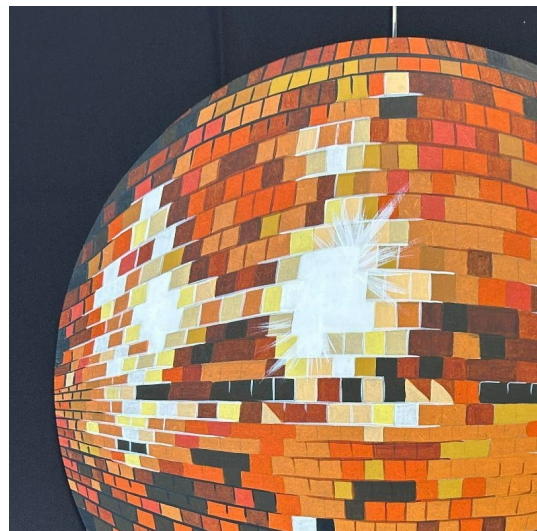


From: Oxfordshire Artweeks <esther@artweeks.org>
Sent: 02 May 2024 12:19
To: Esther
Subject: Unexpected art in North and West Oxfordshire



Oxfordshire Artweeks 2024: a five-minute read

Unexpected art in North & West Oxfordshire





Artweeks is nearly here, and as Oxfordshire turns into a gorgeous gallery this weekend for a month, the county is bursting with paintings of lovely bucolic local scenes, sculptures scattered in gorgeous Cotswold gardens, contemporary homewares and jewellery to add sparkle to any day.

Dig just a little deeper, however, and you'll find an Artweeks with an alternative flavour in art spaces packed with the unusual and the unexpected. Here are some of the surprises to discover during the first week of the festival (4th-12th May).

In Woodstock, home of Blenheim Palace and well-heeled boutiques, visit St Mary Magdalene's Church – one of four Artweeks venues in the town - and you'll find some surprises amongst the pretty Cotswold stone. From superheroes to skateboarding and sequined skulls, each is a celebration of life.



“Most of my art is themed around the idea of memento mori – which literally translates to “Remember you must die”,” explains textile artist Eleanor Matthews. “It might sound gloomy, but it actually leads to a philosophy of embracing the present and living your most authentic life. After all you only have one chance, and you don’t know how long it is going to last.”

Life and how it is lived also inspire artist and museum curator Hannah Cushion who moved to Oxfordshire 18 months ago. She is exhibiting old postcards which she has altered with stitching, turning them into something precious once again. One series includes old pictures of Blenheim Palace reimagined, inspired by the paintings in the collection at the National Gallery, paintings that wouldn’t be out of place in Blenheim Palace. These include Blenheim Palace after Rousseau, with luscious jungle fronds; Blenheim after Turner with skies inspired by those in JMW Turner’s *Fighting Temeraire* and *Calais Pier*; and Blenheim after Monet’s waterlilies.



Also in Woodstock

There are stories and memories, too, in the photography of Jane Smith an image-maker who is passionate about “Collections”, often with a retro twist. “It started at university when I specialised in large format 5x4 studio photography, arranging objects meticulously in front of the camera to create interesting and beautiful compositions,” she explains. Her areas of interests vary from and Lego minifigures, to tea cards and retro toys to sweets and bottle tops, inspired by a lifelong love of Pop Art and Andy Warhol’s work.

“I am also fascinated by the graphics on food packaging, the power of brands and how these become part of people’s childhood memories, evoking different emotions in different people” Jane continues. “They are also so reminiscent of a time in history.”

“And I love the visual repetition of small, neatly arranged objects within a wooden print-type box which represent, to me, the bringing of order and serenity to chaos when, for example, we are used to seeing Lego characters strewn headless across the floor.”



Over the last year, Jane has also been creating eye-catching collage works, sourcing and collating imagery from her photography, vintage and current magazines and other sources. These include Wonders of Woodstock, inspired by the items she sees during local trips to town, and include both recognizable

and unusual details of the place and palace.

Alongside you'll find ammonites in rough-hewn pots, botanical installations with wild colour evoking the dynamism of the seasons, and British folk oddities drawn from the past.



And there's more!

Elsewhere in North and West Oxfordshire for Artweeks this week, look out for Carol Harvey in Chipping Norton who is showing artwork created using her own natural pigments, the making of which she has recorded in a pigment bank and a book, 'The Poetry of Pigments', a beautiful overview of her journey recorded in vintage type using an antique typewriter.

Over in Piddington Heidi Fenn creates stylish pendants made from concrete and gold leaf on a faux leather cord and Liz Dee transforms children's illustrations into characterful personalised jewellery. Further north there's original and inventive circus-inspired sculpture by Anna Steiner of the King's Sutton Collective who draws on her theatre background and, a stone's throw away, in Fired Up Studios you'll find Charlie's Doughnuts, a ceramic collection by Helen Woolner inspired by Charlie's Angels.



There's more colour, with illusory disco balls for your walls by Middleton Cheney exhibitor Melanie Charles who laughs "I'm known for my love of anything sparkly, spangly, glittery and glitzy, I love the 80's disco vibe so what better to paint than a disco ball!" she smiles.

Across the county, until 27th May, you can see, touch and talk about hundreds of thousands of pieces of art and craft, and uncover the stories of their inspiration:

- [discover Ikebana](#), the Japanese art of flower arranging
- choose to [meet a milliner](#) at Wise Investment in Chipping Norton
- follow [a furniture-maker's creative process](#)
- or talk sport ahead of Paris 2024 with [a nominated Olympian Artist](#), one of only six worldwide.

You can also

- find [bouts of boxing in bright colours and construction workers a la Van Gogh](#), a Tik-Tok sensation;
- be wowed by the [generative art created through computer coding](#) and a cool robot called Stephen

- or discuss [AI-generated art](#) over a beer in Horspath's Oxford Brewery Tap Room.

Where will you go first?

[Explore festival venues](#)



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