

3rd March 2015

Oxfordshire gets arty with a huge display of talent this spring.



Expect Oxford and Oxfordshire burst into life this spring with as many as a thousand artists of all ages at more than 400 venues, as artists and designer-makers prepare for hundreds of exhibitions and events across the county for Oxfordshire Artweeks (2nd-25th May) in the longest-running and biggest open studios event in the UK.

Painters and designers, potters and sculptors, wood-turners, photographers, jewellers and textile artists will all be opening their homes and studios across the county to the public for free to showcase their talent through exhibitions and demonstrations. 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 idea.

Here's what's happening across Oxfordshire – and there are 200 venues within Oxford's ring-road too.

Abingdon

In Abingdon historic town hall, five jewellers showcase their new pieces inspired by the Roman remains discovered at nearby Marcham, and now housed in the Abingdon Museum. Enjoy striking sculpture in Garford or enjoy 'Views from a Taxi', photography from India & Sri Lanka by Bernard Auton alongside ceramic birds & driftwood sculpture by Shira Gal both new to Artweeks for 2015. For large group exhibitions with a wide variety of professional artists head to Dry Sandford, Appleton or Peachcroft Farm Barn to discover a new group of artists in a medieval barn, just metres away from the Jewellers and Silver Society of Oxford who will also be demonstrating their craft. With two schools and new responses to Old Masters by Oxfordshire Mind in the Well-being centre there are artists of all ages and abilities opening their doors to welcome you in.

Banbury and the Cherwell Valley

Banbury will be bursting with art as nine venues throw open their doors in the centre of town and invite you in. In Market Place, two complementary exhibitions will each run for three weeks, as Banbury artist Gena Johns presents Banbury in 3D handcut photographic collages & digital collages transferred onto wood, painter Stuart Roper explores Oxfordshire's secret places on a large scale at Hamptons International. Over at The Mill discover Jacqueline Taylor's colourful nature canvases in a new airy attic studio space overlooking the canal or be surprised by the range of art inspired by water in the ground floor gallery. Just a stone's throw away, enjoy striking art photography in both bold colours and black and white by Steve Gold on Queen's Road; find watercolours and acrylics by local art groups at The Artery, and consider art and poetry intertwined as the talented members and volunteers of Restore on Calthorpe Street express their experiences and feelings about mental health.

On Tramway, where an industrial tram line once ran between canal-side factories and railway sidings for freight trains, you can find art inspired by dance. Here too, ground-breaking Oxfordshire artist Claire Reika Wright, once described by a former Tate Modern curator as 'working at the coal face of digital art', also belies the industrial heritage of this site with engaging interactive art inspired by trees in the Cotswolds, romantic and celestial in nature each including the sun or moon and the silhouettes they create.

In the countryside around, the studios and halls are bursting with animals from quirky animals in a Swalciffe pub alongside traditional acrylics and watercolours propped on rustic agricultural machinery in the neighbouring medieval barn. In Bloxham discover big bold abstracts and pots of pleasure and purpose, or find Cloudcuckooland in Deddington courtesy of designer-maker Tony Davis from the art collective Art More Lovely.

Bicester

You'll find a wealth of sculpture in the heart of Bicester, as Bicester Sculpture Group show their talents in the beautiful studio and garden of The Old Vicarage by St Edburg's Church, or enjoy a fresh exhibition of contemporary design, photography, print-making and furniture by nine artists in the classic summer setting of Heyford. There's decorated earthenware & sculptural stoneware on show in Lower Heyford's Old Rikyard, and in Upper Heyford, established artist Stephen Yorke exhibits with talented newcomer, sixteen-year old Beatrice May as his fascination with light combines with her modern interpretation of village life.

Cotswold towns and villages

With stone carving incorporating poetry and prose in Burford, to silver and gold contemporary jewellery by Sarah Pulvertaft in the Ranger's Lodge at Cornbury Park, as worn by Deborah Meaden of the Dragon's Den & JKRowling; prints and artists' books inspired by music from violinist and artistic director of Oxford Concert Party, Isabel Knowland, and life-size horse sculpted from metal by Milton-under-Wychwood's Sophie Thompson, there's plenty to explore.

