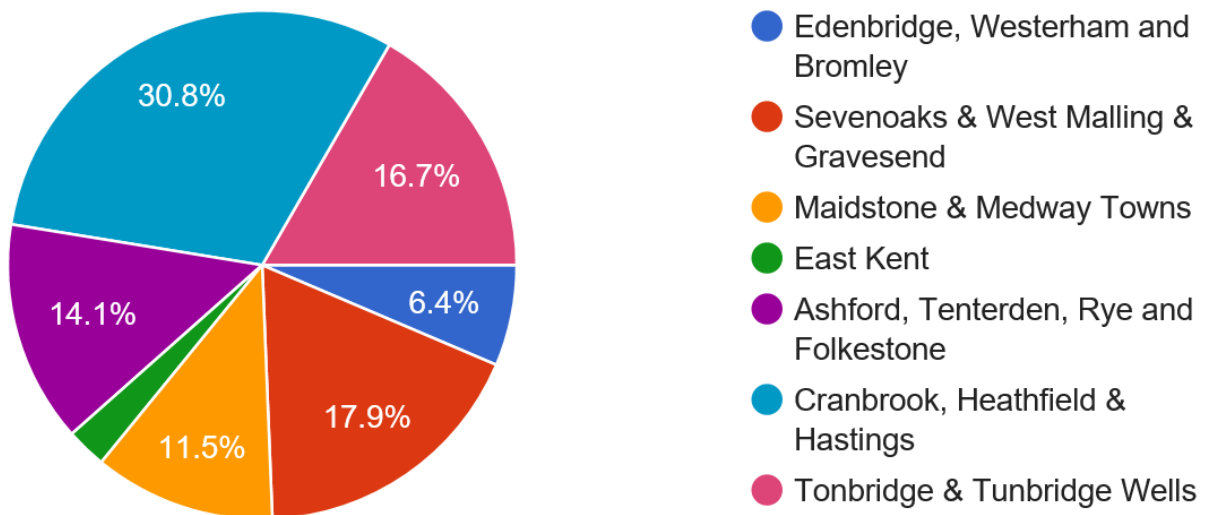
Victoria Wainwright, Social Media Officer



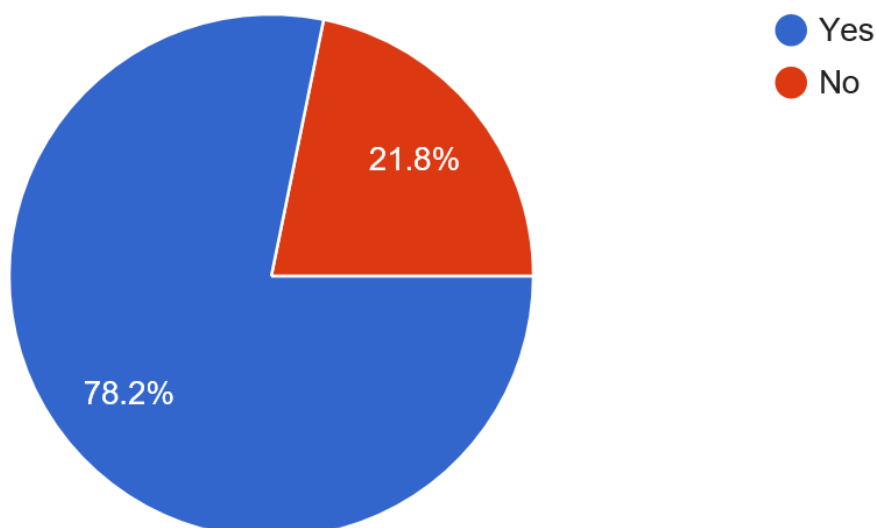
10. Evaluation Report

Evaluation of the event was online this year, and there has been a marked increase in participation in 2019, which is encouraging. In 2017 only 23% of participants fed back (60:264); this year 37.6% fed back (80:213). This could still be much improved.

