

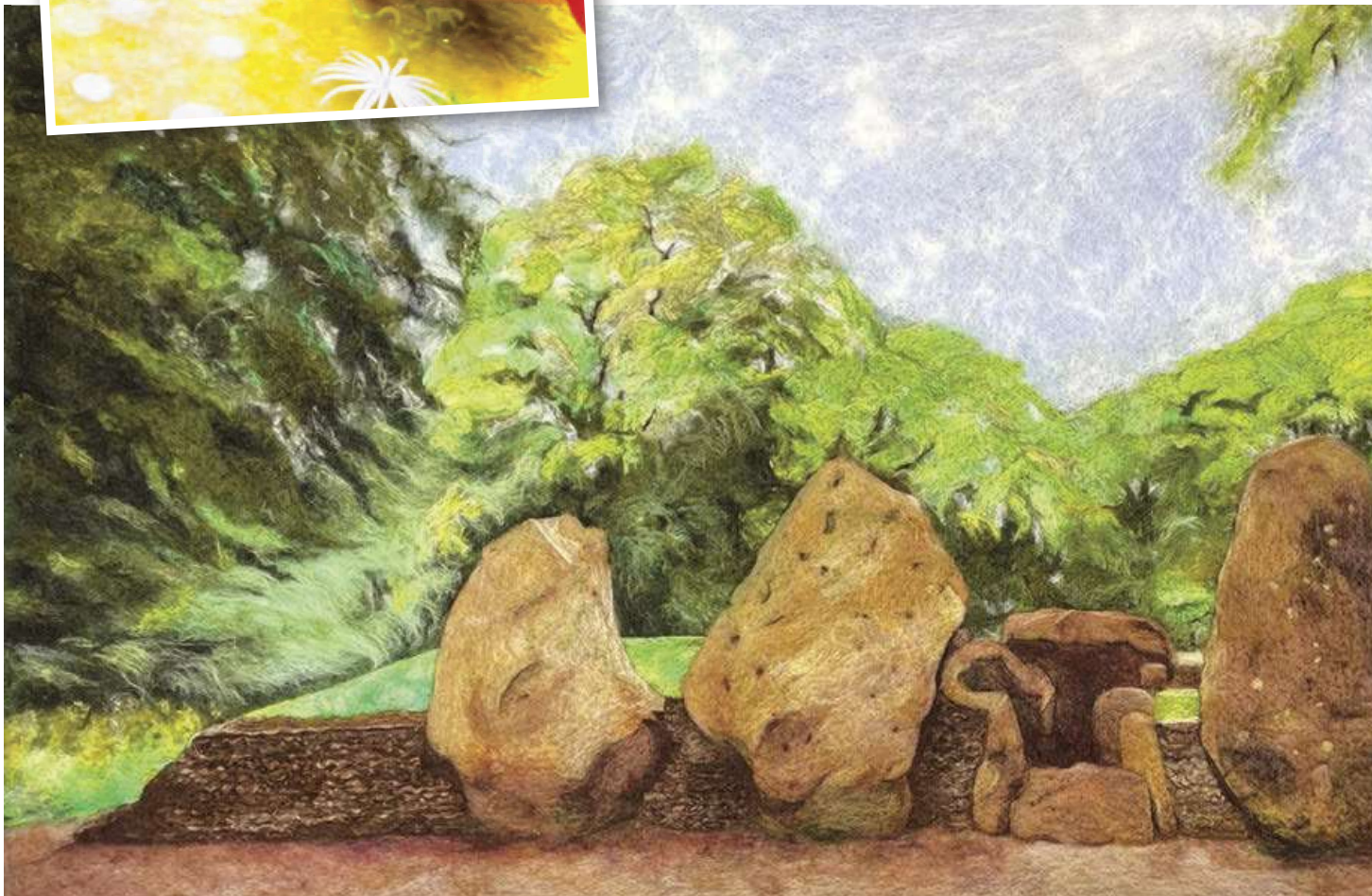


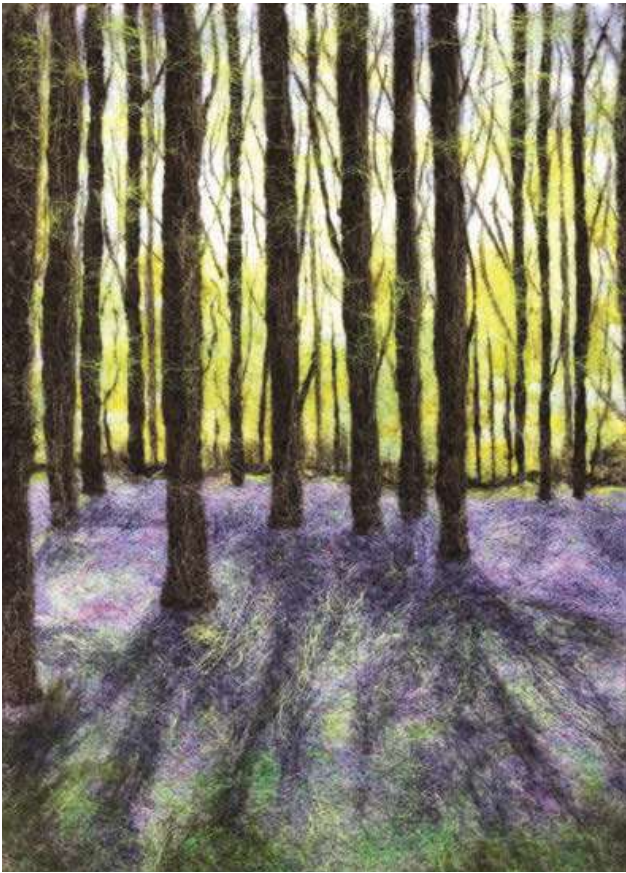
Meet Fibre Artist **Ushma Sargeant**

Living on the Ridgeway National Trail, where Wiltshire and Oxfordshire meet, Ushma Sargeant creates evocative textile art reflecting the stunning landscapes which surround her and exploring the subject of mental health through her art.



