



## Cotswold artists prepare to celebrate thirty years of outstanding art

One hundred and fifty sculptures by forty artists in Kingham; handmade jewellery with pearls, Thai silver, foiled glass & semi-precious stones in Sandford St Martin; ceramic pieces inspired by human and animal forms in Shipton under Wychwood; and contemporary wood furniture with flowing curves in Shipston on Stour are just some of the things being planned for The Cotswolds during Oxfordshire Artweeks in early May.

Around 1000 artists, including 180 new for 2012, are preparing to open almost 500 venues across Oxfordshire this spring as Artweeks celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, making it the longest-running and biggest open studios in the UK. With nearly 100 venues in Oxfordshire Cotswold towns and villages inviting you in, there'll be a wide variety of work on show, from paintings and photography to textiles and glass art, prints, cards and pots; and as dozens of new artists and makers joining in for the first time this year, there'll be something to capture everyone's interest, whether art aficionados and everyday enthusiasts, and all for free.

To mark this birthday year, a celebratory exhibition by photographer Simon Murison-Bowie will tour from Modern Art Oxford in April to The Mill Arts Centre in Banbury (1<sup>st</sup> May-2<sup>nd</sup> June) capturing, in black and white, thirty Oxfordshire artists at work in their private studios.

*'This is a project rooted in an age-old fascination in the place of an artist's making ... Simon's acute and insightful depictions support the riposte to 'everyone is an artist' with the more telling assertion that 'all artists are people'. Michael Stanley, Director, Modern Art Oxford*

In addition, a teenager commended by the 'Wildlife photographer of the year' competition; an award-winning ceramicist from Chipping Norton who wears goggles and gauntlets to brave the flames in which she fires her pots; life-size sculptures celebrating Olympic values standing tall in The Ashmolean, Oxford; and a celebration of arts & crafts by older people using the Witney Health and Wellbeing Centre are all in the planning.

With new local area trails, as well as the definitive festival guide and website, visitors will have the chance to see the art produced in their own communities, to ask local artists about their inspirations, techniques and materials, and even have a go themselves.

Artweeks is celebrated across Oxfordshire in partnership with local arts centres, museums, and other Oxfordshire organisations, with support from Hamptons International whose Banbury & Deddington offices will house taster art throughout May.

You can pick up an Artweeks guide from libraries, Hamptons branches and local information points from April or visit [www.artweeks.org](http://www.artweeks.org).

## **Notes to Editors**

### **Oxfordshire Artweeks [www.artweeks.org](http://www.artweeks.org)**

Artweeks is Oxfordshire's largest visual arts festival, a three-week celebration in May each year of the county's artistic and creative talent., and the UK's oldest and biggest Open Studios event.

Almost 1000 artists open the doors to their homes and studios and welcome the public to see their creations and watch them work. In 2010 over 107,000 people visited nearly 500 venues across the county.

#### **All exhibitions are free**

*Oxfordshire Artweeks* 2012 will run from Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and is organised into three geographical areas

*North Oxfordshire Exhibitions:* Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May

*City Exhibitions:* Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May

*South Oxfordshire Exhibitions:* Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May

The *Oxfordshire Visual Arts Festival (Artweeks)* is a non profit-making company, limited by guarantee and owned by its members. Everyone is welcome to take part and there is no selection process for artists wishing to participate.

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**Esther Browning, and dozens of artists, are also available for interview.**