



# Oxfordshire Artweeks Winter Show

ESTHER LAFFERTY

This month Oxfordshire artists present an exhibition online so you can enjoy browsing a wide range of art by without leaving the warmth of your hearth.

It's a seasonal selection in which leaves sparkle in red and gold, and berries and seeds stand proud as still life and in ceramics for the festive home.

The collection takes you from local scenes, including *Winter Landscape, Wytham* by **Francesca Shakespeare** to *Peyto Lake in Banff* which glistens gemstone turquoise amongst snowy slopes and sun kissed vineyards in *Montefiori*, a painting by **Maria Luisa Arrivillaga**, for the festive wine.

It also includes a bracing excursion to the coast, with a Cornish harbour master's house in cool hues by Elaine Allender and the thrill and crash of the winter waves captured in dramatic glass, by maker **Alison Vincent** who hand-creates statement pieces inspired by her encounters in remote and pristine wild nature using unexpected techniques.

"I am passionate about being in extreme wildernesses – especially oceans, mountains and ice. I am fortunate to have sailed, dived, kayaked and swam with majestic whales and sharks in remote locations including Antarctica, the Arctic and the Galapagos. These big expanses give me a sense of adventure and exhilaration and being there is a real privilege. Vast, rugged landscapes make me feel very small but connected with this world. I am concerned about their fragile future and want to raise awareness, so others care and protect them too," she explains.



Alison Vincent





Hannah Cushion

Closer to home, see Brighton beach through storm-tinted glasses as a vintage postcard with embroidered embellishment by artist **Hannah Cushion** who brings together her creative practice and her work in museums.

“In addition to being a season of celebration, Christmas is a time for remembering people who are no longer with us,” she says. “At home and as families, we protect memories in drawers and boxes of precious things and in museums we do the same in frames and cases. I come from a long line of hoarders,” she laughs, “and basically museums are professional hoarders with excellent PR.

I’ve always been very interested in what we keep and why, what memories we’re preserving and what happens to all these things when someone dies. Perhaps, surprisingly, these days the answer is often eBay. I once ordered some old envelopes with original stamps, and when they arrived the envelopes contained a series of love letters between Ruby and René sent between 1948 and 1950. They were fascinating and what a story they told – although I’m not sure Ruby was kind enough to René.

I’ve always loved the idea of stitching as a way of gathering memories, of working them into tangible items that we treasure. I loved the film *How to Make an American Quilt* with Winona Ryder, and I love the idea of groups sitting, chatting and making together, making and sharing memories as people do at Christmas. Textiles are so comforting in nature and a great reminder of who you are and where you come from.

When I moved to Woodstock last year, I began working with old discarded postcards which I alter with stitching, metamorphosing them into something new so they become precious again in their own right. Amongst other things, I have been reinvigorating scenes of classic British coastal towns, often in stormy weather with white water stitching—the views are very nostalgic, reminiscent of my childhood. I grew up in Cornwall, and I have never been so landlocked: I hanker after the sea,” she smiles.



Yvette Phillips

“The ritual of sewing is also meditative, which can have a very positive impact on people’s wellbeing, and that can be helpful at Christmas too for those who find it a stressful time.”

It’s both the style of previous decades and local fauna that has inspired a second embroidered

piece in the show, an exquisite handsome Red-legged partridge who might sing out during the Twelve Days of Christmas but is, apparently, unlikely to have been loitering in a pear tree in real life! He’s set in the tangerine orange splash of vintage Boras Plexus, a 1960s Swedish flower power design, by textile artist **Yvette Phillips**

using a needle painting technique. Yvette loves to use and preserve these fabric fragments of history in a contemporary way. ▶



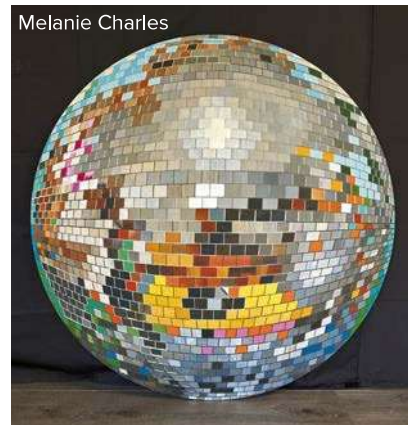
Jane Tomlinson



Celebrating the natural world in rich palette of colours, patterns, and textures, she combines free motion machine and hand embroidery on her striking material backgrounds, provided by brocades, damasks, synthetic, and natural fibres.

“I have been fascinated with birds and animals for as long as I can remember, and they have been the focus of my drawings and dreams ever since,” she explains. “I spent my childhood in exploring nature and poring over illustrated books. The small thrill of seeing something wild and beautiful up close has stayed with me, and some of the creatures to which I feel drawn to depict now are those that I might encounter in my own garden or around the village of Blewbury in Oxfordshire where I live.

With hand embroidery I find a natural rhythm of slow stitching that gives me time to build a relationship with the creature I am portraying. I view my subjects with a romantic







Andrew Forkner

eye, trying to imbue them with life and individual character, colour combinations that sing, and a sense of atmosphere. In essence, my work celebrates the magical beauty of nature and invites you to connect with the enchanting birds and beasts around us.”

There's a second partridge, a grey partridge in the snow by wildlife painter Andrew Forkner; several robins, including a bright-eyed character on a snowy coaster also make an appearance, and there's a whole avian gang in **Jane Tomlinson's** Winter Song . “It's a painting about those bright winter days of lemon and pink skies, when the air is clear and cold, and the birdsong rings louder than ever. As well as the little robin belting out his sweet song, I've included other winter birds: fieldfare, waxwing, redwing, and (my favourites) starlings,” she adds.

Look out, too, for a wire crow sculpture for the garden and a stylised swan ring in 9ct gold and opal by jeweller **Chloe Romanos**.

Other pieces in the show include a wool and silk scarf, an upcycled bronzed 'boho' bag, a glittering disco ball – the perfect party piece – and a collaged still life bursting with details including a cat, a cuppa, a cauliflower and candles. What will you spot to make you smile?



Elaine Allender



Chloe Romanos



Melissa Orrom Swan

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