

Crafty Christmas move

Esther Lafferty takes a look at an initiative to expand the open studios calendar of Oxfordshire Artweeks

Photography by
Ross Mackenzie

● For further information on the artists and event of Oxfordshire Artweeks Christmas season visit artweeks.org

Oxfordshire Artweeks has gone festive for the first time... giving people in the county the chance to snap up unique gifts from the makers themselves.

Throughout November and December, around 150 Oxfordshire Artweeks artists and designer-makers – are throwing open their doors at more than 70 pop-up Christmas exhibitions and festive crafts shows in Oxford and across the county.

Among the unique offerings on show, you'll find chameleon jugs that bring a character from tropical Madagascar to your table; a canal-side alchemy of textile art in Banbury, a celebration of the acclaimed traditional Gifford's Circus in Jericho and an exhibition of Arctic art to make you shiver in the Oxford

University Museum of Natural History.

The small intimate events will showcase everything from jewellery and ceramics, to furniture and soft-furnishings, decorative glassware, paintings, and hand-made prints. And you can even make your own wooden reindeer at the Sylva Wood Centre.

Here's a look at some of the events and artists taking part:

An Arctic Artweeks

Oxford University Museum of Natural History

Parks Rd

Oxford OX1 3PW

10am to 5pm, November 11-January 29

Fascinated with the patterns made by light, water, and both natural and man-made features, from architecture to natural forms and geology, Jericho's Susan Avery is a painter in pure watercolour.

She began with a love of the works of 18th-19th century English painters in

watercolour, above all JMW Turner, and in her studio (open on November 19 and 20 for Oxfordshire Artweeks Christmas season), she invites visitors to explore Venice captured on paper, pictures of garden nooks and corners, and a series of thoughts on the changing environment, her concerns affecting the way she observes the world.

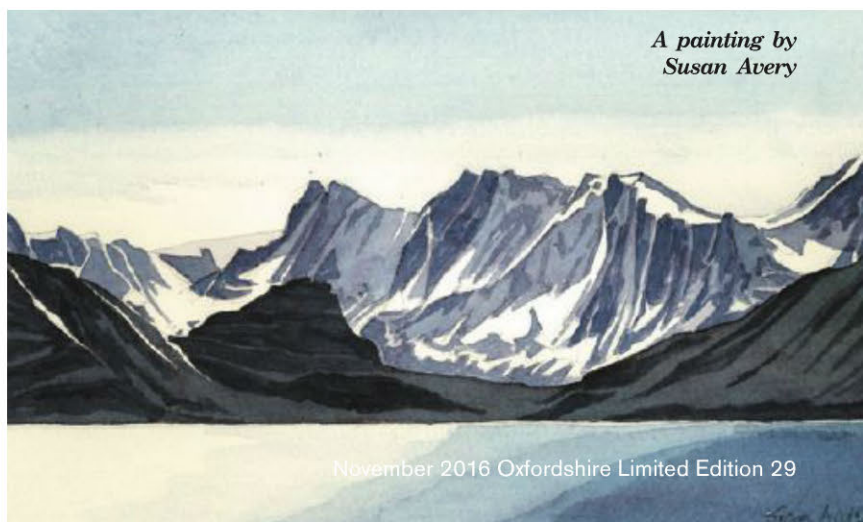
Susan's subtle landscapes can also be seen at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History where she is exhibiting along with other artists who are also inspired by natural forms in the Arctic Circle in striking photography, glass art, detailed textile art, silverwork and ceramics.

Kina Gorska, is known for the quirky designs she creates from a hidden studio along Oxford's High Street. She will show a Geo Breakfast Set inspired by the topographic maps she loved to draw in her school geography lessons. "I was fascinated by the way their simple linear pattern created such beautiful shapes," she explains.

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Photography by
Ross Mackenzie

A painting by
Susan Avery





Emma Louise
Corry's studio

As a ceramicist, she has developed these into contemporary designs, minimising the shapes of the mountains to the size of everyday crockery which also serve as porcelain sculptures.

