

# Oxfordshire

Limited Edition  
*incorporating Intuition*

INSIDE:  
Oxfordshire  
Artweeks  
supplement

## Capturing Dylan

How one of the world's biggest  
stars was persuaded to come  
to the original Isle of Wight  
music festival





# Oxfordshire

## Contents

## Limited Edition

May 2015 number 340

### 8 **Castaway**

Sylvia Vetta talks to gallery owner Aidan Meller

### 15 **Oxfordshire Artweeks**

Our preview of the annual celebration of the visual arts

### 18 **In those shoes?**

Julie Webb talks to ceramicist Kate Hopkins-Searle

### 22 **Down to the sea**

Model-maker Max Hobbs

### 25 **Artweeks trail**

What to see in and around South Oxfordshire

### 26 **Capturing the exotic**

Artist Jeanne Jackson is inspired by birds of Africa and Central America

### 31 **Family matters**

A group of artists with a special connection

### 35 **Concrete alchemist**

Theresa Thompson meets sculptor Richard Goldsmith

### 38 **Horse sense**

Equestrian artist Melanie Wright

### 41 **Imagined landscapes**

From Apple to Treasure Island with designer Tony Davis

### 73 **Books**

Maggie Hartford talks to Michael Smith about his book on Bletchley codebreakers

### 79 **Music**

How Ray Foulk persuaded

Bob Dylan to play at the original Isle of Wight Festival

### 85 **Wordplay**

Tony Augarde on those special languages that bridge cultures

### 87 **Travel**

If you go down to the woods you will discover a way to get back to nature. Plus a lodge with a sea view in Cornwall

### 97 **Food and drink**

Michael Halbert at the Fleece in Witney, plus a season of food festivals

### 103 **Wine Tipster**

Neil Phillips celebrates English and Welsh wines

41





# Oxfordshire Artweeks 2015

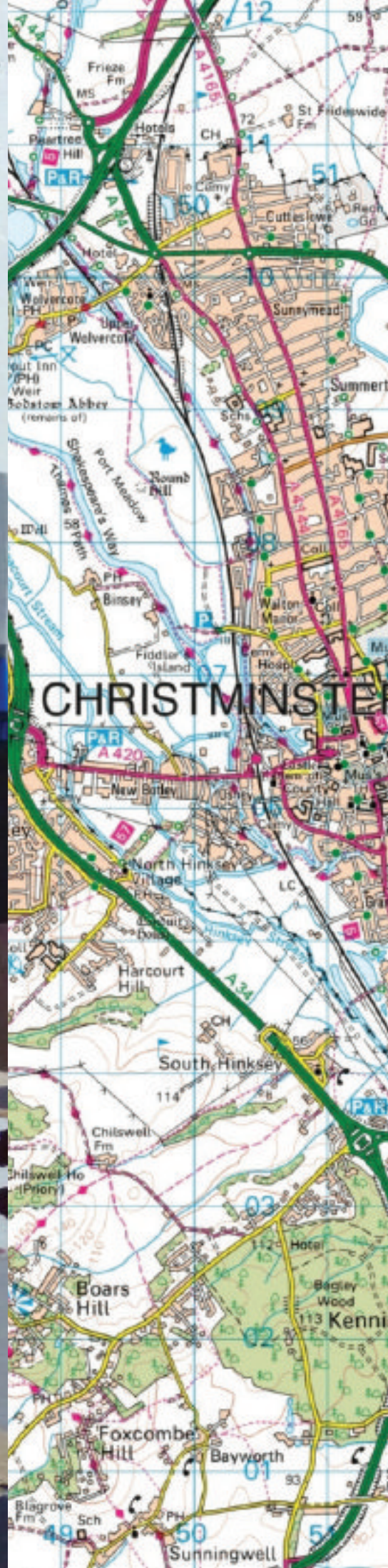
A special supplement to  
Oxfordshire  
Limited Edition  
May 2015

OXFORDSHIRE

art

WEEKS

HAMPTONS  
INTERNATIONAL





# Be surprised and inspired

**I**t is May and Oxfordshire Artweeks is upon us, a free visual arts celebration of the visual arts bursting with vibrant art and bright new artists at more than 400 venues across the county.

An 'open studios event', Artweeks is an opportunity to see the creative talent of hundreds of local artists and designer-makers: painters and designers, potters and sculptors, wood-turners, photographers, jewellers and textile artists will all be opening their homes, workspaces and other interesting spaces to share their *modus operandi*, their studio space and the art produced within them.

In Banbury, artists are bringing beauty to spaces from its industrial past: the old mill hosts a gallery exhibition inspired by water and an airy loft studio overlooking the canal is packed with vibrant mixed-media work; and where an industrial tram line once ran between canal-side factories and railway sidings, find art inspired by dance and ground-breaking digital art inspired by local treescapes.

In The Cotswolds, meet silversmith Patricia Freeman who made guitar buckles for Sir Paul McCartney or hear the tales of textile artist Sue Rangeley whose stunning floral embroidery creations have graced both catwalks and the V&A.

Visit Pip Shuckburgh, Bampton's resident *Downton Abbey* artist, in her studio, or head to Bicester for a sculpture in the beautiful studio and garden of The Old Vicarage by St Edburg's Church.

In Oxford, the Oxford Playhouse presents an exhibition of drawings from live theatre while the Wytham Woods artists invite you to the inaugural firing of a traditional Japanese willow-woven, climbing kiln eight metres long.

Visit artist studios in Edith Road or Magdalen Road; find artist hubs in St John the Evangelist on the Iffley Road or Jericho's

St Barnabas, or have your taste-buds tickled by delicious recipe prints in the Hamptons International Summertown office or visit Paddy Summerfield's garden installation of poignant photographs of his parents' days in that very garden, over ten years, with his father caring for his mother as her memory declined (listed in the *Observer* as one of the top ten photo-books of 2014).

Head west, via three Longcot stone carvers a stone's throw apart to visit the beautiful National Trust village of Coleshill for art spaces in the old stable yard, and explore kinetic and sonic sculpture at Watchfield's wind farm.

Take a step back in time in Abingdon's historic Old County Hall where five jewellers present new silverware inspired by the Roman remains discovered in nearby Marcham, or in Dorchester-on-Thames where narratives, history, people and ideas are captured in wall-mounted tree-dimensional 'theatres', travel far beyond the county boundaries!

Discover the natural world, from the poles to the equator, take a journey in a gondola through the Venetian archipelago (in Sandford-on-Thames), or travel back in time and share memories of childhood.

Come nose-to-nose with a highland cow in an Enstone pub, or follow the fine lines of a bird at flight in Blackwell's Broad Street bookshop.

