

Make Your Own Artist Trading Cards

About Artist Trading Cards

Artist trading cards (ATCs) began in Switzerland. Zürich Artist M. Vänçi Stirnemann produced a 1996 exhibition based on the concept of collectible sports cards. He and Swiss artist Cat Schick promoted the making and trading of artist cards among art students, artists, and patrons.

The idea of artist trading cards traveled. In 1997 Don Mabie (aka Chuck Stake) held the first trading session at the New Gallery in Calgary, British Columbia.

Artist trading cards are also found in other Canadian cities, Australia, and some cities in the Lower Forty-Eight of the U.S.

Currently, most international activities surrounding the artist trading card centers on socializing and self-promotion, but it can also be a fine art format to be taken seriously.

Online, you can Google “artist trading card” for sites. Some sites offer trading as well.

Very Few Rules

While artist trading cards afford artists an endless selection of media and subject, there are a few rules that define what an artist trading card is:

- A. **It is always 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches**—no more, no less. You decide whether you want a vertical or horizontal format for each card. You can also make the card as thick as you wish, incorporating assemblage, carving, origami, etc.
- B. Any medium or mix of media is allowed, but works must be original and made by the artist signing the card.
- C. Editions are limited to 20 printed cards (I would suggest you limit editions to 5), and all cards should be labeled on the back, such as “1/5, 2/5, 3/5,” etc.
- D. You can designate a series if you wish, and number those as you would an edition. While an edition is a set of virtually identical cards, a series can be cards that have obvious differences or that share a theme.
- E. **The back of each card must have the following written:**
 - Title of work (optional)
 - Date** (month, day, and year, such as 12.23.2006)
 - Signature of the artist** (not just initials)
 - Country of origin** (I use “AK • USA”)
 - Edition numbers or series numbers**, if applicable.