

Feature

# Jump into a world of colour

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**THE county has this month burst into life with colour and art.**

Blue and yellow Oxfordshire Artweeks flags wave from 500 sets of windows across the county, signalling that there's a pop-up exhibition within at which you can browse paintings, photography, textile art, pottery, jewellery, sculpture, furniture or glass art created by top Oxfordshire artists and designers. Whether it's a five-acre sculpture garden or a tiny jeweller's workshop, entry is free and there's no obligation to buy. All you need is a touch of curiosity and you'll discover immense talent and a cornucopia of art and craft that's unique, interesting and inspiring.

The festival runs until May 29, and this week the focus is on southern Oxfordshire – from Faringdon to Henley.

Over in Buckland, contemporary artist and TikTok art sensation Gabriella Anouk creates vivid hyper-realist art that's fresh and unexpected, merging fine art, photorealism, surrealism, and pop art with modern flair and a sassy style that is engaging hundreds of thousands of youngsters on social media. Inspired by Salvador Dali in particular, his technical skill and precise craftsmanship and the bizarre and absurd imagery in his work, Gabriella is also influenced by finding beauty in the mundane and then distorting it in an unnatural way.

In her Slime Series she juxtaposes a beautiful, natural pieces of fruit – from bananas to dragon-fruit against synthetic, almost vulgar, shiny slime which she makes herself. The slime, either transparent or in lurid hues, is an unexpected and even unsettling contrast that triggers a reaction. The nature of the fruit as a 'still life' jars with



Maisa Stolz's nod to Degas



Sheepish creation by Maisa Stolz

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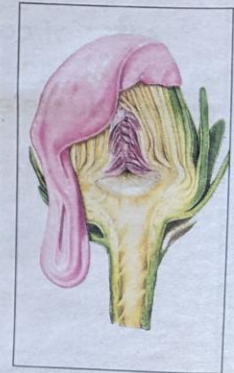
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Gabriella Anouk



Work by Hannah Simm



Gabriella Anouk's artichoke



# with Oxfordshire Artweeks

the apparent dynamism of the slime as it drips, whilst the incredible control and precision of the drawing – and each takes up to 200 hours to create with colouring pencils. – appears at odds with the chaotic nature and unpredictability of dripping slime.

In Abingdon, at Peach Croft Barn in Abingdon, Maisa Stolz is a Brazilian sculptor creates mixed media animal sculpture inspired by classic masterpieces and well-known pieces of art, re-imagining a famous painting or piece of sculpture with the protagonist – whether Rodin's the Thinker or da Vinci's Mona Lisa – as an animal.

Maisa chooses which animal to use for her pieces based on both the shape and personality of the animal and how she well she thinks it matches that of the person she is representing. She slowly recreates these iconic protagonists from many layers of papier-mâché and paint, before embellishing with fabric, glass and other materials: the end result is light-hearted, for the most part, and theatrical.

"The Mona Lisa is a sheep because she seems calm and placid," explains Maisa, "I decided that Van Gogh, in his self-portraits, was most like a duck. He's a thin faced man with a golden orange beard and a rather pointed chin which reminded me of a beak, and character-wise ducks are curious and observant.

Degas's Little Dancer is perfect as a hare – her head tilted to the sky in a typical moon-gazing hare pose, her limb lean and lithe. If it weren't for her ears and her ballet shoes, which encase large feet than you'd see on a human ballerina, her stance and poise are identical to the original.

Thame photographer Hannah Simm whilst taking thousands of images, showcases her travels in a mosaic style. Hannah amalgamates the best images she has taken whilst exploring a place into a single picture that reinterprets a favourite photograph and summarises an entire destination.

"Tanzania was all safaris and game drives either early in the morning or late at night as that's when the animals are out. The light was magical," says Hannah. "It was incredible to see so many animals. However, as they blend into their background by design it was a real challenge to take good photographs. The way you spot the animals against the landscape is mimicked by the way you pick the lion from the photo collage of her."

Look closely at the individual pictures used in Hannah's creation, and you'll also see elephants, warthogs and hippos in a watering hole amongst African scenes and views giving you an almost immersive experience and adding an element of fun.

Other pictures, based on collections of photographs taken in Bali and Thailand, are a real contrast, bursting with colour and dynamism.

"The market was my favourite spot when I travelled in Asia," smiles Hannah. "The people were always wearing colourful clothes and I chose a photo of a man riding his dazzling red scooter right through the middle of one in Bali as the starting point for a photo collage because it summed the whole place up perfectly."

Elsewhere in the festival, the art on show both celebrates iconic Oxford views and local landscapes and promises a global journey through the eyes of local artists who have been influenced by people and places around the world and the colours, fabrics and styles of exotic destinations.

You'll find furniture, jewellery, glimmering glass and intriguing installations. You can take an art trail through the towns of Woodstock, Watlington and Wallingford or even tour America on a motorbike, head to Svalbard or Cuba, and be enchanted by Rajasthan through the eyes and art of Oxfordshire's creatives. There's so much to enjoy, where will you go first?

For more on these and other Artweeks venues, visit [artweeks.org](http://artweeks.org)



Maisa Stolz's Goat with a pearl earring



Gabriella Anouk's dragon fruit heart



Banana and peach by Gabriella Anouk



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