From fashion to furniture, in collage, ceramics, mosaic, on fabric, on film and on canvas, artists are telling tales of wonderful places and journeys travelled, their inspiration and ideas, and inviting you in to join them in a relaxed and friendly way and even have a go yourself.

Whether an art aficionado or an everyday enthusiast, follow local art trails through Oxford streets, Cotswold villages, along the Thames or through the county's market towns.

Be inspired and delighted and choose a few treasures to take home with you!

**Esther Lafferty**, executive director of Oxfordshire Artweeks previews this year's celebration of the visual arts



**Melanie Charles**



**Claire Acworth**

**Jacqueline Taylor**



**Sally Dorrity**

THE first week of the festival focuses on North Oxfordshire (May 2-10) venues will be nestled around the Cotswolds and the historic market towns of Bicester and Banbury. In the second week, Oxford City (May 9-17) plays host to with nearly 200 art spaces within the ring road and in the third week the focus shifts to South Oxfordshire (May 16-25) with 100 exhibitions along the Thames from Lechlade to Henley and the Ridgeway from Uffington to Thame.

For full information, pick up a free Artweeks festival guide in libraries, Hamptons International offices and information centres across the county or go online at [www.artweeks.org](http://www.artweeks.org) where you can browse all exhibitions by area, date, artist or creative medium.



**A**s I drove to Chipping Norton to meet artist Kate Hopkins-Searle and the ceramic shoes she will be exhibiting with Kingham Jewellery School and Friends at Asthall Manor, near Burford, I found myself wondering, as you may be doing, what had drawn her to such a curious art form, and whether a pair of her Glacé Slippers (delightful name!) on somebody's mantelpiece is any odder than a couple of Staffordshire pottery bulldogs?

I was also interested to see whether she would be wearing shoes as elaborately decorative as those she makes – but no, like me she was wearing black ankle boots; much more practical, I guess, for heaving about bags of clay and tubs of glaze in her garden studio.

Kate is originally from Norfolk, just outside Norwich.

"I was at school there and art was the one subject I did not hate," she said. "I was always doing Plasticine as a child and doodling on my exercise books."

None of Kate's immediate family are artistic, but she is distantly related to the St Trinian's and *Molesworth* cartoonist Ronald Searle.

"While I was still at school I went to an adult evening class in pottery, which I loved, so when I left I did a foundation art course in Great Yarmouth and then went to Loughborough Art College. It was a proper old-fashioned course – five days a week, 9am-5pm, with compulsory registration and classes in the evening.

"I signed on for furniture and jewellery but ended up doing mostly clay, specialising in hand-built and slipcast pots for my final show."

Slip is a liquid clay that can be poured into a mould, used to attach things like spouts and handles, or applied as decoration.

Her college dissertation was on the history of shoes and their relevance to women's place in society.

"The day we arrived they had given us all a lump of clay and said 'Make anything', so I

*Continued on page 21*

# In those shoes?





**Julie Webb** meets  
ceramicist Kate  
Hopkins-Searle

Photographs: Simon Williams







From page 19

roughly modelled two shoes" Kate told me. "I have had a fascination with them since I was ten and my babysitter came wearing a pair of purple suede wedge platforms with suede flowers. I am particularly keen on shoes with lots of colour, lots of frills, lots of decoration and gold and silver."

This pretty much describes her extraordinary rococo-style creations, which are always made in pairs, with a left and a right. Like real shoes, they are constructed on a last; in this case a plaster one.

"They are an idealised foot shape, very narrow, with rounded arches, and quite laborious to make because each is individual in terms of shoe shape and patterns on the surface of the clay," Kate said

"The clay is rolled out in sheets which are wrapped around the last and left to harden – not so long that they become brittle and crack but long enough for them to hold the shape and still have some flexibility."

Her materials are white earthenware, coloured underglazes and glazes, and semi-precious metal lustres.

"The good thing about earthenware is that you can fire it at a lower temperature and get a better colour range. The higher you fire, the more the colours tend to burn out, especially reds. The hands-on work involved in the shoes, excluding the research and design, takes about 14 hours. I love the tactile thing of modelling the clay, and transforming mud into something precious!"

One of the examples she showed me was

cream in background colour, with turquoise braid, plentiful pearl and platinum beads, and a cream rosette. Each is signed and dated underneath, with a Glacé Slippers label inside.

Amongst her influences are the rococo painter Boucher and practitioners of Pop Art such as Andy Warhol with his portfolio of drawings *A la Recherche du Shoe Perdu*.

"And Manolo Blahnik. I have many of his books though unfortunately none of his shoes! His drawings are lovely – very modern but historical as well."

Another influence on her work was time spent in Australia, during which she did a three-year part-time custom-shoe-making course in Sydney that made her realise she preferred the fantasy, and potential for exaggerated decoration, of ceramic shoes to the detailed construction of individual lasts necessary for real hand-made footwear.

While in Sydney she also worked in the costume department of the Opera House, on productions such as *La Traviata* and *Don Giovanni* (an ambition nurtured during her secondary school teaching days when she provided costumes for school performances). "I was a bit awestruck at the quality of the fabrics used there – the most beautiful silks, often hand embroidered. Fabrics – the way they fall, and the patterns, are a definite influence on my work. I realised though that in a big theatre like that I could only do part of a job – designing costumes or selecting fabrics or pattern cutting or sewing – and there is less satisfaction in those incomplete roles. I enjoy

the entire creative process of designing, solving problems in two or three dimensions, and of course, the making.

"However, I do do an annual voluntary stint at Chipping Norton Theatre helping the costume designers for the pantomime with sewing and prop construction."

She and a giant photographic reproduction of one of her shoes featured on Antony Gormley's 2009 Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square.

Much in evidence for Artweeks will be the black-and-white series she is currently working on. These include a pair with black toes and impressed flowers with hearts in between.

"The glaze is glossy black with white speckles and they have gold lustre tassels and two sets of cut-outs with edgings in gold beads," Kate said.

Her next project will be based on Gustav Klimt's portraits of women.

"I will design shoes for them because you only get an occasional glimpse of one in his paintings: either the dress is full-length or only the top part of the body is shown. His gold and rich colours are relevant to my stuff."

Kate's shoes are gorgeous, it has to be said, and could be yours if you have £600 to £800 to spend, but if this is outside your price range go along to the Artweeks exhibition and just feast your eyes on them for a while. They really are very cheering.

LE

• The Ballroom, Asthall Manor, near Burford OX18 4HW. May 2-10, 11am-6pm (Thursday 11am-8pm). [www.kate-hopkins-searle.com](http://www.kate-hopkins-searle.com)





**A**t a point where art and engineering overlap Artweeks exhibition visitors will find craftsman Max Hobbs, surrounded by model boats, in his Toot Baldon studio, part of a converted farm dairy.

