



*November 2018*

# It's Artweeks Christmas Season!



As the weather turns cool and crisp, the Oxfordshire Artweeks Christmas Season begins, offering you the chance to see dozens of pop-up exhibitions across the county and to enjoy open studio events with a festive twist on a variety of days. These range from a solo artist exhibition of acrylic and watercolour paintings drawn from nature, featuring landscapes, birds including owls, animals and plants of the Oxfordshire countryside in the home studio of Swerford's Ronny Loxton ([Artweeks Christmas venue 4](#)) to many multi-artist venues including Holy Cross Church in Shipton-on-Cherwell ([Artweeks Christmas venue 25](#)), Oxford's Edith Road workshops ([Artweeks Christmas venue 44](#)) and 'art at Christmas' in Summertown ([Artweeks Christmas venue 36](#)).

[venue 2](#)) invite you participate in practical workshops throughout the month and you have the chance to meet jeweller Lucy Sylvester ([Artweeks Christmas venue 3](#)) who takes inspiration from the changing seasons in countryside today. As a child growing up in Oxfordshire collecting twigs, leaves and snail shells, Lucy's love of nature was evident. 'My mum said that as soon as I could walk I was always stuffing leaves and twigs into my pockets and bringing dead moths home.' She laughs. 'I'm not so different now, and now I have two small boys to help me!' Their autumn finds are displayed in her studio, old science jars salvaged from skips are filled with seed heads, fallen leaves and dead insects. These finds drive Lucy's creative work - she takes moulds from the delicate forms and recreates them in solid silver and gold, often adding with moonstones, opals and diamonds.

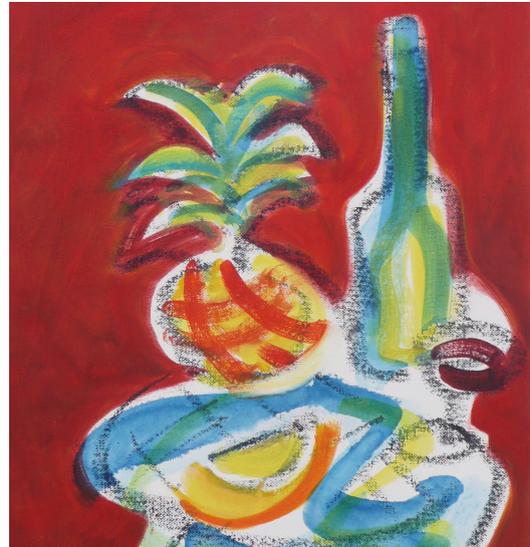


'I like the idea of taking a natural form that would decay and disappear into the ground, and making it permanent' she explains. 'I had to spend hours in my studio working out how to mould really fine and delicate objects and to develop the techniques I use now. Once I've made a mould I fill the cavity with molten gold or silver to create that perfect replica, a piece that will last forever, and yet my work is evolving all the time, as the seasons change,' she enthuses, 'and the inspiration is new once more.'

Lucy's direct casting produces such exact likenesses of bees and dragonflies, acorns and seed heads, for example, that the pattern in the wings or a leaf's vein structure is clear to see, and her Moth and Poppy ring was chosen by the lead costume designer Michele Clapton, for Sansa Stark in the fantasy television drama Game of Thrones. Lucy will be using many of her metalwork skills while demonstrating the creation of her jewellery: see saw piercing, soldering, forming, stone setting and the oxidisation of silver surfaces.

Over in Chadlington, you can find the nature-inspired illustrations of Celia Crampton ([Artweeks Christmas venue 10](#)) which hang alongside work of other artists including Cotswold-based Mary Knowland ([Artweeks Christmas venue](#)

explains. 'However, the 'Unseeing' process requires full focus on the subject matter, and so it creates a greater connection with what you're observing - be it a group of objects, the figure or a place. The brain, hand, eye coordination takes over the making process and so it is the essence of the subject that emerges as a drawing or painting. I love working this way and adding the paint after the drawn ink lines, it always, to my amazement, lands roughly where it needs to be!'



There's colourful glass that tells a story by [Anna Gillespie](#) who is opening her studio in nearby Charlbury (where you'll find [Artweeks Christmas venues 13-18](#)), seasonal glass gifts by Rosalind Duffy in Eynsham ([Christmas Artweeks venue 22](#)), fused glass bowls and vessels by Pam Armitage in South Oxford ([Artweeks Christmas venue 45](#)), and in Holton, Jackie Birchall of Purple Urchin invites visitors into a Christmas grotto ([Artweeks Christmas venue 29](#)) where glass glistens with gifts and collectibles for the festive season.

Head to Dorchester-on-Thames, where you'll find a charming series of dainty embroidery by textile artist Debbie Farrell ([Artweeks Christmas venue 50](#)) who creates stunning panels of rural Oxfordshire, displayed in crisp white box frames that set off the vibrant colours of the threads within: these include all seasons from picturesque summer poppies to frosty winter scenes and snowdrops.

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Debbie is a Nordic walker and so whilst out striding through the landscape she takes note of particularly striking views and comes back later with her camera and her sketch book. 'I begin each piece,' she explains, 'with a drawing, a painting or a photo which I transfer onto fabric as a base and then embroider over the top. I use a sewing machine with a freehand embroidery foot so it's as if I am painting with thread and I change the colour of the thread just as I would change brushes if I was painting. I use dozens of different colours in each picture – so just for bluebell heads for example I might use ten or more threads in different blues and purples, and even a pink-heather lilac.'

'When I am embroidering a picture with subtler colours, like Frosty Wittenham Clumps, I might use lace and crochet elements for additional texture. I'll also use silvery metallic threads to add that sparkle of a frosty morning. I often use metallic threads for sunlight, golds and coppers, and for water too, and while they're tricky to work with, they add a whole extra dimension, catching the light and glittering as you move across the room or the weather outside shifts.'

Debbie is exhibiting with jeweller Christine Ellis and Claire Houghton whose knitwear is accessorized with costume jewellery whilst also in Dorchester, along the High Street you can find functional white ceramics as crisp as snow by Tamsin John ([Artweeks Christmas venue 52](#)) who is exhibiting alongside handbuilt ceramics and mixed media paintings by [Rosie Southon](#) and oak-framed watercolours by [Sophie Stewart Liberty](#).

There is so much more to see across the county – in **Abingdon**, **Bicester**, **Chalgrove** and on. To find what is on closest to you, and their varied opening hours, visit [www.artweeks.org](http://www.artweeks.org).

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