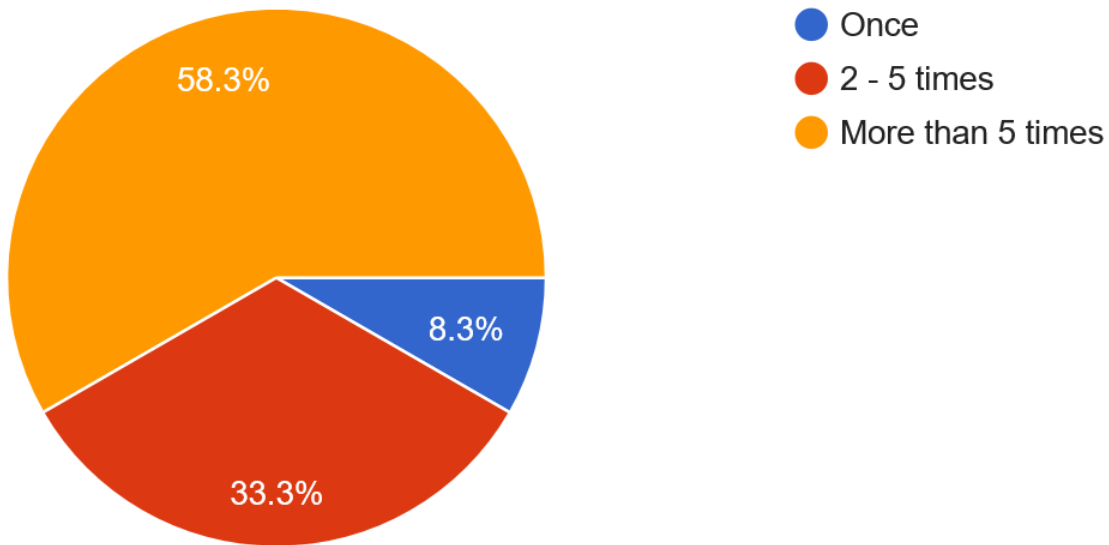
The feedback has been reproduced below:



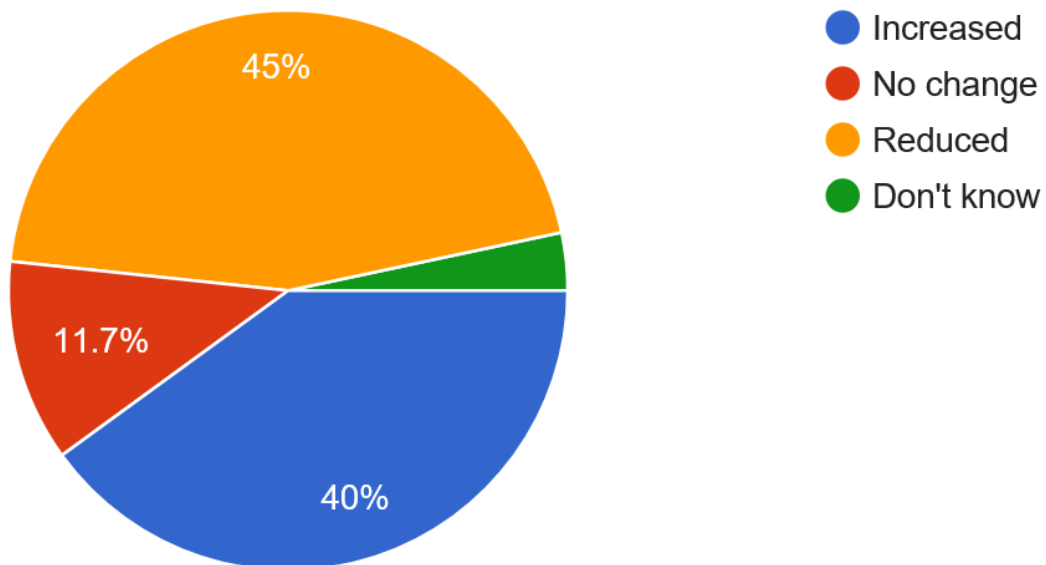
Participation by area



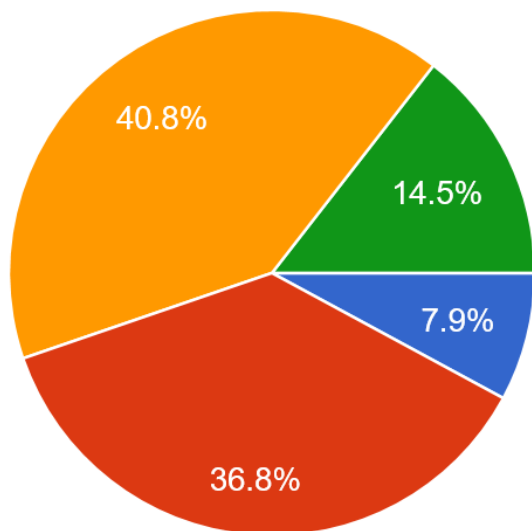
Previous members vs. **new**: if this pattern holds for the whole event, we had about 46 new members in 2019



How many times have you exhibited before? Most returning members have exhibited with SEOS on many occasions

