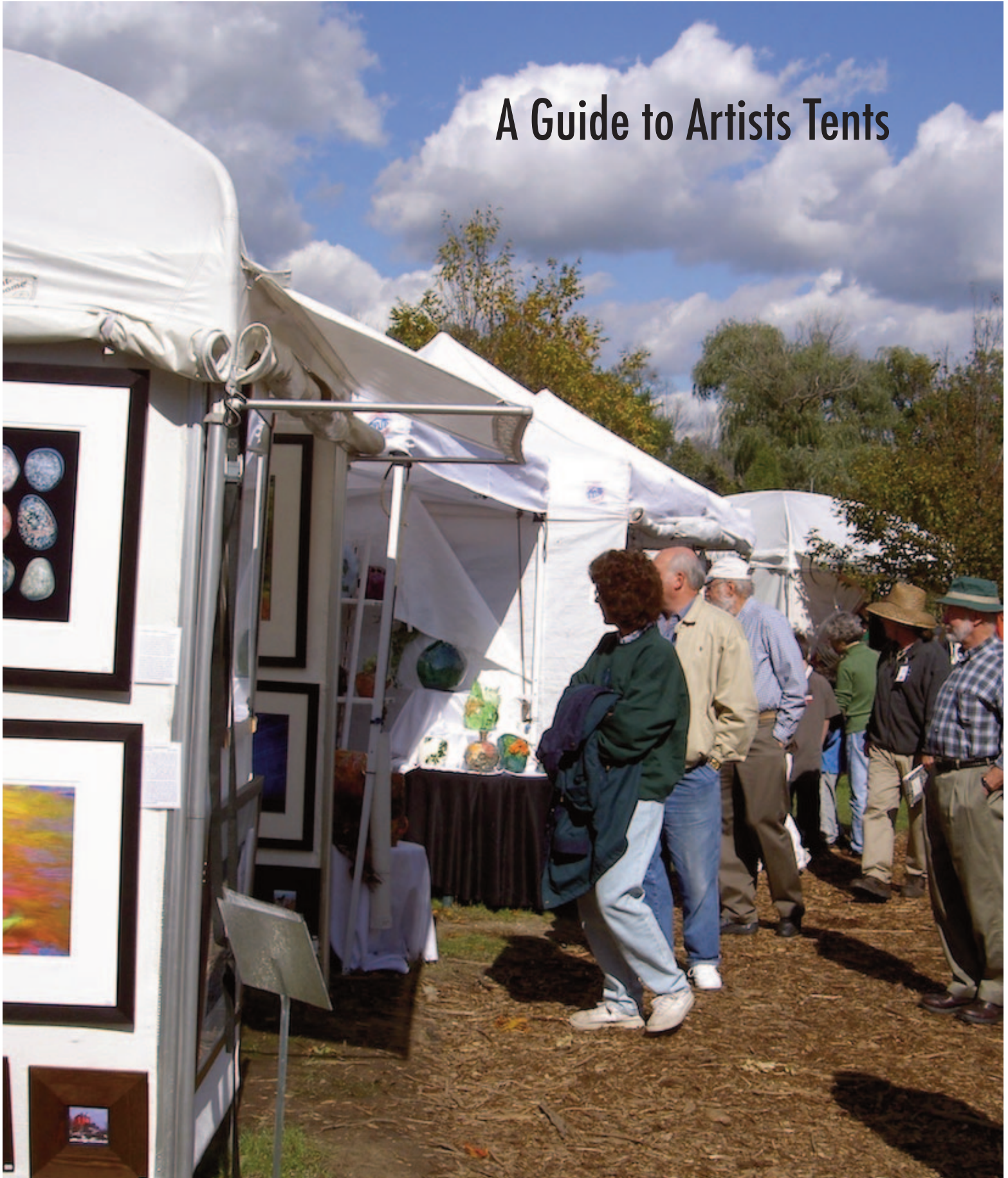


A Guide to Artists Tents



Suggestions from Integrity Shows, art fair consultants and producers of Detroit area Art Fairs. **Integrityshows.com**

We have a limited number of tents available to rent at our events only. Some basic pop-ups (\$100) and one each of the four primary artist tent types (\$175), to allow you to try them before you buy them. All come with weather walls for closing up at night. These cannot be used for hanging. The artist tents include two mesh hanging walls. (See our brochure on hanging systems for information.)

Choosing A Tent

Buying an art fair tent is a major commitment. Tents and accessories can easily cost \$1500. Part of the tent selection is determining what type of display system you will be using. Display systems work best in specialized artists tents (they are designed to go together). Some systems can also work in a pop-up canopy but not all have a full 10' width.

There are four specialized artists canopies that are used by most art fair artists. In tent vernacular these would be called pole tents. They have numerous pieces that fit together and must be assembled each time you put up the tent.

The pop-up style has been looked down upon by artists because many people start out with party tents that are available for under \$100. These inevitably are damaged in stronger winds or rain. There are some very durable pop-ups that are designed to stand up to bad weather. Of course these are much more expensive approaching the cost of the professional tents.

Pop-Up Tents

Many events only allow plain white tents. The colors of your art will not show correctly with a color top. Buy a white tent.

Buy a durable tent. Expect to spend at least \$250. Make sure that it comes with side walls that attach and remove easily. Most tents will have some plastic parts as well as either steel or aluminum for the frame. Steel is heavier and stronger, but if you have a larger diameter leg of aluminum it's as strong or stronger than steel and lighter.

