

TORPEDO FACTORY ART CENTER

Tenant/Artist FAQs

for Private Event Rentals

Written Nov 2024 and subject to change

EVENT RENTAL BASICS

Why do we have Private Event Rentals?

Private Event Rentals started several decades ago to earn income for the Art Center. Today, that continues. The Art Center's daily operating budget is approximately 1 million dollars. Operating like a non-profit, the Art Center brings in approximately 1 million a year and spends approximately 1 million a year. Expenses include staff, property tax, custodial, utilities, marketing and more. This operating budget is a Special Revenue fund and may only be used for the Art Center.

Around 20% of the income earned is from Private Event Rentals. Therefore, like many cultural institutions, event rentals are critical to maintaining the budget. The other, and largest, earned income is studio rentals. Income from Private Event Rentals help maintain a low rent for artists.

What spaces may be rented?

The Art Center offers three specific locations: the Grand Hall, the Overlook Room (325), and the Riverview Room (208). When the building is closed Renters often have options to expand their events into common areas of the building, such as the second floor or third floor hallways.

The Grand Hall, and second and third floors, may only be rented after 5pm (with a premium upcharge). The Overlook and Riverview Rooms may be rented at any time of day. Rentals in the Overlook Room, during the day, have a decibel limit.

What time do Private Event Rentals start?

It depends on the Event Rental Agreement between the City and Renter.

Events in the Overlook and Riverview Rooms may start at nearly any time of day in the designated rooms.

Events using the Grand Hall have the option to close the building at 6pm or 5pm (with an upcharge). Often, the Renter may rent the Grand Hall and Overlook Room, allowing them to set up in the Overlook Room prior to set up in the Grand Hall.

What is a rehearsal?

Many events, particularly weddings, are permitted a short rehearsal in the building prior to their event. Rehearsals often happen near the end of the day and the day before the event. Staff encourage rehearsals to happen after hours, however Renters often want earlier times. Occasionally rehearsals are earlier in the day if there is an event that evening.

Renters are charged for the Rehearsal. Allowing for Rehearsals is a necessity to stay competitive in the field.

Artists do not need to leave for rehearsals. Staff makes all attempts to keep them short, as low volume as possible, and not blocking studios or stairs. Torpedo Factory Art Center is a public space, and often Rental parties show up early or stay later and take up space just as a group might in any public space.

How often do Private Event Rentals happen?

To maintain the fiscal goal, the Art Center's goal has been to have approximately 40 – 50 events in the building per year. This would imply an event almost once a week. With the Overlook and Riverview Rooms, this allows for more events without having to close the building.

Why do I see tours?

Tours are necessary for selling the space as a venue. Normally there are no greater than 3 visitors on a tour. Tours may happen at any time of day, but often happen during open hours so potential Renters may see the building in action.

If you have a question for the staff member leading the tour, please find them at the end of the tour—after the visitors have left them—to talk with the staff member.

RULES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Why does the Art Center have to close early?

To stay competitive as a rental venue, the Art Center has, for the past few decades, permitted events to close the building at 5pm so they have sufficient time for set up and a good event start time. The industry standard is a minimum of three hours for rentals to set up. Torpedo Factory Art Center provides approximately one hour for set up.

Not all events close the building early, including events in the Overlook or Riverview Rooms. Events that close the building at 5pm are charged more than events that close the building at 6pm.

Can I stay in my studio/gallery during a Private Event Rental?

There are two kinds of event rentals: traditional Event Rentals that mostly happen in the Grand Hall, and Event Rentals that only take place in the Overlook or Riverview Rooms. For traditional

Event Rentals that happen in the Grand Hall when the building is closed (and often other parts of the building), tenants are not permitted to be in the building during the event set up and event. The Operating Rules and Procedures incorporated into Tenant Leases offer the City/Landlord the opportunity to make that rule. In the past, tenants were permitted to stay in the building, however too often it became dangerous for artists to be in the building during a setup as they would walk through vendors working, and during events artists frequently would walk through events (for example walking down the stairway as a bride is waiting to walk down making her entrance). This may change in the future.

Who manages the Private Event Rental Program and directs Renters/Vendors on the event day?

Staff provide rules and times for vendors that are written in their Rental Agreement. This agreement was created by the City, including Art Center staff, RPCA leadership, and the City Attorney's Office. The Agreement is filled in by the Private Event Rental Manager and signed by the building manager.

Despite the rules and restrictions, vendors occasionally do attempt to alter the rules on the day of the Event, such as setting up early. In such situations, staff makes all efforts to enforce the set rules and restrictions. Staff occasionally must make a diplomatic decision to balance the interests of tenants, visitors, and renters whereby a vendor may be given some restricted grace. Such decisions are made by the Private Event Rental Manager or their designee with support from the building manager and RPCA leadership. Event Renters are customers as well. Even if they don't rent the building again, their friends may rent, and their event planners and vendors will be back (so long as their experience was positive).