"The first boat I made was with my father" he told me, "just a single plank, with a cane mast and polythene sacking for a sail. I started making models seriously about 25 years ago."

He describes this as 'playing' but the great enthusiasm with which he talks about it, and the deep knowledge of model-making he has clearly acquired, suggest it means more to him than that.

Though he does not come from a nautical family – he was born and brought up in nearby Cowley – Max's professional life has always been related to water, its movement and its effect, taking into account other factors such as wind and tide, on vessels that use it for the transportation of cargo or passengers.

"I studied civil engineering at City University in London," he said. "And then worked at Wallingford, in the Hydraulics Research Station, for ten years, on things like the design of harbours and fenders, testing them on huge models the size of four tennis courts."

"For example, you might want to work out how to produce something that swings very little on its mooring, to avoid dropping things in the wrong place when you unload. That was when boats looked like boats – nowadays they are a little bit thin, a little bit top heavy!"

He has been concerned mainly with commercial enterprises, including passenger businesses on the Thames.

"Several million tourists a year travel by boat between Greenwich and Westminster," he said, "so I was involved in a bit of a redesign of the pieces of kit on the Thames, piers and floating pontoons and so on, with the Port of London Authority."

The Worshipful Company of Watermen and Lightermen made him an honorary member in recognition of this work.

One of the models he is exhibiting is *Riverman*, a Thames tug of a kind which, he says, has disappeared from the river in the last ten years.

"The water rises and falls in the tidal estuary 26ft a day, and in so doing will lift everything with it or drop it down, so these boats have to have air space – in addition to enough depth of water to float in – to avoid scraping their tops off under bridges."

As well as being works of art in themselves, the models are fully functional as sailing vessels and Max has fitted *Riverman* with some entertaining equipment in the way of lights, a smoke generator, and a speaker that sounds a siren in response to a command from the boat's radio-control unit.

From working with the Port of London Authority he moved on to Thames Water, based in Oxford, which also took him abroad to West Africa, the Middle East and India, where he was employed on a variety of water-related projects, from harbour design in Dubai to the implementation of innovative water technologies.

Another Thames craft model Artweeks visitors can see is *Josie Anna*, a barge named after one of his daughters, the detail of which



# Down to the sea

**Julie Webb** meets civil engineer and model maker Max Hobbs

illustrates beautifully Max's ingenuity in the re-use of materials – a philosophy which he holds very dear, maintaining that "like many things, model-making is not a question of spending a lot of money but of spending it right; getting the paint colours correct, knowing where to get the right materials and how to put them all together."

*Josie Anna's* tan-coloured sails have a surprising origin.

"They are made from old sheets of blueprints, boiled so that they become very flexible and the ink disappears. The linen that was used for these drawings consists of extremely fine threadwork – if you blow on it it will react as sensitively as a balloon."

"The masts are bits of the children's playpen, and floorboards from an old house made the sides." The rope, tiny in circumference, was hand-made by Max.

"These barges moved thousands of tons of clay," he said. "Now they are used for racing and the interest in them is considerable." He has had the fun of taking part in one of these competitions.

"You know when you hear an old house creaking? That is what it is like when you are in a sailing barge going flat out in the Thames estuary – you wonder about its ability to stand up to it!"

The model, just over four feet long, is built exactly to scale.

"One of many ways you can do this" Max explained, "is by what is known as 'bread and butter' construction."

This employs a series of temporary frames (slices), technically known as 'shadows' – with gaps between them – which vary in size and shape depending on their whereabouts in the hull, and which form the basis for positioning





**Max and  
Josie Anna**

**Photographs:  
David Fleming**

*“You know when you hear an old house creaking? That is what it is like when you are in a sailing barge going flat out in the Thames estuary – you wonder about its ability to stand up to it!”*



the sides. “The tools you need to make these models are quite elaborate, including a flat table for setting out, and a small bandsaw or vibrosaw for the intricate taking out of the slices, which have to be accurate to within a couple of millimetres – you have to take the trouble to get it right because mistakes magnify as you go along.”

Max uses a Myford lathe for metal-working; as well as boats powered by wind, he has made steam models, such as a 1940s-style Admiral’s launch.

Once again, recycling is much in evidence in the boat’s detail.

“The cabin top is an upside-down cake tin, painted cream, with imitation rivets created by a small punch and a nail. The roof covering of the wheelhouse is a bit of old handkerchief, resembling canvas, and the deck is individual veneer planks with black paper between to look like caulking.”

Max also makes extraordinary musical boxes and musical clocks and will be showing a number of model yachts, small and large, for which he is happy to take commissions from interested visitors. He will be exhibiting alongside an artist friend, New York-born Aimee Birnbaum, a member of the Royal

Institute of Painters in Watercolour.

His wife, the highly-regarded professional flautist Elisabeth Hobbs, performing with violinist Abraham Brody and guitarist Joules Roberts, will provide the music referred to in the exhibition’s title, contributing to an enjoyably multi-dimensional experience well worth tracking down.

**LE**

• *Water Music, The Studio, The Dairy, Toot Baldon, OX44 9NG. 07966 466720. Open May 16-19 and May 21-23, 10am-6pm (weekdays 3-6pm) [www.aeolianmodels.com](http://www.aeolianmodels.com); [www.aimeebirnbaum.com](http://www.aimeebirnbaum.com); [www.flutesinspired.co.uk](http://www.flutesinspired.co.uk)*



**Riverman**





# Discovering jewellery and sculpture on an Artweek trail



If you love jewellery, then the Abingdon area is the place to visit during Artweeks. A new group of jewellers and silversmiths who aptly call themselves 'Soldering On' are hosting an exhibition in the beautiful County Hall Museum in Abingdon.

In the old stable block at Peachcroft Farm you'll find the Jewellery and Silver Society Oxford (Jasso). This is a new venue for 2015 and will display work by Andrew Harrison, Sue Hill, Ali Jones, Barbara Payne, Judith Payne, Mia Sarosi, Jenny Smith and John Stephen. There will be a children's activity table and a chance to meet the artists.

If you fancy a walk to end your day, head for Susan Wheeler's lino printing workshop. This small but-perfectly-formed studio is tucked away in Lower Radley.

A weekend Artweeks trail could take you the Sunningwell School of Art, longstanding supporters of the annual festival. After enjoying their exhibition of painting, drawing, sculpture and pottery, drive over scenic Boars Hill with its famous view of the dreaming spires. At the bottom of the hill head for Art in the Barn at Dry Sandford where you will discover an eclectic mix of artists exhibiting ceramics, sculpture, jewellery, glass, textiles, wood, paintings and drawings in a tranquil setting.