Ushma says of the Ridgeway, “you can see for miles, and I can’t get over the changeability of the views; the light can change in minutes altering the view completely. You can stand with a camera taking a dozen pictures in ten minutes to find they look like different scenes, the changing seasons are fascinating as well, with seasonal flowering bringing dramatic colours into the landscape.” This inconsistency is an interesting contrast in a place with such a long history, where the essence of the view has remained the same for centuries.





The pieces Ushma creates depict this rural countryside in a medium which captures light, depth, and texture better than she feels she could achieve with paint. As she says, “When ‘painting’ landscape views in fibre, capturing light, shadows, depth, and texture is almost done for me by the fibre.”

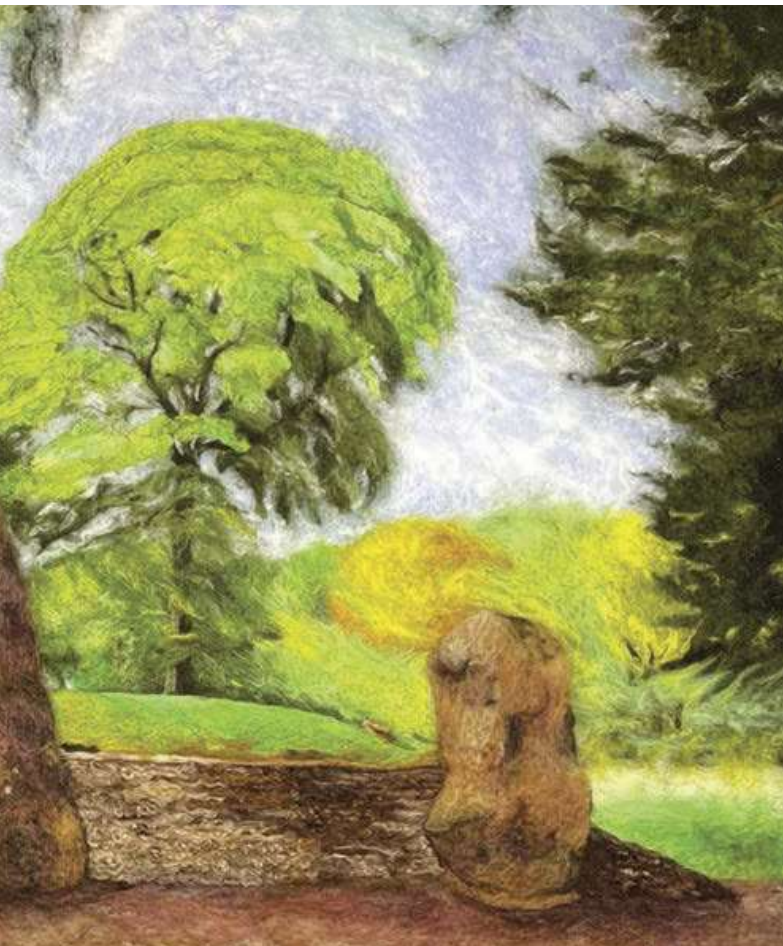
“Bluebell woods, poppy fields and rapeseed fields are particular favourites of mine and they appear frequently in my work. Luckily regular displays provide plenty of inspiration right on my doorstep, including bluebells at Badbury Clump.”

More recently Ushma’s textile work has extended toward the abstract and vibrant work that can be seen in her studio today. She has been exploring the subjects of mental health and our moods through the seasons, through the symbolism, history and mythology of local flora and fauna in relation to our health and wellbeing.

Having started using fibre in her work in 2015, Ushma is continuously exploring new techniques to achieve the desired effect. She uses a variety of fibres including wool, silk, camel, alpaca, llama, angora, flax, seaweed, bamboo and acrylic, always looking for the right fibre and texture for the detail and enjoying the challenge of learning new techniques. Experimenting with new ways to cut and use silk cocoons is her latest obsession.

It is with these fibres that Ushma ‘paints’, sourcing them as locally as possible, including from local farmers. Using soft sweeping wool fibres instead of a paintbrush gives her pictures a softness and delicacy, and a light, depth and texture that captures the mood of the scene. “I used to paint,” she laughs, “but once I started using wool, I immediately fell in love the process and the results. I also found wool is much easier to clean up than paint and there is less waste. All the little tufts of fibre left over when I complete a piece can be collected and reused, if not in a piece of art, then to make bookmarks or felted soaps.”

Because of the gently flowing lines in each of her pieces, it is a surprise to learn that before becoming an artist, Ushma was a structural engineer. “I come from a family that is almost all engineers,” she smiles, “and that made it a sensible and obvious career choice. And so, although the pictures I make look wonderfully free-spirited and organic, I’m actually obsessive about following the ‘rules’ on good composition and colour balance and so on.”



You can visit Ushma’s Bishopstone studio during Artweeks (venue 505) – for more information visit artweeks.org