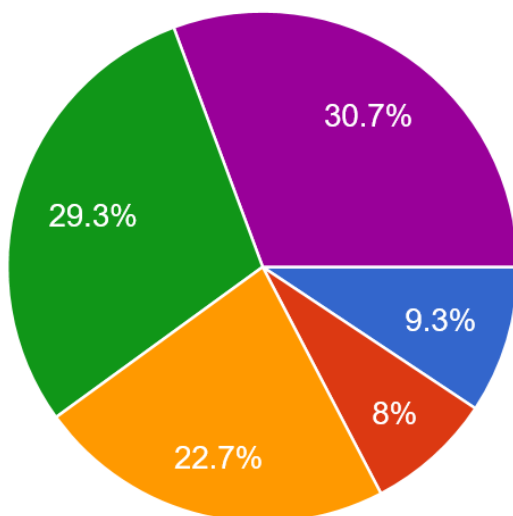


Visitor numbers: these have stayed the same or increased for over half the respondents. 40% say their visitor numbers increased



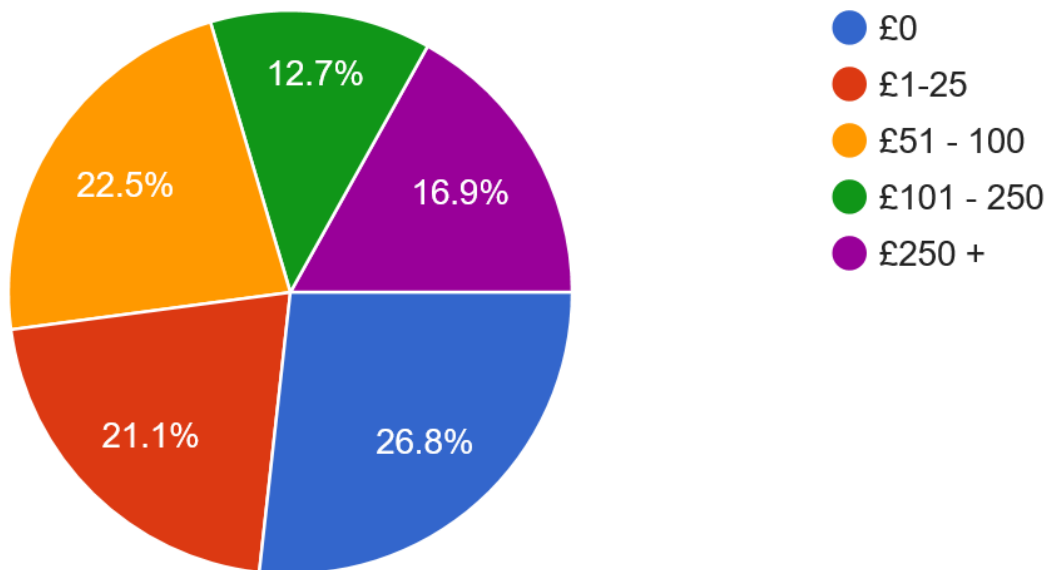
- I/we didn't have enough guides
- I/we had the right number of guides for the studio
- 1-10 guides were left over
- 11-50 guides were left over
- More than 50 guides were left over

Number of guides: although only 7.9% of respondents said they didn't have enough guides, comments suggest that more guides in 2020 are needed