If you feel like a short but delightful stroll, explore the remarkable landscape of Dry Sandford Nature Reserve before heading through Wootton in the direction of the A420. Visit Appleton's Village Hall. Amanda Smith and Mo Alner started Village Arts in 2010.

Amanda said: "Mo works in ceramic sculpture and I am into textiles. Six years ago we joined with Jo Golding, and had our first exhibition in Mo's conservatory. It was popular and so we relocated to the village hall. Each year we invite up to 14 more artists to join us, taking particular care to have a group that will show as many different medium as possible, and quite often, with artists who have never exhibited before. This makes it exciting for us, too!

"Our show is only on over a weekend as the village hall in Appleton is in high demand but the village is incredibly supportive. Jean Wickens, who was with us in 2010 sold everything! She has been working ever since to replace her 'stock'."

An example of her exquisite work is can be seen on their facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/villageartssociety>.

According to Amanda, some artists need a confidence boost.

"Janice Coles exhibited for the first time three years ago and very nearly changed her mind at the last minute! Fortunately a stiff gin and tonic at home before the private view helped see her through and she received so many compliments she now loves showing her work."

**Sylvia Vetta** is your guide to exhibitions in South Oxfordshire



Amanda is a member of the Oxford Embroiders Guild who meet on the second Wednesday of each month in Iffley Village Hall at 7.30. If visiting Artweeks inspires you to want to try textile making new members are always welcome.

After Appleton return to the A420 and head for Faringdon. The Folly Artists are new to Artweeks and are exhibiting in the old town hall and nearby The Vale Artists are housed over three floors of the beautiful café, The Rookery, where you can take a refreshment break.

If you have never seen The Great Barn at Coxwell, the next stop is worth it for that alone. Inspired by The Great Barn, the Great Coxwell Artists are exhibiting painting, stone-carving, jewellery, photography, ceramics, woodcarving and, unusually, bookbinding. There are demonstrations, lunches and teas between 11am-5.30pm in Peter's Barn Gallery.

If you love sculpture, venue 349, off the A420, is the place to visit. Here you will discover one-and-a-half acres of sculpture, wood, bronze and stone in Longcot by Oxfordshire's 'mother of stone carving' Pat Elmore.

There is one venue which may take up a whole day on its own. It's where you can see a pack of wolves, a flock of sheep and a life-sized horse gamboling among wildflowers in the Oxfordshire countryside. These unlikely companions will be unleashed in the grounds of Bothy Vineyard, Frilford Heath, as part of an ambitious sculpture show from 23 May to 7 June 2015. Bothy's director Sian Liwicki said: "Our first Artweeks exhibition in 2013 was a dream come true and we are thrilled to host *Sculpture in the Vineyard* again."

With 200 outdoor sculptures, Sculpture in the Vineyard will be Oxfordshire's largest exhibition of its kind this year. The work will be sited around the seven of the county's oldest vineyard. A further 50 indoor sculptures will be on show in the working winery where if Bacchus calls after the exposure to art, you can enjoy some wine tasting too. The Bothy exhibition is being staged in aid of The Nasio Trust.





**Artist Jeanne Jackson prepares her new work for Artweeks**

*Photographs: Marc West*



Jeanne Jackson never planned to become a ceramic artist, but now she would not have it any other way. “It was almost a chance thing,” she said. “I never did it at school, but I did A-Level art and then went to art school and ended up doing a degree in ceramics. I was always going to do something to do with art, and it was just chance that it ended up being ceramics. It just sort of happened.

“I think they wanted me on the ceramics course at college because I did a lot of drawing, and they wanted someone with a fine art attitude in the ceramics department. I like making, but I also do a lot of drawing. Most of my stuff is very decorated, and I could probably easily have painted instead!”

After college, Jeanne had a studio in London before moving to Oxfordshire over 20 years ago. She became an art teacher, first part-time and then full-time, eventually becoming head of art. Then retirement came along and allowed Jeanne to devote herself entirely to her art.

She now has her own purpose-built studio at her home in Horspath, where she produces a variety of functional and decorative items in earthenware or stoneware, including jugs, bowls, pots, egg cups and toast racks, all of which she designs, makes and paints herself.

“The three things I do are brightly-coloured bird dishes, a range of stoneware which is more usable, such as bowls and mugs and things like that, then painted earthenware, such as small bowls with fish on. I also do those with chickens and hens on. You need to have a range of work.”

Jeanne’s pottery is either hand built or wheel-thrown, with the designs carved into the clay and oxide applied to the lines before being allowed to dry completely. The pieces are then placed in the kiln and fired up to 1000 degrees, before being underglazed, glazed and then giving another firing in the kiln.

“It’s quite fiddly and very time consuming, but I like doing it,” she says. “I enjoy the decorating more than the making, because you can sit down when you’re decorating! I really like hand building, but I can only throw on the wheel for so long and I lose concentration. A lot of potters like being on the wheel for hours and hours, but I find it very repetitive.”

Her unique designs are inspired largely by the many colourful species of birds she has seen on her travels.

“I have been to Costa Rica, which is fabulous for birds, and I go to Africa quite a lot, which is good for exotic birds. I have family in Cape Town, so we go there quite a lot. While I am there I have the time to look and to draw and to make notes, and then I steal my husband’s bird books!”

Featuring exotic birds in her designs allows Jeanne to indulge her love of bright colours, and also gives her a bit of artistic licence – something she can’t normally get away with when featuring British birds.

“I have made a few pieces recently where I have put English birds on, and I found that much more restricting. They are just as beautiful, but not as colourful and so not as much fun to do.

“With the exotic birds I start off with very

*Continued on page 29*



## Capturing the exotic

**Nicola Lisle** discovers how a local potter has been inspired by her travels to Central America and Africa





*Using exotic birds in her designs allows Jeanne to indulge her love of bright colours, and also gives her a bit of artistic licence – something she can't normally get away with when featuring British birds*

*From page 29*

realistic drawings, but then I change them a bit – I add bits, or sometimes change the colours. If you did that with a chaffinch you would be in trouble!

"Also, when you are drawing by carving into clay, it is quite hard to be really precise with shape, and with the delicate little English birds it has to be exactly right."

When not travelling, Jeanne spends most of her time in her studio.

"All day every day," she laughed. "I really love doing it."

Although she does occasionally work to commission, Jeanne prefers the relative freedom of producing whatever she fancies.

"I like to make and people buy what I have made," she said.

"Making to commission is always very time consuming and more stressful, because no matter how carefully somebody describes what they want it is very hard to be sure it is right, and once it is made you cannot change it."

