

Announcing the Mary Moser Award Winner 2024

MEET THE ARTIST:

Sally-Anne Stewart

Printmaker Sally-Anne Stewart is the winner of the 2024 Artweeks Mary Moser Award, an annual award intended to help develop the career of a professional artist who has taken up art as a second career later in life. Artweeks Festival Director Esther Lafferty visited her to find out about her art.



On leaving school, Sally studied English Literature and then journalism as a post graduate student, working on local papers around the home counties as a news journalist. “It wasn’t a glamorous position; slogging away on gritty streets and in grotty offices, and so after ten years I took the leap to ‘the dark side’ and moved into PR and communications. I had a great job at Oxford University in a beautiful building, at The Oxford Martin School in the Old Indian Institute opposite the Kings Arms. I met academics from all disciplines and from all around the world who were looking at big issues – from climate change to stem cell research.





Their work was fascinating, and I was helping them get the word out to a wider audience. In my spare time, however, I was learning how to make linocut prints and becoming a printmaker.”

In linocut printing, pieces of linoleum are hand-carved – a kind of fine-art version of children’s potato printing; the ‘non-image’ areas are cut away and the raised surfaces or the ‘relief’ is inked and pressed to paper. For different colours, different blocks are printed onto the same paper to create a final image. Alternatively, a single block may be used several times, each after additional carving has taken place.

Sally’s art is largely inspired by the natural world, trees, plants, fungi. “I love gardening and being outdoors”. She also loves the places where people meet the environment, like children playing in the waves, a rowing boat cutting across the surface of the water or a thoughtful swimmer contemplating the plunge into a turquoise lido. “I’m finding myself increasingly drawn to urban architecture in my work, and my latest piece is of the 1960s brutalist buildings at Oxford’s St Catherine’s College. In my work I prefer the bold straight lines of modern designs over the iconic, the ornate and the decorative, although I love those, too, in real life”, she adds.

“Printmaking is a relatively new thing for me. At school, I enjoyed art and took art A level. I never had the chance to do printmaking. Pencil was my preferred medium and my drawings tended to be accurate and realistic. Printmaking is very different in that it knocks the edges of your accuracy because you can’t control it so precisely, either the carving or the adding paint.



I have found it weirdly therapeutic, relinquishing some of that control and relish a bit of a surprise at the end of the process. I started out watching YouTube videos before finding out what was going on locally, gradually creating more complex pieces. I do like to give myself a challenge”.

At first Sally worked on a few commissions for neighbours and friends. “This was great from a business point of view, as it showed the reality of being an artist in a more professional way with deadlines and so on. I am also blessed with a very kind and optimistic husband who had become a freelancer a few years earlier and made a great success of it. He suggested I did printmaking as a business and was amazingly supportive as I considered giving up my career at the University to become a full-time artist. I took to take the plunge at the end of 2020. ►

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Working from home during Covid was great preparation for completely working on my own. However, while I was never thrilled by the 'corporate meetings' of my previous role, I do miss the team. My husband's transition to freelance had also illustrated the importance of a network for opportunities and – for morale, too. That's one of the things that has been so great about Oxfordshire Artweeks for me; it's a brilliant vehicle for social interaction and I've met so many lovely people through it."

Now, in addition to creating her own work, Sally runs regular linocut classes and has started a podcast, Art Musings, with another East Oxford Artweeks artist Carole Theriault in which they ask a variety of artists about their loves, learnings, fears and hopes as they negotiate the art world.



To follow Sally on social media, it's **@print_sal** or see more of Sally's work at **etsy logo/shop/lineandlightart**



Maria O'Meara The Month of Love

Valentine's Day on the 14 February give us something to keep our spirits going after the New Year's celebrations. When in love, this time of the year can prove magical. I have always connected the occasion with the song Kiss Me, by the band Sixpence None the Richer. I can hear it now in my head.

Oh, kiss me, beneath the milky twilight
Lead me out on the moonlit floor
Lift your open hand
Strike up the band and make the fireflies dance
Silver moon's sparkling
So kiss me

Enchanting words...

Did you know that the "first records of human kissing may date back 1,000 years earlier than estimated. Humanity's earliest record of kissing dates back about 4,500 years in the ancient Middle East, 1,000 years earlier than previously thought, according to researchers." (The Guardian, 2023)

Stephanie Pappas in her article for Scientific America explains that "in anthropology, studies shown that sexual-romantic kiss is not universal in all human cultures, while the parental kiss seems to be relatively ubiquitous."

William Jankowiak, a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, found that only 46% of cultures use lip-to-lip kissing in a romantic sense. This contradicts earlier research that placed this figure at 90 per cent. This also suggests that kissing is a learned behaviour and scientists found that people from more complex societies kiss more often.

Unquestionably, kissing can be a pleasurable act that floods the brain with 'good' chemicals. During a kiss, dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin hormones trigger the feel-good points in our brain. The dopamine released evokes feelings of euphoria; oxytocin increases feelings of affection and attachment, while serotonin allows us to feel calmer, happier and focused making a wonderful kiss an experience – a memory to keep and treasure.

Research nonetheless is still not done with the matter of 'kissing'. Scientists continue to question and research. What a wonderful subject to investigate indeed. So, this Valentine's, let's kiss more. For love, for science and for good memories.