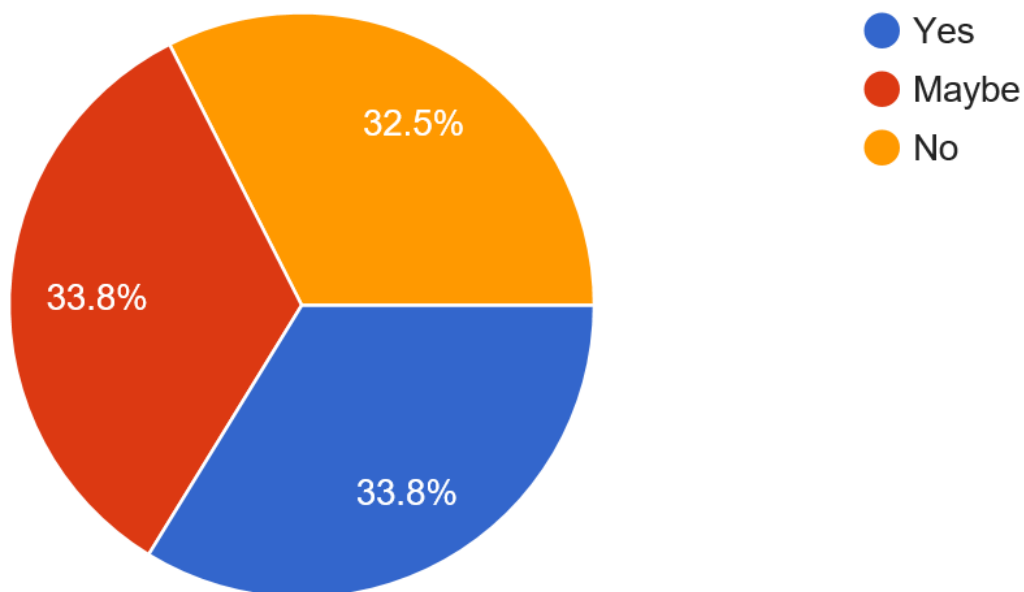


- £0
- £1-125
- £126 - 500
- £501 - 1000
- £1001 +

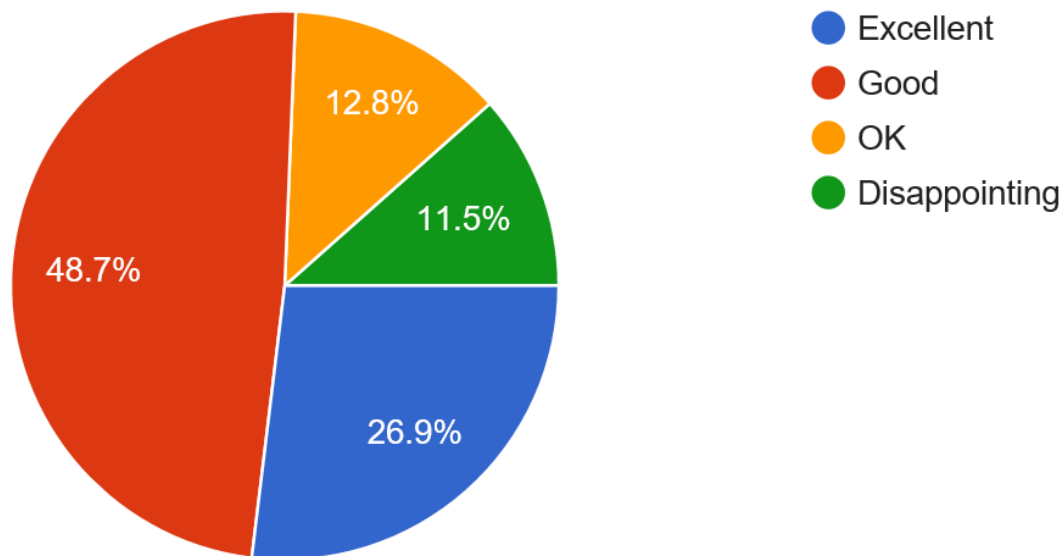
Art sales over the whole event



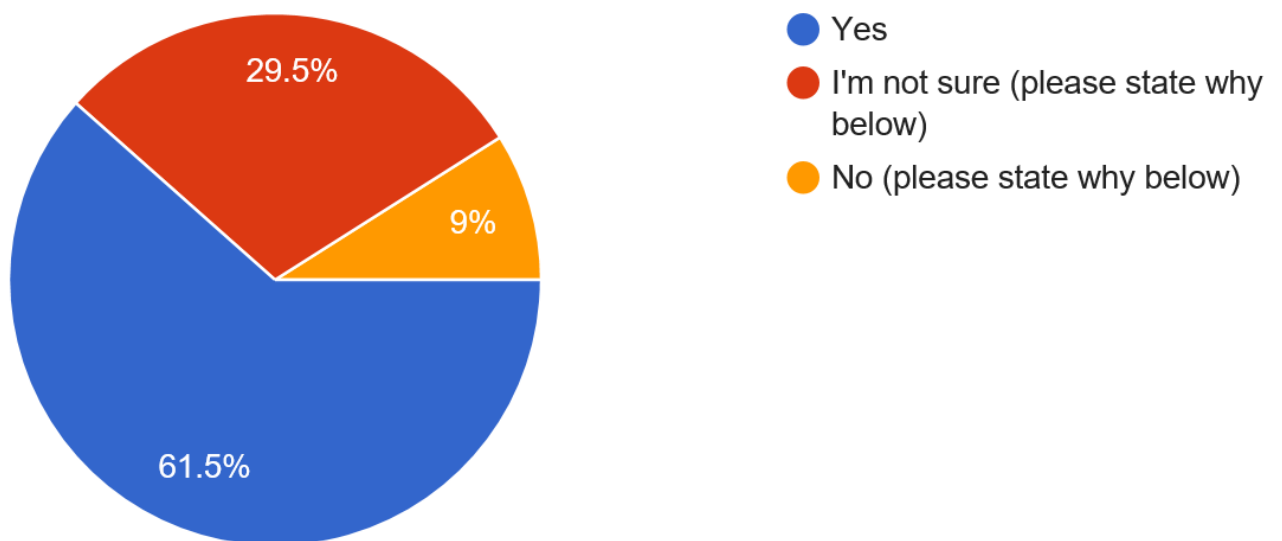
Other sales over the whole event



Have future opportunities come from participating in SEOS 2019?