Chipping Norton Town Hall hosts the Oxfordshire Craft Guild with paper sculpture by Graham Lester and so much more. For paintings and 2D mixed media work, visit the theatre across the square for top quality affordable art chosen by ex-Christie's Deborah Allen, and all of Chipping Norton will be bursting with art as more than forty artists and designer-makers display their work across the town: there's equestrian paintings by Melanie Wright just a stone's throw from tactile wood-turning and Raku ceramics. Over in Charlbury, meet silversmith Patricia Freeman who has 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. Head to Burford to find, in the ballroom of Asthall Manor where debutantes including the Mitford sisters were introduced to high society, intricate ceramic shoes are fit for a fairy princess created by Kate Hopkins Searle as shown in Liberty's, London, jewellery and other art.

Didcot

In Harwell, Robert Strange is preparing for his may open studio with sparse textured landscape paintings inspired by the Ridgeway, each taking just a few hours to complete. These are a total contrast to his other work - colourful ephemera squashed into boxes drawn in coloured pencil, his obsession with 'collecting things in boxes' serving a source of inspiration and each takes between 80 to 120 hours to complete. With four ceramicists on The Green in Steventon, textiles at Milton Hill House, rag-rugs in Upton, painters in Aston Tirrold and small sculptures in East Hagbourne there's plenty to explore. In Didcot centre, the Cornestone hosts its annual open show for Artweeks, with drawings created traditionally and digitally, see silver jewellery by Charlie Davis or head to North Bush Furlong and visit new exhibitor Ruth Rothery and her appealing animal portraits and fun speckled flower art.

Faringdon

In Faringdon's historic centre you'll find new face in multi-artist exhibitions in two of its oldest buildings – from photographic collages of local landscapes meticulously reconstructed from hundreds of originals, jewellery, textiles and sculpture in The Rookery, with its chequered heritage; to local landscapes in watercolour and oils contrasting with fresh animal portraiture in the Old Town Hall. Head West to Longcot for three stone carvers a stone's throw apart with neighbouring funky mosaic mannequins, or visit the beautiful National trust village of Coleshill for four art spaces for quirky black and white fine art photography and lino-prints, paperworks, pottery and more in Old Stable Yard studios. Take the ever popular artist trail through Great Coxwell or head to Watchfield's wind farm for kinetic & sonic sculpture at community-owned windfarm with occasional performances too. With artists throwing open their studios in Bourton, Standford and Uffington, there's plenty to explore on the edge of east Swindon this May.

Goring-on-Thames

In the Garden Room in Goring Village Hall, discover contemporary bold and imaginative paintings and photographs, or visit Camilla Sopwtih's charming studio for light butterfly and bird printing on fabric made into cushions and bags, and enjoy quirky contemporary ceramics by Sarah Rushbrooke, just a stone's throw from Ann Spencer's comments on life in a range of 2D media. Over in Toker's Green, sculptor Richard Goldsmith, recently accepted by the Royal Society of British Sculptors proves that concrete can be every bit as beautiful as marble as art meets precision engineering in the creation of sleek and stylish 'industrial-inspired' pieces from concrete and sheet metal that are tactile and rich in colour and shine He's exhibiting in his studio so visitors can ask about his working practices and see work in progress.

Thame

Enjoy a sea view in Thame with painter Janine Philips, whose giant canvases being the tide right into Thame or explore a real artist's studio with Christine Tacq and see her printing presses at work! Visit an artist in her studio or head to a stable studio at Brill's Manor House for a collection of contemporary fabrics and silk inspired by traditional botanical illustrations and herbaria. Heather Hunter, artist-in-residence at Turn End Gardens in Haddenham is also inspired by the natural world. In addition, she's developing art as a reaction to the lace work in Thames Museum for her artist books, each a mini gallery, and sculptural 'altered books' –books.

Wallingford

Visit a well-established group of artists in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell with work ranging from large lively canvases to botanical watercolours; discover fresh jewellery and ceramics in a delightful Little Wittenham barn and orchard garden or visit the neighbouring Sylva Wood centre, with tree art and new workshops dedicated to the best in home-grown wood. You can escape to Cornwall with vivid seascapes by painter Jane Duff or travel further afield in Dorchester-on-Thames where narratives, history, people & ideas are captured in wall-mounted tree-dimensional 'theatres'. Ceramicist Lucienne De Mauny is celebrating 30 years as a professional potter and welcoming you into her new Crowmarsh studio to see her craft, and in Castle Lane print-maker Marion Hill celebrates '50 years an artist' with a retrospective exhibition of the art she has produced as an artist and teacher.

