

The Story of the Artist Trading Cards

By Susan Pickering Rothamel

ARTIST TRADING CARDS are original or limited edition, miniature works of art created very specifically in a 2 ½" X 3" ½" format. Artist Trading Cards are to be traded and not sold, the point being to 'exchange art cards' in the same manner as business people exchanging business cards. ATCs are never to be sold.

The idea is to 'personally' trade ATCs with other artists. In the beginning ATC swaps, were held in certain locations, and announced in art magazines, the paper and through art forums. However, now ATCs are swapped among art groups, at shows, through the mail, and through online Internet groups. Oftentimes, there are even ATC challenges, with group members making ATCs within a certain art criteria, such as collage or textile, or holding to a subject such as flowers or cats.

While the size is most important, the materials or styles are not. All types of art are acceptable in ATCs, including all forms of painting, drawing, collage, photography, rubberstamping, mixed media, found images, and assemblage.

Swiss artist M.Vänçi Stirnemann is credited in many circles with popularizing the modern artist trading card in 1996, holding trading sessions in Zurich. Art Cards, Editions, and Originals (ACEO) cards, are another version of the ATC, but the difference being that ACEOs may be sold.

ATC Tips:

- Store and view your traded ATC's in sheet protectors made for baseball cards, which are identical in size.
- Mark the time and place your swap took place.
- Be sure when making an ATC, to put your name, contact information, title of the ATC on the back of the card.
- If it is part of an edition put something like (1 of 3), (1 of 8) on the back of each card.