While the Torpedo Factory Art Center enforces setup only in a designated event room or when the building is closed, it is not uncommon for other cultural institutions to permit event set up while the building is open to the public.

Please be mindful that the Art Center does not regulate the sidewalks or spaces outside the building, therefore vendors may be unloading outside the building. Further, as the Art Center is a public space, Event guests and staff may show up early and be seen in the building.

All vendors have permits or licenses.

How do I know when Private Event Rentals are in the building?

Art Center staff do their best to inform artists/tenants of Event Rentals. They are often posted in the monthly Internal Newsletter. The best way to know about Private Event Rentals is to view torpedofactory.org/dates. This is a private webpage for Art Center artists. Remember, if you are looking for event rentals on the torpedofactory.org/hours page, you will only see events that close the building early.

You are encouraged to bookmark torpedofactory.org/dates and view it regularly.

The procedure for staff posting events on the internal calendar, torpedofactory.org/dates, was recently updated.

Why do bathrooms close 15 mins before the building closes on an Event Rental Day?

On any normal day it is a challenge to have people exit the bathrooms by close of building. This is also the case on days when Events take place. On Event days, the first floor bathrooms close 15 mins early so that cleaning staff have an opportunity to clean the bathrooms and keep them clean before the Rental begins. This helps keep staffing costs low and provides a superior experience for the Renter.

Staff plans to create a notice that will be put on the bathroom doors.

WHAT ARE THE RENTERS/VENDORS ALLOWED

When are vendors allowed to set up?

Renters and their vendors have specific times they may enter and begin using the Art Center, pending their written Agreement.

Renters and their vendors may enter the Overlook or Riverview Room at the time listed on their Agreement, which may be any time of day, but is often 4pm.

If only the Grand Hall is rented, set up begins at 5pm or 6pm (the time the building closes) pending their Agreement. Often renters using the Grand Hall also rent the Overlook Room earlier in the day.

Where are vendors allowed to load into the building?

For events in the Overlook or Riverview Rooms, Renters and their vendors are instructed to enter with larger items via the Waterfront Entrance and up the elevator. For events in the Grand Hall, Renters and their vendors may use the Loading Dock or Union St doors after 5 or 6pm pending their Agreement.

When do Renters and vendors get to park or use the loading dock?

Most events have reserved parking on Union St and a reserved Loading Dock. Again, times vary depending on the event, so an event early in Overlook Room may have earlier parking. For a 5pm early close, Event Rental may have parking on Union St. that becomes restricted as early as 3pm because it takes a few hours for cars to move. Art Center staff does not want to tow a vehicle unless absolutely necessary. For a 5pm early close, Renters and their vendors have the loading dock reserved as early as 4:30pm.

Signs are posted for parking and Loading Dock use. Trucks (vehicles larger than a van) are not permitted in the Loading Dock.

HOW CAN I HELP AND WHAT CAN I DO?

How can I help? Who do I contact if I see an issue with a Private Event Rental?

As Private Event Rentals help offset the budget and maintain low rent for artists, you may help by being welcoming to people renting the building or their vendors in the same way you are to all visitors.

Unless someone is in immediate physical danger, do not confront a renter or their vendor if you are unhappy with their actions. All events have unique written Agreements. Renters and vendors are visitors, like any other, and will share their experience with others, so help make it positive. If you see an issue with a Private Event Rental, or have a question, please notify the Manager on Duty at the front desk. You may also report issues to torpedofactory@alexandriava.gov.

Can I rent the Building and would I get a discount?

Yes, if it is for an event related to the mission of the Art Center, tenants may rent the Art Center at a discounted rate. Visit torpedofactory.org/rent or email torpedofactoryeventrental@alexandriava.gov for more information. Tenants may not “pass on” their discount to others.

Can I hold events in my studio?

Yes, if the building is not rented for a Private Event Rental, you may. We encourage tenants to notify staff in advance in case there may be a conflict, and to find solutions if there are. Lease and Operating Rules and Procedures continue to apply if you have an event in your studio. For example, during the day noise must be kept at an appropriate level, if after hours, guests need to be escorted through the building, and if alcohol is served an ABC License must be shared with staff. Email torpedofactory@alexandriava.gov with questions.

You may not rent your studio to others (aside from a sublease through the City).

Are there any other benefits to the Event Rentals?

Aside from the income from Event Rentals that directly support the Art Center and artists, Event Rentals are often the first time someone visits the Art Center, and they often come back to visit studios. Rentals offer an unforgettable event to the Renters, making Torpedo Factory Art Center memorable and special.

The Event Rental Program garners press in wedding publications such as *Washingtonian* and *Virginia Bride Magazine*. The Event Rental Program has won many publicized and noted awards including Top Venue from *Washingtonian* and Couples Choose Award on *The Knot*.