

THE SEWARD JOHNSON ATELIER

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE YOUR EXHIBITION

I. Photo Contest

This is a great event that has been very enthusiastically received in many sites as a way to encourage lots of community involvement with the exhibit. Get some local businesses to contribute prizes (an inexpensive camera from a photo shop, a dinner at a local restaurant, a night at a hotel). It is usually pretty easy to get them on board for this for the inherent publicity. Then announce via local TV, radio, posters, and newspapers the news of the contest. Applications can be picked up around town at businesses, or perhaps the newspaper will print them for you on the living/style section pages along with your walking tour map.

Participants are asked to take photos, the only constant being that the sculptures be the subject (or part of); anything from artistic lighting at sunrise to the family dog posing. Entries are submitted to a “committee” (you, your art committee, local artists and photographers, whomever). The “show” of photos can be mounted in a visible lobby of a bank or other public access building drawing in all the participants to see their competition and having the prize winning top three entries presented with their awards at an opening. (Another fun and positive press event.

This contest also encourages talk around town about the show and is incentive for people to see each and every sculpture to find the best spot to shoot their prize photo.

Please note that The Seward Johnson Atelier may also be able to provide a Seward Johnson sculpture book or miniature to use as prizes. Please call the office at 310-264-2400 for more information.

2. Scavenger Hunt

Again, what you are aiming for is community involvement. Everyone loves a hunt and some prizes. Also, the hunt could be a more child-based and family event and the photo contest a bit more for the adults. Either way, the hunt would consist of a list of small details found on the sculptures that people have to locate, or clues that force them to solve mysteries. For example, a simple one might be to find the band-aid (located on the arm of the Frisbee-playing boy), or which sculpture’s watch reads 8 PM. Similarly, you could do a more complicated type of clue based game with riddles to solve involving details from the sculptures.

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Curatorial Office 2525 Michigan Avenue Suite A-6, Santa Monica, CA 90404 | t 310 264 2400 f 310 264 2403

info@sewardjohnsonatelier.org | www.sewardjohnsonatelier.org

This gives you yet another reason for the media to cover the exhibit (another good news story to balance out the daily crime toll). And another way to get those families out looking at each piece.

You may also wish to involve the local schools or clubs with either of these projects! Ask us about our children's activity books. There is a printing cost for these, but we are happy to share our designs of games and prompts.

3. Plein Air Art Event

A plein air art event can be a fun way to involve local artists in the sculpture exhibition. Participants can station themselves around the city and create paintings, drawings, pastels, etc. of the town. Like the photo contest, these artworks could feature the sculptures in the town environment. The art may also be exhibited afterwards in a public access building. (Note that artwork featuring the sculptures does involve copyright permissions for commercial use or sale.)

4. Walking Tour Map

A nice way to make the show appear most cohesive and to encourage everyone visit all the pieces. We would suggest you have the map made by an artist and to include some fun graphics for your various garden areas.

5. Press Strategy - print and TV

The main thing to think about for press is that your releases and efforts should circle around Lifestyle and Features. It would be disastrous to have the press releases mistakenly funneled off to the art critic for the paper/TV station. This exhibit is a people event - an interactive event - a natural photo opportunity and should be exploited as such. Sometimes when media see the words "art" and "sculpture" they narrowly think of a little article like a gallery review. You must make every effort to avoid this by making your mailings to them very visual and very Lifestyle/Fun/Family/Community oriented.

We have written many press releases and can send you some samples, in addition to all the photos that you will need. You will want to promote the installation day(s) as one press possibility and the unveiling/opening as a second. The arrival and placement of the works (Press release titled such as "Look Who's Coming To ..." - something catchy and light hearted) - is a wonderful evening news piece. The sculptures are picked up and clutched in odd and comical ways with hands and legs askew. They fly in the air with the forklift. Passersby have comments - no one can believe their eyes. It is a perfect ending to the news show: very upbeat and easy for that anchor to anchor banter.

The opening event (whichever type you plan: family mid-day to black tie evening) should be covered separately and announced to the press separately. Evening events are usually social affairs, and there are certain correspondents for this. The family day events are good for newspapers, TV news, as well as AP and other wire services. Lots of times something from a city gets spread far and wide by the wire services simply because it is a captivating photo.

Later on you should encourage odd little media things such as having the weather done on site near one of the sculptures (examples of tie ins: a rainy day - one of the figures with umbrella hoisted and soggy weatherman underneath -- sunny day with weatherman standing by kids with kite).

Also, don't forget that the good-bye of the show is another happening that should be formally announced to the press and given weight as an event. People will be used to seeing the works around town and will want to know about their departure.

6. Opening Event

We would be happy to discuss what you think would be the most appropriate type of event for your opening. Some places feel that a family day (balloons, music, etc.) is best, others wish to do very fancy black tie evening event with VIPs from the arts, government and politics. Stamford's Mayor declared the opening day "Seward Johnson Day" in a proclamation and made that into a press event unto itself. If you have the support of the various city state houses, that is a good idea.

Nashville once created an evening event tied into a museum charity. The host was a prominent collector who had planned to purchase one of Seward Johnson's works for their building. Before the works were spread around town the collector, a developer, hosted an elegant event with all of the sculptures in a lobby. Beside each sculpture of Seward's was a glass fishbowl and during the evening guests put in checks and cash contributions into the bowl beside the sculpture that they wanted to stay in town. At the end, all of the contribution funds went to the museum charity, but the voting by cash dictated to the host developers, which sculpture to buy for their site. Everyone was delighted with the outcome, and the event itself was a huge success. As the champagne flowed and the evening wore on, the fun competition between the attendees really brought up the dollar amount for the charity totals.

7. Brochure/catalogue

You may have seen the Stamford brochure, the Collection catalogue, and we have a few others that we can also share with you. As you might imagine there are myriad ways to go from a single sheet map to a full color booklet. We have photos and digital images as well as biographic materials that you can use for making whatever your budget and timing allows. Just let us know. Also, as Mr. Johnson's image as an artist is always important to us, we do require that you send us mock-ups of your designs for anything going out: advertisements, announcements, invitations, calendar listings, press releases,

etc., so that we can fact check them, make comments, and sign off on the image use permits before the piece goes out.

8. Installation Instructions

Just to give you a sense of what happens the day of installation, here is the scoop: You will want to have about six men and either a back-hoe or forklift to assist with moving the sculptures into their specific locations. Our shipping company is contracted to load up the works at the artist's studio, and to unload them (with a lift-gate truck) at a central site for the show. You can simply have them unloaded in a parking lot, to make it easy. The sculptures come completely assembled on their benches or circular steel discs. They simply get plunked into place. They are, however, quite heavy. That is why the forklift or mini-crane is an ideal tool and will make your life easier all around.

Special Events for Particular Sculptures

1. "Forever Marilyn"

If "Forever Marilyn" is on display in your town a great event to host is a "Marilyn Monroe Look-Alike Contest." The event can be hosted in a small theater, auditorium, or town square. We suggest using a local DJ or comedian as the MC to the event and to gather a panel of judges (with a sense of humor) who are well known in the city (politicians, business owners, etc.) Prizes can be awarded to the best look-alike or best impersonator.

2. "Embracing Peace"

"Embracing Peace" was inspired by a photograph taken on VJ Day at the end of WWII. A touching event to host is a VJ Day celebration. You can gather WWII veterans in your town and host a dedication to them. Have them share their memories of "where were you" on VJ Day. Also renewal of vows at the sculpture is a wonderful event.