Wantage

In Letcombe Regis you'll find four artists in The Old Manor Stables with art on an equestrian theme with paintings and more. Gutsy seascapes, landscape and cityscapes by Jane Vaux will grace the centre of town in The Dolphin Gallery, just a stone's throw from the Vale & Downland Museum where local artist Stuart Roper who explores the many elements that creates a bigger picture and take on a life of their own on great big canvases. In the town too, for example, regular Artweekser Jill Cooper's surprising intricate fabric collages will surprise you with the skill in which they capture people and places, while across in Ardington, a group of professional art tutors will demonstrate their crafts including sculpting in stone, wood carving, working with leather and windswept images drawn from thread onto fabric and paper. Explore examples of the local offerings in an exhibition at The Charlton Centre, Wantage throughout May.

Witney

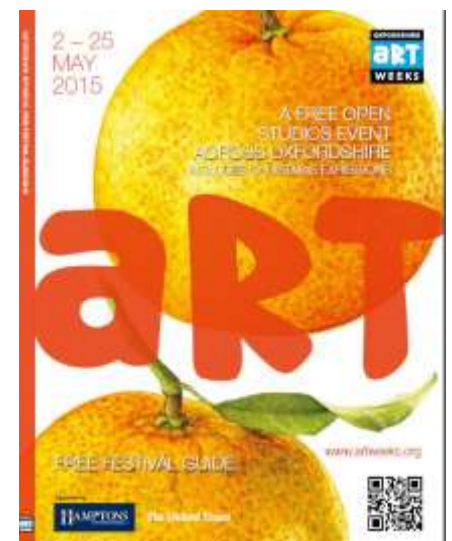
In Witney, start at the SOTA gallery in Langdale Court where Andrew Harrison's breath-taking artistic sculptural pieces which combine the traditions of woodturning, and carving with a modern touch; head to Cogges Manor Farm for wool and textiles art by local Cotswold artists and Cogges volunteers, Sue Tucker and Neil Cap; or be surprised by the talent of the young people who access Witney Early Intervention Hub. Head to Eynsham to follow a village trail with local scenes and travels abroad, pottery, textiles, photography and steel sculpture both large and small; explore the Kingfisher studios in Crawley to see glass art, jewellery and mixed media art, or visit Pip Shuckburgh, Bampton's resident Downton Abbey artist, in her studio.

Discover the natural world, from the poles to the equator, take a journey in a gondola through the Venetian archipelago, or travel back in time and share memories of childhood. Come nose to nose with a highland cow in a Cotswold pub, or follow the fine lines of a bird at flight in a bookshop. Find nature encapsulated in glass or reproduced as fine silver jewellery, or enjoy art good enough to eat, or eat off!

Visitors are invited into hundreds of interesting spaces, many of which are usually closed to the public, including Oxford Colleges, two of the finest medieval barns in England, a West Oxfordshire wind farm, and a classic 1930s barge on the river Thames. Art aficionados and everyday enthusiasts, adults and children alike will be able to follow art trails through Oxford streets, Cotswold villages, along the Thames or through the county's market towns.

And with art talks, events, and workshops at The OU Museum of Natural History, The Ashmolean and art centres across the county, there's something to inspire all ages and aspirations. Visitors will have the chance to see the art produced in their own communities, to ask local artists about their influences, techniques and materials, and even have a go themselves.

The listings are now available on-line at www.artweeks.org and the printed festival guide will be available from April.





Notes to editors

Artweeks is celebrated across Oxfordshire in partnership with local arts centres, museums, and other Oxfordshire organisations, with support from The Oxford Times and Hamptons International.

Notes to Editors: Oxfordshire Artweeks www.artweeks.org 2nd- 25th May 2015

Artweeks is Oxfordshire’s largest visual arts festival and the UK’s oldest and biggest Open Studios event, a three-week celebration in May each year of the county’s artistic and creative talent encompassing the visual arts in their broadest sense. Almost 1000 artists open the doors to their homes and studios and welcome the public to see their creations and watch them work – in 2014 over 100,000 people visited more than 400 exhibitions and a million pounds of art changed hands!

Further press information & lots of lovely colourful IMAGES contact **Esther Lafferty** 01367 242498 or 07776 196967 esther@artweeks.org

