

Newsletter

Sept 2004
Issue no 17

Welcome back to Artweeks, as we start preparations for our 2005 festival. Enclosed with this newsletter is a new set of entry forms and information sheets, which need to be completed and returned to the Artweeks office no later than 31st December. We are pleased to announce that the **small group rate** has been reduced to **£50** per person, which the Board felt was a more reasonable rate for this category, without affecting income too drastically.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR.....

There's scarcely time to assess last year's event before artists and craftspeople need to make decisions about the next one. No less for the Board and me in reviewing what was successful, what was not, and why. This process affords both satisfaction and concern - especially when a man writes to say it was his best ever Artweeks while his wife says it was her worst! I've long ago learned that in Artweeks you can't please all of the people all of the time.

Soon after I became Chair, the Board floated ideas for exploring wider issues of arts activity and creating a higher profile for the Festival, which we began to do in various ways, including more media coverage, special exhibitions and using interesting venues. The rationale for this seems - to me at least - simple and unassailably valid: if the Festival has enough excitement and buzz, it will generate a bigger audience. This must be "a good thing" whether crudely bringing more customers, or whether in building a larger audience, exploring and enjoying art and craft, which of course serves the former. As far as the Board can ascertain, apart from a very few siren voices, there is a feeling abroad that Artweeks is achieving these aims.

One measure of this is the continuing support from District & County Councils and new support from the City - all of whose officers are due thanks from us all. Artweeks is not rich, but at least after decades of struggle and uncertainty we do now have some financial security.

We can safely continue to print a high quality full colour guide and also support ideas like distributing flyers countywide to announce, and contribute to, the very successful children's workshops - which also publicise the Festival. And we can mount a professional & coherent press and PR campaign, which in 2004 produced excellent press coverage.

More excitingly we can now pursue other initiatives for members, such as the recently concluded arrangement for a bursary to allow a member to spend a month in Tuscany working on a beautiful wine and olive estate. Details are being finalised with ArtsCouncil Southeast and will be publicised shortly - the first award will be for autumn/winter 2005/6.

Much Board time has gone into getting OVADA (Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Agency) off the ground. It manages the Xchange Gallery at Gloucester Green. Oxfordshire artists now have an independently run large, well equipped exhibition venue with an already active programme of exciting

workshops and exhibitions. Artweeks will have access to the gallery and benefit significantly from working alongside OVADA's team.

Through Oxford Inspires and assisted by OVADA and as a consequence of our higher profile special exhibitions, we have won a small grant to assist local artists develop their practice. We will explore ideas such as portfolio days, master classes, workshops, techniques for marketing and many others. These will take some time to get under way and we must first establish the administrative base. But watch this space.....

These and other ideas will assist the development of Artweeks and artists in Oxford. We continue to rely heavily on members to make things happen, and most particularly the area co-ordinators to whom we are specifically grateful. And we welcome ideas and suggestions for improvement.

I need also to thank Colin Burton, Susie Medley and Rebecca Hind who, after many years of giving Artweeks many many hours, have stepped down - Artweeks is much the better for their contribution and we will miss working with them.

Finally and most importantly, best wishes for an exciting and artful Artweeks 2005.

Alan Berman, Chair.

SPECIAL EVENTS

For the past four years, Artweeks has sponsored and organised a series of 'Special Events' during the festival, which have been very well received. As well as attracting large numbers of visitors to Artweeks, they have served as effective publicity devices for the festival and have offered Oxfordshire-based artists the opportunity to be show-cased at some of the City's most prestigious venues. In order to organise these exhibitions professionally and with objectivity, the Board has agreed to appoint a curator each year. This year the curator will be John Hoole who has worked at the Barbican in London, at Oxford Brookes and most recently, for the Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Agency (OVADA). We are very pleased to welcome him to Artweeks.

Artweeks' artist, Jan Crombie exhibited in a Special Exhibition at the Said Business School In 2004 :

"For the last thirteen years I have opened my studio in East Oxford to Artweeks visitors, but this year I was invited to put on an exhibition of my work at the Said Business School as one of Oxfordshire Artweeks "Special Exhibitions". I found this a very enjoyable and positive experience in general, and in particular for my professional development. The opportunity to have a solo show in the excellent gallery space at the Said Business School meant that I could embark on a new body of work on a larger scale than I had done for some time. I felt that this very intensive period moved my work forward and in pulling together many threads enabled me to put together a cohesive exhibition of all new work. On a professional level I particularly benefited from working on the essay for the catalogue with the Curator. This as well as giving a gallery talk has helped me define my practice more clearly. New avenues have opened up as the result of this experience and I am grateful to the Artweeks Board , the Curator (Clare Carswell) and Southern and South East Arts for giving me this opportunity."

Jan Crombie, Oxford, Sept. 2004.

Area Co-ordinators

We are very pleased to welcome some new area co-ordinators: Jane Strother and Pam Clocksin have kindly volunteered to oversee the Headington area and Helen White, who is based in Botley, will co-ordinate Oxford City West. Contact details for Jane, Pam and Helen are included in the information sheets.

Urgent request

We are still very much in need of volunteers to become area co-ordinators for East Oxford, and the Vale of the White Horse (taking in the area between Wantage and Faringdon). These areas will struggle to function efficiently before and during Artweeks without an area organiser, so please contact the office for further information, if you think you might be able to help. The roles can be shared with a fellow artist, in order to lighten the load! In return, the post offers free entry into Artweeks 2005 and lots of social opportunities to meet other artists and take on new challenges.

Website and e-mails

We are currently revising our website function and would welcome any comments or suggestions for improvement from you. Please e-mail your thoughts to the usual address: oxford_artweeks@hotmail.com. We would also like to cut down on office paperwork as much as possible and e-mail the newsletters to those members who supply us with an address. If you have any objections please contact the office.

News

If you have anything that you would like to say about Artweeks, that you think would interest other readers, please write it in a letter and we will do our best to print it or post it on the website. Also, if you have any interesting news about your work that you think should be communicated to the press, please contact Karen David at Spriggs David (who look after PR and marketing for Artweeks) on 01865 512662, karen@spriggsdavid.com.

Goodbye to Louise and Pam

After four years' trusty service in the Artweek's office, Louise is moving on to pastures new. On behalf of the Board and myself, I would like to thank her very much for her hard work and dedication and wish her luck in her new job.

Our thanks must also go to Pam Foley, who has stepped down as area co-ordinator for Jericho

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