"But I will only work to commission if it is the sort of thing I do. I have made some large fish bowls and somebody came round and said, 'I would love that but can I have it in another glaze?' If it is a glaze I have already got then certainly I will make another one."

"But if they say they want something that looks like something they saw somewhere else, it's a big no-no."

"I seem to manage to sell everything I make at the moment, which is good."

Jeanne's work can be seen in several places

during Artweeks. In addition to her studio at home, she is also exhibiting with the Oxford Craft Guild at the Horspath Hub and Chipping Norton Town Hall, and is contributing to the Artweeks Exhibition at the Turrill Sculpture Gardens in Summertown.

As a member of the Oxford Crafts Guild, she has been instrumental in organizing the exhibition at the Hub.

"It is good, because it will help bring people into the village," she said. "There will be 13 Craft Guild people taking part there, so there will be jewellers and textile people as well as potters."

So what are the attractions of Artweeks for Jeanne?

"People coming round are interested. They talk about your work in a way you had not thought of."

"It also makes you take the time to connect with other people who are also making. When you are working away in your studio all the time, which I love doing, it is quite isolating."

"The worst thing about taking part is that you are not able to go round and look at other people's work because you are open yourself, especially this year when I am open two of the weeks. But there is one week in the middle, so I might be able to whiz round then!"

"But it is good. It is a community thing. Sometimes the same people will come back and say 'I bought this from you last year and I have really liked using it', and that is very nice."



You can see Jeanne's work during Artweeks at these locations:

- **Shepherds Cottage**, 2 Blenheim Road, Horspath OX33 1RY. May 16-18 and 21-25, 12-6pm (Thursday noon-8pm). 01865 876647. <http://jeannejackson.co.uk>
  - **The Town Hall**, Chipping Norton OX7 5AD. 01608 646998. May 2-6, 11am-5pm. Email: [selmastagg@googlemail.com](mailto:selmastagg@googlemail.com), [www.oxcg.co.uk](http://www.oxcg.co.uk)
  - **Horspath Hub**, The Green, Oxford Road, Horspath OX33 1RU. May 16-25, noon-6pm (Thursday noon-8pm). 01865 876647. [www.oxcg.co.uk](http://www.oxcg.co.uk)
  - **The Turrill Sculpture Garden**, behind Summertown Library, South Parade, Oxford OX2 7JN. 01865 515584. Email: [info@turrillsculpturegarden.org.uk](mailto:info@turrillsculpturegarden.org.uk)
- Various dates from May 2-21 during library opening hours; check website for details, [www.turrillsculpturegarden.org.uk](http://www.turrillsculpturegarden.org.uk)



**Imogen Rigden (left) with husband, Steve Lunn (right) dog Flora and Imogen's son, Joseph Rimmer and his partner, Ellie Morton**

**Photographs: Damian Halliwell**

# A family affair

**Julie Webb** visits a group of artists with a very special connection exhibiting in Wolvercote



**I**n the Lunn/Rigden household, on the Wolvercote and Wytham Artweeks Trail, you will find no fewer than eight family members exhibiting – not to mention the lovable dog Flora, whose speckled feet are a work of art in themselves.

The family relationships take some untangling. Stephen Lunn (former software designer, teacher, and educational researcher, now happily concentrating on making art from found objects) and Imogen Rigden (former EFL teacher at St Clare's college, painter) are married, both for the second time.

Their children/step-children and partners, all in their 20s, exhibit as Art Delta, "because a delta spreads out and goes its own way, but at the same time is connected," Imogen explained.

Steve's daughter, Amy Dehn Lunn, is a doctor. She is showing her ink and wash drawings.

"Though she is frantically busy, she observes things – little moments in time – in daily life, or while travelling. Mainly figures. She captures them completely, without much fuss and from

unusual perspectives," said Imogen.

Amy's fiancé Geoff Tibbs is an artist, writer and member of the Magic Circle, who is presenting a video installation.

As befits his calling, an air of mystery attaches to the exhibit at the time of writing but it will, he said, draw on his interest in "disrupting the linear experience of video-watching".

Last year he embedded a film in a mirror, so that viewers could not watch it without seeing themselves and the space they were in. His exploration of the visual languages of early abstract films is influencing his production for 2015.

Imogen has two sons, Benjamin and Joseph Rimmer. Benjamin and his Australian-born partner Karina Scuteri are musicians – Karina a singer-songwriter and Benjamin currently with a new Oxford band, Paddox. Both also work in London.

As they did in 2014, they are putting together for Artweeks 2015 an interactive video collage using home-made and found footage, with composed sound dubbed over it, which takes the form of a series of panels any of

*Continued on page 32*



Joseph Rimmer



From page 31

which can be played simultaneously or in any order, producing a unique performance.

"Last year a couple were so fascinated they sat in front of it for two hours, with an earpiece and half a chair each," Steve told me.

Karina and Benjamin intend eventually to set up an online facility for anyone to upload their own contribution to the collage.

Younger brother Joseph Rimmer and his girlfriend Ellie Morton live and work in Oxford. Ellie, originally from York, is a social work student at Ruskin College and has a part-time job at Cafcass (a Government organisation advocating for children in family courts).

"I paint to relax," she said. "It runs parallel to work. Tough things I come across there are reflected in the way I mix paints. I tend to get lost in what I paint: that offers escape to other people."

Her sea pictures – mainly in acrylics – exude a calmness which viewers find infectious. Travel is her principal inspiration.

"My family was from the Isle of Man, so I spent lots of time there and I just love the sea and its different colours and moods. Last year we went to France and Spain – the Spanish landscape is absolutely beautiful. I have never seen anything like it."

She has also worked successfully with découpage, gluing favourite things such as cartoons and crosswords to charity-shop-table tops.

Her partner Joe, a product designer, is an administrator with the long-established Oxford construction firm Symm. He is exhibiting the wire sculptures he makes "as a bit of a hobby" but his passion is the creative potential of the 3D printer, from which he is building a business, having already been called upon to visit the set of *Silent Witness* and explain to Emilia Fox how to re-create a 3D hand.

Artweeks visitors can see a classical door surround Joe modelled for his employers, with each element of the masonry to scale. A more experimental piece is his rose goblet.

"I was trying to see how thin I could get the stem, how strong it was and how much light came through it – you can see the grain of the filament through the petal design. It is amazing to watch the melted material being laid down in layers and setting."

Joe and his step-father Steve also carry out joint projects. Their workshop is a glorious jumble of useful bits and bobs and finished, half-finished and possibly never-to-be-finished objects.

