

YOUR
FREE
COPY

Oxfordshire • Living

• MAY 2023 • LIVING-MAGAZINES.CO.UK • A NEWSQUEST PUBLICATION • COMPLIMENTARY •

Plus
STYLE &
WELLNESS
ARTS &
CULTURE
MOTORING
AND MORE

DOORSTEP TREASURES

Oxfordshire Arts Weeks

Painted *in* history

Ashmolean inspires
the Ashmolean

LEADING *the* PACK

WHAT THE MOST FASHIONABLE WILL BE
WEARING TO THIS YEAR'S ROYAL ASCOT

NATURAL TALENT

Eleanor Fausing's
botanic designs

Your guide to
HENLEY
FESTIVAL

OXFORDSHIRE LIVING

WELCOME

MAY 2023

Just when you are glad to have polished off all the Easter chocolate leftovers, along comes a very special Bank Holiday and its obligatory afternoon teas!

If there is one thing us Brits do well, it's ceremony, and come rain or shine the bunting will be out all across Oxfordshire as we witness an historic event - the Coronation.

Ever the fashion enthusiast, one thing I'm keen to see are the outfits. What does one wear to a Coronation? Perhaps those attending would do well to take a look at our feature on this year's Royal Ascot style guide.

For a decade, this document has acted as inspiration, not only for race day, but for summer's biggest events. And having had a makeover of its own, the guide is getting us under starter's orders for some serious style.

Florals, colour, texture... whether you are into haute couture, or looking to elevate pieces from your own wardrobe, there is something for everyone.

If your summer plans are about home renovations, then delve into our



'If there's one thing us Brits do well, it's ceremony, and come rain or shine the bunting will be out all across Oxfordshire as we witness an historic event - the Coronation'

homes and gardens section. Eleanor Fausing brings the outside in with her biophilic designs on page 22. And if actually being outside more is your aim this summer, take a look at the summerhouse tips from Hartley Botanic on page 66.

We interview some of the incredible designers showcasing their wares for Artweeks on page 36. And we take a look at the new paint collection inspired by the world's oldest museum, Oxford's very own Ashmolean on page 42.

If you love a bit of history, you will enjoy the new exhibition at Blenheim (all about its royal links, very timely).

And make the most of that Royal Ascot outfit by re-wearing it to Britain's most glamorous festival at Henley on page 94.

SAMANTHA HARMAN
EDITOR
 samantha.harman@newsquest.co.uk

Stay with us all month by following us on Instagram @livingoxfordshire. Subscribe to our complimentary eEdition at living-magazines.co.uk

CONTACTS



SHANE HARDING
 Publisher
 01865 425493
 shane.harding@newsquest.co.uk



ANDREA HARRIS
 Magazines Production Manager
 andrea.harris@living-magazines.co.uk



KATY PEARSON
 Group Managing Editor
 katy.pearson@newsquest.co.uk



DARRAN REYNOLDS
 Sales Director
 01793 501773
 darran.reynolds@newsquest.co.uk



RYAN WESTWOOD
 Magazines Design Manager
 ryan.westwood@living-magazines.co.uk



JULIE BOLTON
 Distribution Manager
 07815 856562
 julie.bolton@midlands.newsquest.co.uk



ABBIE POWLES
 Lead Magazines Designer
 abbie.powles@living-magazines.co.uk

Oxfordshire Living is published by Newsquest Media Group Ltd of Loudwater Mill, Station Road, High Wycombe HP10 9TY, registered in England and Wales with company number of 01676637. Newsquest.co.uk



Oxfordshire Living adheres to the Editors' Code of Practice (which you can find at pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html). We are regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation. Complaints about stories should be referred firstly to the Editor by email at: samantha.harman@newsquest.co.uk or by post at Newspaper House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0EJ. It is essential that your email or letter is headed "Complaint" in the subject line and contains the following information: • Your name, email address, postal address and daytime telephone number. • The title or website, preferably a copy of the story or at least the date, page number or website address of the article and any headline. • A full explanation of your complaint by reference to the Editors' Code. If you do not provide any of the information above this may delay or prevent us dealing with your complaint. Your personal details will only be used for administration purposes. If we cannot reach a resolution between us then you can contact IPSO by email at complaints@ipso.co.uk or by post at IPSO, c/o Halton House, 20-23 Holborn, London EC1N 2JD. If complaining about third-party comments on our website articles, you should use the "report this post" function online next to the comment.



TREASURES *on* *your* DOORSTEP

Artists across Oxfordshire are opening their doors this month to help you find one-off treasures your home will love. *Living* meets some of those artists this Oxfordshire Artweeks

Although trained as an architect, Artweeks artist Alexandra Browne found herself increasingly interested in interior design and for several years she worked for well-known interior designer Rose Uniacke to bring modern luxury into classic Georgian houses, rockstar pads in the country and stylish homes around the world. More recently, Alexandra refined the scale on which she works, and now produces bespoke hand-painted ceramic tiles that bring a touch of this glamour and panache to any home.

"I like the simplicity and scale of a tile," she says, "and I paint characters using glaze on hand-cut ceramic tiles as if onto paper or canvas before firing them."

"The first tiles I painted were monkeys, inspired by a House of Hackney wallpaper,"

says Alexandra. "It was bold, busy and colourful, with monkeys scampering amongst palm trees and I wanted to take their shapes and charm and put them into something more neutral. Crazy wallpaper in a downstairs bathroom is popular but can be overwhelming; these were just as playful but less imposing.

"Then, as I have always loved life drawing and nude art, I began to paint a series of sunbathers. These became the Pampelonne series, which are still my most popular designs."