"The combination of oblique repetitive lines underlined with the contour of dishes and porcelain whiteness create an impression of Arctic landscape, and it was crucial to me to show this aesthetic while creating beautiful objects that can be used," she says.

Headington photographer Ross Mackenzie explains how he finds himself drawn to the Arctic and other remote spots by the quality of the light – and it isn't just the Northern

Lights that attract him like a moth.

"It's the dramatic mix of mountains and fjords, of villages and harbours, combined with the clear, crisp air that makes the Arctic a wonderful place, although the logistics of visiting these kind of locations can be a challenge," he says.

"The towering mountains, whether dominated by snow or basked in bright sunshine, set the heart of any would-be mountaineer soaring. And there's also the draw of fjord safaris, with whales and white-tailed eagles."

Ross is an avid wildlife photographer and has captured Svalbard polar bears feeding

from just a few metres away.

"It's a privilege to see them in the wild, and something I feel driven to share with others," he says.

Ross's photos also capture the sculpted icebergs of Eastern Greenland which can be reached only by helicopter from Reykjavik in Iceland or, in the summer, by boat.

"One of the delights of photographing icebergs is the knowledge that an image can never be repeated; every iceberg image is unique. After a few minutes the light will be different, in a few hours the water will have changed and after a few days the berg would have been transformed out of all recognition,"



Work by Emma Louise Corry

he says. "The Arctic really is the end of the road and it's just implausibly picturesque."

Drawing in Thread

Emma Louise Corry

**Carrick Cottage, 54 High Street,
Dorchester-on-Thames OX10 7HN**

10am to 3.30pm, November 19 and 20

Emma Louise Corry is an enthusiastic, contemporary textile artist from Marcham, near Abingdon, Oxfordshire whose handmade creations have an instant appeal. Emma has an MA (RCA) in Woven Textiles and creates flowers, birds, animals, houses and scenes, "drawing" them with her Elna sewing machine, black thread and applied fabric on fabric.

I've always used black thread, ever since I started sewing although funnily enough when I'm teaching other people I always

encourage them to use every colour under the sun," she says.

"I started sewing when I was seven – from the time I was tiny I was desperate to be allowed to use my mother's Elna sewing machine, and when I was finally allowed, I taught myself.

"My first real project was a purple shirt. Looking back, it was probably dreadful but I was so proud of it.

"Then, when I was fifteen, I inherited a little bit of money from my granny 'Gum' and used it to buy my own Elna machine, and that's what I still use, over thirty years later. I like to think she'd love that.

"I pick up vintage clothes too when they're made from interesting or unusual cloth. I love creating decorations, bunting or pictures that take fabric from a piece of clothing that's been loved but is no longer wearable – a favourite party dress or something special

a child has grown out of, for example. I recently picked up some very thin, recycled American leather with a gold backing which I'm enjoying using for the centres of flowers, birds' beaks and other glitzy touches.

"In my November Artweeks exhibition, expect a Christmas feel with glitter and sparkle as I'm showing lots of decorations as well as pictures and bags and I've recently started making beautiful noticeboards which are three dimensional and decorated with quirky houses or flowers and are designed to keep the sparkle in the mundane. The idea is that they hold all those scraps of paper, invites and leaflets that you want to keep safe yet can be so scruffy in a pile on the kitchen worktop!"

And what would Emma like for Christmas? "A thimble that fits! It seems ridiculous, but they always seem to slide off."



Handmade: A Christmas Market
West Oxford
Community Centre,
Botley Rd, Oxford
OX2 0BT
Saturday, November
26, 11am to 6pm;
Sunday November
27, 11am to 4pm



Jackie Birchall
Stained glass
and alternative
gift ideas
Ambrose
Cottage, Holton
nr Oxford
OX33 1PS
10am to 6pm,
November 19
and 20



**A work by
Kina Gorska**