

How To Make and Use An 11 x 17 Sign for the Backroads of Sonoma County

(Please note: 11" x 17" signs are not to be used on Highways 1, 12, 116 or 101. Those highways are under Caltrans jurisdiction. Please follow the instructions for AATS Coordinated Group signs for signs that are placed on Highway 1, 12 116 or 101.)

For rural roads, John Chambers uses 11" x 17" road signs to guide travelers to his studio. Following are instructions in case other artists wish to try his simple and flexible technique for signing.

John lives in a rural area of twisting roads where visitors usually get lost. He has found that by reaching out two or three miles along main approaches and part way to neighboring studios, he can funnel visitors directly to his studio without confusion, where they arrive in an eased and receptive frame of mind to see his work. He places signs at every intersection, sometimes more than one so they will not be missed. 11 x 17 is big enough to be seen from a moving car. Sometimes a confirming "straight ahead" sign is good when drivers might be growing nervous during a long stretch without turns. Of course, in a more rationalized landscape, you might need just a few. And they can be used in concert with our big colored placards.

The signs are glued in advance to 11 x 17 pieces of cardboard or foamcore, using rubber cement. They can hold together through two weekends, then can be stripped to be used again next year. On Saturday morning, John goes out between 7 and 9 inking and mounting signs as needed along his standard route, without much pre-planning. (A few too far away go up the night before.) Numbers and arrows are inked quickly with over-size marking pens, usually in contrasting colors. It is a quick process. In fact, there's time to throw in a sign or two for somebody else's studio, if the route isn't clear.

The signs are installed with one-inch hex-headed roofing screws, with washers attached (available at Friedman Bros. or Sebastopol Hardware), two per sign, using a battery-powered screw gun. Or the signs -can be hung on perforated metal stop- sign shafts with the right quarter-inch bolt and a wing nut. John also carries some 3- and 4-foot stakes and a hammer in case there's no pole or post convenient.

On Sunday evening after visitors have left, John scoots around taking all signs down, quick and easy with the screw gm. It preserves them from dew or vandalizing and they are not needed during the intervening week. Often he writes a note on the signs so they can go up in the same place the second weekend. Removing up to 40 signs takes only 1-1/2- hours.

The process is simple and effective. It gets a big outreach job accomplished with low cost materials and minimal impact on the neighborhood. Maybe you can adapt these suggestions to your needs.