Steve has been painting and making things for 50 years. His pieces are aesthetically satisfying in themselves but the stories attached to them, and to their component materials, such as driftwood gathered from the riverbank near Godstow Lock, add extra interest.

One of Steve's exhibits, a combination of found wood and painted symbols, rooted in his study of philosophy, is an expression of the Confucian idea of *Chung Fu*, translated as 'innermost sincerity', and refers also to the ancient Chinese divination text the *I Ching*.

The chance discovery of a Craven A cigarette packet under a floor and its connection with a story about Pakistan's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, whose favourite brand it was, inspired his piece entitled *And he Laughed, Happy as a Child*.

Another, *No Way Out*, sprang from reflections



Steve Lunn



## Imogen Rigden



on a salmon farm observed during a Scottish sailing trip.

"All day and all night these beautiful great fish were simply throwing themselves at the cages," he said.

Scotland has also featured heavily in Imogen's work. She paints mainly in oils and acrylics and is attracted to wild places, both rural and urban, as subjects.

Artweeks visitors can see her image of the landscape around Didcot Power Station the day the first cooling towers were demolished. "But I was painting on the car bonnet and I bent over at the wrong time and missed the moment!" she said.

"My work often makes a statement about the environment from an unexpected angle," Imogen said. "In 2012 I produced a piece based on a community project I did with people in Barton losing their scrubland to an urban park. I like my work being used to draw attention to the small things like weeds we ignore, despise or get rid of."

This year she is taking her practice in new directions through OVADA (Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Agency)'s Warehouse Art School, so some exhibits reflect the challenges she has encountered on the course. **LE**

• 54 Rosamund Road, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8NX. 07847 092746. May 9-17, noon-6pm (Thursday noon-8pm).  
[www.imogenrigden.com](http://www.imogenrigden.com); [www.ovada.org.uk/stephen-lunn](http://www.ovada.org.uk/stephen-lunn); [www.coroflot.com/josephpaul3D](http://www.coroflot.com/josephpaul3D); [www.magicassemblage.com](http://www.magicassemblage.com)



**Ellie Morton**



# The concrete alchemist

**Theresa Thompson** meets sculptor  
Richard Goldsmith

**P**recision engineering meets art and beauty! That CAN'T be concrete?" read the brief I had with me as I set out for South Oxfordshire and sculptor Richard Goldsmith's studio. It also promised that his works "defy any preconceptions of concrete as ugly".

But concrete? Ok, concrete might fit the bill as "industrial-inspired" pieces, but as "sleek and stylish, rich in colour and shine" that was taking it too far, surely?

But no, for that is exactly the appeal of Richard's sculptures. And though the photos on this self-taught sculptor's website tell their own story, you can see for yourself during Artweeks this month when Richard opens his studio to visitors to show how the alchemy, as he calls it, transpires.

"Most people think of concrete sculptures as those you see in garden centres," said Richard as I stood looking at – and believe me, wanting to touch, so smooth and marble-like were they – the array of sculptures adorning in his home.

This is his first show in Oxfordshire

*Continued on page 37*





From page 35

Artweeks, and his first since deciding to take the plunge and make a full time career out of sculpting extraordinary pieces in cast concrete, and cast and sheet metal. Then, with the decision made, the daily commute to London and IT job left behind, in January 2015 the up and coming sculptor was elected a member of the Royal Society of British Sculptors.

Richard puts a lot of thought into his works. He is a thinker as well as a maker. After I had seen a couple of his larger works I asked about his background, expecting to hear him mention engineering. He did, but only as a family link.

"My uncles were engineers, one in nautical engineering and the other planes, on my mother's side of the family – so it has always been in me. Even in the plaster sculptures I began with in my early 20s there was an engineering element. My father, who was a lawyer, introduced me to philosophy, the intellectual side; he was a 'thinker'. As a father he wanted me to embrace what I was passionate about. He would have loved to have known I had taken this step."

A work called Soho Block was on the dining table where we sat and chatted before going into the studio. Ostensibly made in black marble with circular openings and a decorative metal cover, the sculpture was eye-catching in its solidity and paradoxical apparent lightness. It instantly took on a whole new meaning, though, when Richard pointed to the design on the cover, saying: "It is a manhole cover!"

"I tend to look up when I'm walking around. I have a love of architecture. There are always elements of architecture in my work. But I also look down! That's where a love of manhole covers comes from," Richard revealed.

"It started with a cover I had seen near Farringdon Road in London when I was out one lunchtime. Segments of it had been worn down over the years. I felt a sense of history from it. It got me thinking about the subterranean world. What's beneath? A world beneath the surface that we glide over, don't see, don't think about. This fitted with how I view the world, spiritually and philosophically."

"Later I saw another that just grabbed me as I passed it in Denmark Street, Soho. The minute I saw it I just connected. The size, scale, circular pattern of it – it reminded me of a mandala, the circular spiritual symbol that's used to help focus attention."

At home in Oxfordshire, armed with a photo graph he had taken of it, Richard "played around with the idea" modelling small versions in wood and card, then in concrete, eventually creating Soho Block as we see it today.

A miniature metal version of the Soho manhole cover fits snugly into the top of the polished concrete block, embellished with symbols Richard added "to give it an extra layer," while inside on the tunnel's reflective surface are some engraved words, intentionally

illegible, to get you thinking. I like the sense of something being open and closed. Openings invite you to explore," Richard explained.

Thus, these themes often feature in Richard's sculptures; similarly enclosure, and extraction – because Richard likes making something new that's part of, or an extraction from something greater, he says.

Several works are presented in boxes, specially made in wood and paper by this multitalented man. For Richard, boxes are the essence of something being very precious.

"Collectors' items were often kept in boxes, to open and reveal the contents to make it more special," he explained. "Now I am engaged full-time with sculpture, I'm working on larger-scale works and exploring new methods of casting."

*Torus* is one of the two largest works he's made to date. Also called *Communication Pipe*, this hollow section of pipe is cast and moulded with a rim of coloured sections and a highly-polished sheet pewter interior face. "It is all about connections and duality – each side relating to the other, the same shape and material each side, but different colours."

But why had he chosen concrete in the first place? I asked. Straightaway he answered, "Permanence! And because for me concrete is a magical material. It's plastic, you can cast it; it enables me to make pieces like *Torus*.

I can create beautiful finishes on the outside. It just fits with my artistic language, with what I am trying to express. It is liquid stone."

How or when did concrete become a thing of beauty for him? He doesn't know, he replied.

For him it was just a natural progression that he's never questioned. He does know the artists that influenced him, however, though none are working in the same material. They include Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, the Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon.

Richard recalls how from the moment he

first saw their work in his early 20s "the penny dropped" and he just knew he wanted to become a sculptor.