Pampelonne is the beach most associated with Saint Tropez and the glamour of an A-list lifestyle. Inspired by the timeless elegance of the French Riviera, Alexandra's Pampelonne tiles are classy – both understated yet oozing style. On each a sleek figure sits, stretches or snoozes, evoking warm

beaches and lazy days: this painted population is pretty and perky in stylised curves, the occasional nipple of a topless sunbather appearing as a simple dot.

"I love to paint the classic woman's silhouette because it's simply beautiful," says Alexandra, although she muses whether it might be amusing to introduce the occasional lifeguard in Speedos into the mix and wonders, laughingly, whether he would be lean, like her women, or muscled in contrast.

The sunbathers are almost all painted in three colours, a skin tone, a glossy mane of hair and a swimsuit, although the colours combinations vary – and can be chosen by a client to match their own, those of their family and friends or an interior design scheme.

Alexandra uses a stencil for the preliminary outline to get the scale and positioning



perfect and then colours each in freehand so that no two are ever the same. Every single sunbather is different and the slight texturing of the painted glaze on the tile makes it clear that these are bespoke.

“I like the versatility of tiles,” continues Alexandra. “They can be displayed on their own or in small groups, framed or as a giant mural, and they’re exciting because there’s no need to have a symmetrical or repeating pattern. You can even position them in surprising ways if you choose.”

Taking you from the beach to the deep blue sea, Alexandra’s designs also include swimmers, in several guises: a Baie series of lane swimmers, and a rogue shark; an Amsterdam series inspired by women’s “fancy” diving first allowed at the 1928 Olympics; and the Aquabelle series, ➔



inspired by the geometry of synchronised swimming, and allows you to create your own unique performance. “Synchronised swimming is an amazing spectacle to watch,” says Alexandra “and the tiles can be used to make distinct patterns that replicate the moves of synchronised swimmers. From a distance, the patterns look slightly art deco: it is only when you are up close that you see that there are heads and arms and legs!”

Alexandra’s designs also extend to the ice-cold ski slopes of the Alps and the Antarctic.

“I love skiing and snow,” she explains. “My sister lived in the French town of Châtel close to the Swiss border and we loved to watch the movement of colour on the slopes, as people gathered and moved together, or solitary flashes as a person skied alone. This gave me the idea for my Châtel series of skiers and snowboarders. I have recently painted 1,000 for a chalet wall

in Utah: look carefully and you’ll see a skier here or there on the cusp of falling over!”

Although as she paints, Alexandra envisages her tiles decorating walls of beautiful bathrooms, pools, and other places, they are sometimes used as coasters or framed individually as wall art. “I make a small number of tennis player tiles,” she says, “and I’m considering a Yoga series.”

She’d also like to branch out into textile design, with three colours of thread embroidered onto really sheer fabric and, in a full circle, maybe wallpaper too in time! You can see Alexandra’s tiles at Artweeks venue 159 in Watlington. See artweeks.org for further information.

Oxfordshire Artweeks is the UK’s oldest and biggest artist open studios and pop-up exhibition event: from May 6-29, hundreds of artists, designers and makers throw open their doors and invite you into their homes, gardens and other art spaces to enjoy a wealth of creativity from wall art to fashion,

bellows and even boats. It’s the perfect time to choose unique pieces for your home, or even commission something bespoke, so we talk to three new exhibitors for 2023 whose upcycled furniture adds interest and character to any home.

Upholsterer Kerry Spurry takes old or vintage chairs, mostly from the mid 20th century and often those that would otherwise be overlooked, and finds great satisfaction in giving them a complete makeover so that they become, instead, “the belle of the ball”.

Previously she ran a vintage clothes boutique in Tetbury selling clothes from the 1920s, 30s and 40s. “I’m inspired by textiles,” she explains. “The quality of the fabric used for clothes in the early 20th century was mouth-watering. I changed to become an upholsterer to become more creative and to make pieces that are more sustainable for the long-term.”

It’s a shift that mirrors the societal trend for casual clothing while increasingly using



‘I love to paint the classic woman’s silhouette because it’s simply beautiful’

the home as a reflection of the inhabitants’ characters and ethos. Having moved to Oxfordshire from Gloucestershire, Kerry was also inspired by the renovation of her own 300-year old home, in Buckland where during Artweeks, in the stunning private chapel of Buckland, Kerry is showing a selection of her latest creations alongside ceramics, paintings, photographs and other art.

Kerry chooses stylish patterned velvets to reinvigorate her chairs, the design partly dependent upon the style of chair. “I have a particular passion for velvet,” she continues. “It doesn’t age well in clothing, but for furniture it works remarkably and it’s luxurious, glossy and sumptuous.”

If, rather than the opulence of velvet, you prefer a more bohemian rustic flavour, then visit Rupert Stewart Cox in Horton-cum-Studley who combines classic shapes with woven fabric and a modern use of colour. Rupert reinvigorates antique chairs, often from the late nineteenth century, and stools, benches and baskets with sisal and jute that has been home-dyed the vivid hues found in wildflower meadows.

“Wildflower meadows give me a sense of freedom and excitement as they are home to such an array of insects and other creatures. It’s that, the joy of being unrestricted, that I try to weave into my work,” he says with a smile.

Over in Deddington, Deborah Hunt of Doodledash Vintage & Home is also showcasing upcycled furniture. Her cupboards and chests of drawers are painted with layered textured finishes and embellished, so that each is both functional and a piece of art.

“I enjoy transforming discarded traditional pieces with faux finishes and a contemporary take, whether that’s a smart neutral style or a funky new look to make you smile,” she says.

“Rooms in which everything matches perfectly can be dull and impersonal,” she continues, “and the smallest space can be transformed with a bold piece of bespoke furniture.”



artweeks.org