

San Francisco Open Studios: artists at work

Jesse Hamlin, Delfin Vigil

Sunday, October 12, 2008

It began in 1975 with a bunch of San Francisco artists who were hungry to show their work and connect with a wider community. Not affiliated with galleries, they opened their South of Market studios one October weekend, inviting the public to peruse the art in its place of origin and talk with the people who made it.



Frederic Larson / The Chronicle

The idea caught on big. San Francisco Open Studios - the country's oldest and biggest art event of its kind - mushroomed into a citywide scene spanning five weekends and bringing 60,000 people into the studios of more than 800 artists. Put on by the nonprofit arts advocacy group ArtSpan, the tour provides a way to see a huge array of work - installation art and Abstract Expressionist painting, sculpture, drawings, prints, textiles, ceramics, jewelry and photography - in a convivial setting removed from the more rarefied air of the gallery. The event is free, but much of the artwork is for sale. Last year, Open Studios artists collectively raked in \$1.7 million.

The festivities, which began last weekend with a preview exhibition at SomArts and went full throttle on Saturday, continues from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. today, Weekend No. 2, when artists in a dozen neighborhoods - from Diamond Heights to the Marina, Pacific Heights and the Richmond and Sunset districts - open their doors.

PHILIPPE JESTIN, Weekend No. 2 (today)

Age: 44.

Hometown: Paris (Billancourt), France.

Education: University of Paris-Sorbonne, degree in *arts plastiques*.

Discipline: Mixed media, plasticity, sculpture.

Open Studios gallery: 646 Laguna St.

About the artist: Represented by Hang Art gallery in San Francisco, Jestin learned long ago that one of biggest mysteries about art can be not knowing what materials may be used on the next project. "The idea is to always allow the materials to give me the direction as to what I can do with my art," says the artist, who recently became a U.S. citizen. Don't be surprised to find Jestin at a thrift store, hardware store or scrap yard in search of anything from discarded pieces of wood, furniture, old photographs or newspaper clippings to inspire his next piece. One thing that is consistent is his work ethic. "When I decide to engage in a project, I will always give it my best shot so that I can feel good about it," he says. "And when I feel good, life is art." See his work at <http://www.philippejestin.com/>.

Artist's statement: "In my practice, I thrive on creating works where the process is not evident to the viewer. This often produces some interesting conversations with visitors to my studio. The result is hopefully a work with very little traces of my intervention. I like it to look effortless, even though a lot of hours of work went into it. This may be a metaphor for life itself, as it is often not an easy task to keep it simple. It takes work and dedication to achieve simplicity.

By the way: Jestin practices and teaches meditation techniques at Psychic Horizons in San Francisco. "It is a big part of my life, and it has helped me to keep it simple and hopefully does the same to those I teach," he says.

- Delfin Vigil

OPEN STUDIOS: The 2008 ArtSpan event runs from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. today and weekends through Nov. 2 in San Francisco. (415) 861-9838. For a complete schedule and locations, go to <http://www.artspan.org/>.

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This article appeared on page N - 18 of the San Francisco Chronicle