A lot of trial and error has gone into the work. "I do experience a lot of failure. But I have learned by trial and error, by going to galleries and my own research on the Internet. It has been my own journey. I am always doodling and gathering ideas, and learning techniques by necessity."

"Concrete is a mixture of water, cement, and aggregates (sand and stone) – three elements only. It's so simple. It is like baking a cake! You just mix ingredients together and put the cake in the oven."

How pleasing then, when we moved into the studio, the first thing I saw was a Kenwood mixer. A family heirloom, he jokes, from his mother's kitchen, and a second one too both used as his concrete mixers.

Richard showed me the moulds he had made for sculptures such as the nested hemispheres he makes plenty of, some with pewter insets, some multi-coloured, and some kept as single layer polished bowls.

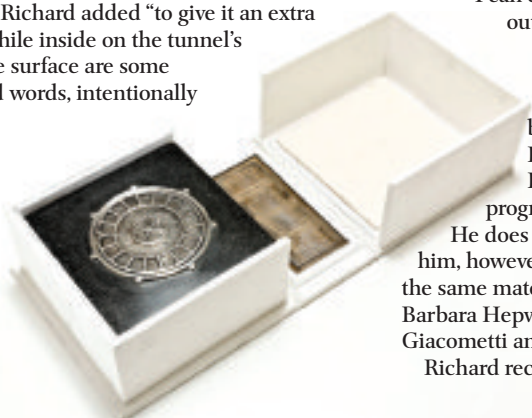
Here too are the artist pigments used to colour the wet concrete – learning to do that was very much trial and error, he tells me – and the diamond grinder for grinding and polishing the cut surfaces. It is like an excavation, he said, revealing the colour of the concrete below the surface – white, grey or black depending on the type of aggregate.

Pipes of polished concrete, tunnels, manhole covers, hemispheres, split forms, tetrads, a scarab beetle with copper pipe legs, a fish in white concrete with nickel-plated copper ribs that apparently the Devon boat builders really related to, there seems no end to Richard's imagination and skill.

LE

• Richard's studio is open during Oxfordshire Artweeks on the following dates: May 16-17 (10am-4pm); May 21-22 (noon-6pm); May 23, 24, 25 (10am-4pm). [www.richardgoldsmith.org](http://www.richardgoldsmith.org)

May 2015 Oxfordshire Limited Edition 37





**M**elanie Wright is one of those lucky people who has managed to make a living out of not just one of her childhood passions, but two. A budding artist from an early age, and a keen horse-rider for as long as she can remember, she now spends much of her time observing, sketching and painting horses.

"I grew up in a saddle," she said. "I am not riding at the moment, but I have ridden up until very recently. I don't have a horse of my own now because I do not have the time. But I grew up riding and hunting in North Yorkshire, and painting, because both my grandmothers were artists. So it is very much in my background and blood."

Melanie has been based in Chipping Norton since 2008, but her training and early career were in London. She studied fine art, portraiture and life painting at Heatherley's School of Fine Art and History of Art at Christie's Education, before setting up her own studio in Battersea in 1991. Here she established a successful portrait practice and exhibited her work across London.

At the same time, she was getting involved in painting horse racing in London, at Ascot and Epsom Downs, and her move to the Cotswolds enabled her to expand her equestrian painting and also move more into landscape painting.

"Coming out here was a fresh direction into the polo that was on offer at Cirencester, the dressage yards and all the national hunt training yards," she said.

"I love the city, and I still spend a lot of time there and still do portrait commissions up in London, but I do love living here. Everything's so inspirational, for the landscape painting as well."

For someone with a passion for horses, Melanie's world couldn't be more perfect. She can frequently be found setting off for a polo match, a hunt, a dressage yard or racing stables, armed with her sketchbooks and watercolours, immersing herself in these contrasting equestrian environments.

"What's nice for me is that they all have their seasons – the national hunt season, which finished about April time, and then in May the polo season starts in this country.

"Dressage is something I go and study and sketch in indoor arenas during the winter months, and you do not have the speed and action with those, you have the balletic poise and meditational approach, which is lovely too. It is nice to have that contrast.

"People see you at the races sketching, at point to point, at dressage events, at polo, and they like to come up and talk, so it is a nice way of meeting people as well and doing business.

"It is really nice to have that social dynamic, and with portraiture I have always enjoyed the relationship between portrait and sitter, whether human or a horse. You are dealing with a living thing, you are communicating with either a family or the owners of a horse, so there is that social aspect.

"Then of course there are long periods of painting in the studio as well, which I love, but I like the contrast. I like to have both things going."

Melanie works in charcoal, oil and



## Horse sense

**Nicola Lisle** talks to an artist with a passion for all things equestrian

watercolour, depending on the subject.

"Different clients like different things. When I paint for exhibitions I am painting purely for myself, so I am exploring a subject and responding to it with whichever medium feels right for what I'm trying to get across.

"Sometimes with polo it is nice to work in a monotone charcoal. The sense of movement can really come across because you're not distracted by colour. But racing is such a very colourful sport with the silks it is a shame not to utilise that."

The sense of movement is a particular characteristic of Melanie's work, and one that she is always keen to explore. "I like the dynamism of movement and I think that's what people are attracted to in my work.

"It is what you feel passionate about and what you're excited about that comes across in the paintings, hopefully, and for me it is that thrill of speed and the racing and the power of those animals, or at a polo match that dynamic which is different again, very fast and furious."

All Melanie's equestrian work starts with hundreds of sketches, working directly from

her subject, and she feels this is the best way to capture movement and shape.

"It is a very old school approach," she admits. "A lot of artists now don't do sketch books, they work from photographs. So it is almost a dying art. But for me it's one of the most pleasurable parts of doing it.

"I find I make a strong connection doing it from life. It is more personal and it means your work isn't going to be photographic. I do not like to work in a photo-real way. I want it to be as much about the surface interest of the painting as it is about representation. Otherwise, I think people can just get wonderful photographs."

Another passion for Melanie is landscape painting, and again she only ever works from the subject. The vagaries of the British weather don't allow for planning when it comes to landscape painting, so she always travels with watercolours and sketchbooks in the car and just stops to sketch or paint when the time seems right.

"They are all done locally, and I will look back over the collection after a year and see if I



Melanie is looking forward to opening her studio during Artweeks, when she will be displaying a mixture of equestrian and

• *Melanie Wright's studio, 33 Spring Street, Chipping Norton OX7 5NN, will be open on May 2-4 and 8-10, from noon to 6pm. 01608 643546. [www.melaniewrightartist.co.uk](http://www.melaniewrightartist.co.uk)*





## Monica Nelson talks to innovative designer Tony Davis

**A**t the dawn of the new Millennium, just as Apple was undergoing one of the most successful corporate rebrands of all time, Oxfordshire artist and designer Tony Davis quit his job with the company.