Overall experience of participating in SEOS 2019: 75% feel it was Good or Excellent



Would you participate in SEOS 2020?

Here are some of the responses to this question:

- This was our best SEOS year yet but do keep joining fees as keen as possible as not everybody sells and for those artists the outlay is high.
- Thanks to the SEOS team for all your hard work!

- I think it would help to be able to share space but I am under the impression that SEOS does not allow people to exhibit together unless they work together.
- Only 5 visitors came because of the SEOS guide/website! Even though I distributed almost 200 guides between Mayfield and Heathfield, put up lots of posters locally and posted regularly about it on Facebook and Instagram. My other 50 visitors were from my own mailing list and came specifically because of that.
- I would like to thank my SEOS ACO J&M for all her help before the event.
- Consider incentives for visitors to visit more studios.
- Thinking about logistics.
- We found our hours (10 - 5) too long, so next time we would probably make it 10 - 4.
- I think with hindsight it is better to open at the beginning of Open Studios rather than the last 4 days but having said that I had twice as many people visit but that was due to sharing my home with a textile artist who has a following. Well done and look forward to next year.
- I loved every minute of it
- Thanks to all on the committee for their dedication to getting SEOS up and running again.
- I noted that not many studios were actually opened. It was more artists sharing gallery space. I feel it's wrongly named and should be called 'Open Gallery'.
- I changed venues this year and the number of visitors for me had increased, however the venues numbers were down slightly. I'm not sure if I will take part next year as the cost is high compared to the amount of profit I make and it isn't financially worth my while although I do enjoy it.
- There are no longer enough studios registered for SEOS in this area for people to want to visit. It's also too expensive to register to make it worthwhile. Too many catalogues produced - I was bombarded with an excess to distribute.
- Interestingly, the wet weather days led to our highest visitor numbers, it didn't put them off.

- Main visitors are friends and family and I consider it appropriate to only exhibit every two to three years.
- I think that I need to do less days and maybe offer demonstrations of my crafts.
- All good encouragement to tidy up and present work and get to know like minds locally.
- I would like to do it again if finances allow - it is quite difficult to plan 6 months ahead as to opening days/time etc.
- I hope to be back next year, if personal circumstances allow it! Thank you to all at "HQ" for organising the show!
- Thank you for all the support.
- Despite lower numbers than 2017, I had an enjoyable 3 weekends - it was well worth the effort.
- When I am on the outskirts and isolated from a trail, I am not sure I can generate enough marketing.. other artists need to take part near by so it makes it worth while people travelling. i think missing a year lost some people local to me. I would like the focus to be on open studio, not open gallery... I want to keep it at my house so I can get on with things when no-one is visiting. I need to re-evaluate.
- Too many of my visitors were friends. Not many unknown people came to buy.
- A big thank you to Flick (my ACO) and Victoria, that were so helpful with our road closure problem on the last weekend. Helped made the best of a tricky situation.
- I think my work is too expensive and too big for most people's homes and it's not what people expect when they come to Open Studio. But I did think it was good value for money and I have not ruled out next year.
- Many thanks to the SEOS team and all the hard work you put into organising it!
- Will offer fewer days next time but will try to publicise demos more.

- I was the only member in the south east of our big area and so without others close by I felt I was out on a limb and it wasn't easy for people to make up a group visit.
- The guide was excellent as usual. Most visitors came because of the guide.
- It's very difficult in isolated areas to get visitors even with an additional personal cost of publicity (£400.00) in Community Magazines, postcards, Posters etc. I covered my costs, but had to do a lots of publicity and hard selling. I even offered 10% off work, if visitors brought one of my postcards from several specific sites. As an ACO I find recruitment very difficult in East Kent - I think because of more local 'Open House' events that are very much cheaper and achieve as many visitor numbers, people can't afford to enter for both events.
- Like to personal skip a year but believe SEOS can only remain a success if it is an annual event.
- Unless I can link with a larger group of local artists I do not think it is viable. I am already in discussion with an artist friend to find a shared exhibition space and a small group of us to staff it etc.
- People have commented they prefer to visit a venue where more than one artist is exhibiting. Wondering if there are any public venues that artists could share?
- I need more new work.