The best pop-up tents are aluminum with hexagonal legs (versus square). A good pop up can last just as long as the artists pole tents. We did not review as there are hundreds of pop-ups available.

Advantage- Build it once and it goes up and down very quickly.

Disadvantage- Display walls tend to not work as well. Most are not as durable.

Pole Tents

There are three companies that make tents specifically for artists. One of them makes two models. We purchased one each of the four styles, to compare them. (These are available to try and rent at our events).

Each company has a variety of sizes and extras, and each also makes add-ons that work with the other company's tents.

Regardless of which pole tent you get, we suggest bringing a tarp that is at least as large as the tent. We kept getting dirt in the poles as we assembled it in the grass.

Advantage- Less likely to be damaged and easy to replace parts. Looks professional.

Disadvantage- Needs to be built and disassembled every time you use it. Heaviers and takes more room in your vehicle

Reviews

TRIMLINE BY FLOURISH (flourishdisplays.com)

The first tent we unpacked was the Trimline. This is made by Flourish. Flourish makes mesh hanging walls which can easily be attached to their canopies. Their walls can also be ordered custom sized for other tents. This tent has many more pieces to assemble than any of the others. This makes it a bit more complicated, but allows it to fit into a smaller vehicle. You can also leave many sections connected if you have a longer vehicle.

The tent arrived in four boxes which was nice because each one was lighter. There are extensive instructions including diagrams. It took about 45 minutes for two of us to assemble the frame. Most parts are steel, with the upper barrel ribs being light weight plastic. Since we did not fully disassemble the tent it should take far less time in the future.

This tent is the only one that does not come with storage bags (they are available as extras). Instead it comes with bungees for strapping poles together. It does include a set of lower bars- which will help to keep the tent squared, which some have only as an add on.

ADVANTAGES

- Flexible. If you have a small vehicle this is likely the only one that will work for you. But you will need to completely disassemble every time.
- Stakes. This tent came with two different kinds of stakes. None of the others included any stakes or weights.
- Directions. This one had the best and easiest to follow instructions with drawing to make it simple.
- Mesh. The Trim line is designed to be used indoors without the top to hold the mesh panels.
- Heights. All of the tents have flexible heights. This one has 2" adjustments. Others are 4" increments.
- Trimline includes some of the most important extras such as ventilation and a ridge pole to hold up the top more securely. Others do not.

DISADVANTAGES

- More parts. First time you put it together will be a bit overwhelming. Leave many of the parts assembled to speed things up next time.
- Bags. There are none. Since there are a few different ways that you can break it down they don't include bags. Instead they sell a variety of bags on their site.



SHOW OFF BY SHOW OFF CANOPY (showoffcanopy.com)

The Show Off has half as many pieces as the Trim Line, It is Aluminum and has aluminum corners and barrel supports. They reduce the number of parts is by having pieces welded together. Instructions were adequate but did not have many diagrams. This one took 30 minutes to put together the first time. We like the two zippered bags that come with it for storage.

ADVANTAGES

- Many parts are welded together... fewer parts to lose.
- Aluminum is light weight and still felt durable.
- We like their bags the best of all the companies. We can't speak to the long term durability yet.
- Best web site. Easy to compare prices and order exactly what you need.

DISADVANTAGES

- May not fit into a small vehicle.
- The poles are not designed for ease of assembly. These were the most frustrating. There are some markings on the poles and we added more.
- No weights or stakes.
- The stabilizing bars are twice as expensive as on the other tents so we ended up skipping them. I may order a set later.



FINALE AND THE LITE DOME BY CREATIVE ENERGIES (lightdomecanopies.com)

Both of these tents are the same except the top. The Finale is barrel topped similarly to all the other artist tents. The Lite Dome has an "X" top like the pop-up canopies.

Assembly instructions were on a DVD and completely useless to us. There are written instructions on the web site but not in the package. These canopies have heavy duty plastic joints, which look large and clunky but very durable. The tent took over an hour to assemble (directions would have sped up the process). This one also seemed the hardest for someone to put up by themselves but the easiest for two people.

The other companies all have you assemble the tops and then use the legs to lift them. These tents you start from the bottom, connecting loose legs before building the top. Even with two of us it felt clumsy though I am sure we will get used to it.

ADVANTAGES

- The legs are labeled for ease of assembly.
- They show a great set of anchors on their web site... but they do not come with the tents. You need to order separately.
- The Lite Dome top may be the easiest one to put together (with two people).

DISADVANTAGES

- The lack of clear directions was problematic.
- These came with paper instead of plastic padding, which we liked, but paper was wrapped in plastic so it negated that and took longer to unwrap.
- You cannot order or find pricing on the web. It takes a phone call since there are so many options.
- The mesh bag for the sides and tops was not as nice as the zippered bag with the Show Off.
- We felt these were the hardest to put together without help (but the easiest with two people).
- The Lite Dome does not leave a possibility of upper venting like all the other tents.
- You cannot order or find pricing on the web. It takes a phone call since there are so many options.



LITE DOME



FINALE

SUMMARY

Which tent would we choose in the future if we are only ordering one kind? I'm not sure yet. I would eliminate the Finale as the most difficult to assemble barrel style tent. I like the Lite Dome for the simplicity of the top. Let's see how it works in action. The Trim Line seemed to be the most flexible and had many options. It was less expensive than others in the configuration we ordered but once we buy the packing bags, it will end up being comparable.

Here's a million dollar suggestion- expandable poles for trade show curtains have a ridge to keep the buttons facing the desired direction. It is a simple (may not be cheap) fix that would save 1/3 of the assemble time and much of the frustration.