If he had kept this rather cushy role developing creative tools for Apple technology, he would be sitting on a very tidy sum right now. Instead, he sits in a modest studio in the garden of his Stonesfield cottage, the walls and shelves of which are crammed with his own artworks, products and inventions.

As he sips a cappuccino from one of the iconic Penguin book mugs he designed, the 54-year-old has no regrets about his career decision.

"Apple was my last proper job," he explained. "I was one of their project product evangelists right on the cusp of Apple being rebranded. It was the best job in the world – company car, share options. If I had stayed I would be independently wealthy. But I had to go. It is not that it has not been difficult, but I have been able to do so many things."

It is not so much the volume of his creative work that is remarkable, but the variety. Among too many things to mention, he has produced a series of OS maps of literary places, invented and created board games, designed and produced beautiful and quirky ceramic tiles including a range inspired by the London tube map – the fact he was a ceramics novice when he embarked on this project did not stand in his way. "I am a fast learner", he shrugged.

He has also created a series of installations with tiny figurines, composed poetry inspired by his own photography and is artist-in-residence for the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust, working on a photographic study of the hands of hospital staff.

Despite spending much of his time working alone in his studio, Tony is very sociable and

*Continued on page 43*

# Imagined landscapes





From page 41

loves to talk about his work. This is one of the reasons he is looking forward to the Artweeks exhibition at Heyford House in Lower Heyford in May, where he will be exhibiting some of his work with fellow members of the art group, Art More Lovely.

Tony is full of ideas and if he thinks he is onto a good one, he won't let red tape or corporate apathy stand in his way. Even if, as with the OS maps project, it takes more than a decade to get his way.

He is a bit like a popcorn machine without the lid on – ideas shooting out in all directions. While he seems content to lay successful projects to rest without exploiting them financially forever, he refuses to give up on the stubborn kernels which have not popped. He spends far more time talking about the ideas which have not worked out (yet) than his many success stories.

He blames poor timing for the failure of his home interior ceramic *Scrabble* tiles project and envisages this taking off at some point eventually.

Another latent project inspired by *Scrabble* is a board game called *Kibodo*, which means 'keyboard' in Japanese.

It uses computer keyboard keys for the letters and incorporates special keys like 'shift' to enable a player to rearrange tiles to make new words and 'caps lock' which lock a word to prevent other players from stealing or moving your words.

Toy company Hasbro thought it was such a good idea/threat they bought a share option, essentially paying Tony \$100,000 not to make it. Hasbro's licence has now expired leaving Tony free to hit the 'Return' button on this project, so watch this space (bar).

He has invented another board game based on *Scrabble* which has just gone on sale in the US. It is called *Elemensus* and uses letters and phonemes from the periodic table so players get to learn a spot of chemistry while they play.

His latest project involves altering and amending Ordnance Survey maps to create maps of famous literary places such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and Thomas Hardy's Christminster, the city based on Oxford in *Jude the Obscure*.

Rather than simply creating an OS map of the literary lands as depicted in the novels, Tony takes these places into an imaginary future and explores how they might look now.

One of his little touches on the *Treasure Island* map is to transform the deciduous tree symbols used to depict woodland in OS maps into little palm trees.

The painstaking technical process of altering the various layers of the OS maps was the easy part compared to what he went through to get permission from the notoriously protective Government mapping agency based in Southampton.

It took about 12 years of patience and persistence to get to the point where he was granted a licence to use and alter the maps.

"When I first started out one of the things I thought about was OS maps," said Tony. "I thought it would be fantastic to do something with those maps. I have always been interested in maps, especially old maps of Roman Britain. I think people have a sense of place where they come from, where they lived, fell in love, got drunk.



"The reason why OS is successful is not because they have mapped the whole of the UK but because they have provided evidence of place more than any other country in the world. You cannot find anywhere else that's mapped in this way. I wanted to do it poetically. I wanted to explore language and places too.

"Because I read, I have an imagination. Where is the Mill on the Floss? What does landscape feel like? I thought, 'What if you could do a game using flash cards for symbols?' I went to Southampton and suggested I make a card game for children.

"The answer was a firm 'No, these are our Crown Jewels'. I thought, 'Yes, they are your Crown Jewels and you are not doing anything with them.'

After many conversations with the agency and grapples with "the most complex licensing agreements" Tony had ever seen, he now has a series of literary OS maps to exhibit during Artweeks.

One of his most successful projects to date is a range of mugs, pencils and deck-chairs featuring the original Penguin book covers.

He came up with the idea of using the brand in this way, got on the phone to Penguin, persuaded them to have a meeting and in 2002 was granted a licence. Then he watched his Penguin products sell. In their millions.

Penguin soon realised it was missing a trick



and later increased its cut in the sales before eventually bringing the project in-house.

Much of his work draws on literature, including a board game called *Bookchase*, which he launched at the Hay Festival in 2007.

It is based on *Trivial Pursuit* but instead of collecting pies, players collect tiny books to put on miniature shelves. The game box is designed to look like a giant book and the spin-off potential for fans of specific authors is endless.

"It is full of ridiculous questions," Tony explained. "Some questions do not have a right answer. Some questions have more than one right answer. You could play it with children who cannot even read. I sold 20,000 copies of the game. To a company like Hasbro, that is a failure. To me that's £200,000 of value."

As an artist with a technology background, one of his techniques involves creating paintings using high-end digital retouching technology.

One example of this technique is a large digitally retouched version of an early 'selfie' the actor and presenter Stephen Fry sent to Tony from his mobile phone in 1995 during his disappearance while suffering from depression and contemplating suicide. It is a striking piece – the vibrant colours on the canvas contrasting starkly with Fry's haunted expression.

The painting hangs proudly in the home he shares with partner and fellow artist Genny Early, also a member of Art More Lovely, and her two sons, Paddy, 15, and Christopher, 11. Tony also has three children from a former marriage – Joe, 29, Hattie, 25 and Noah, 17.

While he has needed a business head to make a living and support his family over the last 15 years, he clearly counts the enjoyment he has brought to people through his games and inventions as part of his pay package. **LE**

• Art More Lovely, a group of nine artists including Tony Davis, will be exhibiting at Heyford House, Lower Heyford, on May 2-4 and 9-10, from noon until 6pm. The exhibition will include original work, including digital art, drawing, furniture, new media, painting, photography, printmaking and wood. [www.artmorelovely.co.uk](http://www.artmorelovely.co.uk)