



Oxfordshire celebrates thirty years of outstanding art

Abingdon: As the county's professional artists gear up for their Oxfordshire Artweeks exhibitions, a celebration of sport art and Olympic values at The White Horse Leisure & Tennis Centre, and displays at Abingdon schools (St Nicholas's CE Primary School, Our Lady's & Chandlings) are just some of the other things in the planning for this spring.

Bicester: Look out for an exhibition by teenager Jamie Unwin (commended by the 'Wildlife photographer of the year' competition) exhibits a large garden & studio showing a vibrant selection of contemporary & traditional sculpture and a celebration of the arts & crafts by older people using Bicester Health and Wellbeing Centre.

Didcot: With bold stylised landscapes and cutting edge jewellery design in Aston Tirrold, art and sculpture in a Little Wittenham orchard, and striking boxing imagery including high octane action in the ring to reflective portraits of fighters at South Moreton Boxing Club there'll be plenty to see around Didcot this May.

Faringdon: An exhibition of a hundred stone sculptures in a Longcot garden with vibrant silk paintings & quirky 3D mannequins around the corner; new exhibitors showing eye-catching local images and a stunning collection of landscapes and constructed panoramic photography in the Old Town hall; and a celebration of arts & crafts by older people at Ferendune Court are just some of the twenty exhibitions in the planning for Faringdon Artweeks.

Wallingford: Plans are being put in place for forty exhibitions in and around Wallingford as the county's artists gear up for Oxfordshire Artweeks including a celebration of arts & crafts by older people using the Wallingford Health and Wellbeing Centre; an exhibition 'Figures and Fantasy' featuring prints, ceramic sculptures and costume jewellery in Dorchester; large exhibitions at Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Ewelme, and striking boxing imagery, from high octane action in the ring to reflective portraits of fighters in South Moreton.

Wantage: As the county's professional artists gear up for Oxfordshire Artweeks, an exhibition of handmade leather goods and handthrown pottery at a riverside mill; an exhibition by students at King Alfred's Academy; a celebration of arts & crafts by older people using the Wantage Health and Wellbeing Centre; and modern sculptures in stone, bronze and iron in South Fawley are just some of the other things in the planning for this spring.

Witney: Several groups of professional artists in Witney and the surrounding villages are preparing exhibitions of paintings, ceramics, textiles, glass art and sculpture for Artweeks 2012, and for the first time in 2012 Witney will host a trail-blazing showcase of arts & crafts by the cared-for-elderly as part of a new Caring About Art initiative. With more than 30 venues and a wide variety of work on show, including hand-drawn maps in Eynsham, silver jewellery inspired by water, mosaic hangings using marble and traditional Venetian Byzantine glass and an exhibition of recent work by the Oxford Art Society in Bampton, there'll be plenty to see.

In addition, across Oxfordshire, a teenager commended by the 'Wildlife photographer of the year' competition exhibits during Artweeks for the first time; an award-winning ceramicist who wears goggles and gauntlets to brave the flames in which she fires her pots will show work at Oxford Castle; and life-size sculptures celebrating Olympic values will stand tall in The Ashmolean.

Across the county 1000 artists, including 180 new for 2012 , will open almost 500 venues as Artweeks celebrates its 30th anniversary, making it the longest-running and biggest open studios in the UK. With a wide variety of work on show, from paintings and furniture to textiles and jewellery, pots and prints, there'll be something to capture everyone's interest, whether you're an art aficionado or an everyday enthusiast, and it's all for free.

With new local area trails, as well as the definitive festival guide and website, visitors will have the chance to see the art produced in their own communities, to ask local artists about their inspirations, techniques and materials, and even have a go themselves.

Artweeks is celebrated across Oxfordshire in partnership with local arts centres, museums, and other Oxfordshire organisations, with support from Hamptons International whose offices will house taster art throughout May.

You can pick up an Artweeks guide from libraries, Hamptons branches and local information points from April or visit www.artweeks.org.

Notes to Editors

Oxfordshire Artweeks www.artweeks.org

Artweeks is Oxfordshire's largest visual arts festival, a three-week celebration in May each year of the county's artistic and creative talent., and the UK's oldest and biggest Open Studios event.

Almost 1000 artists open the doors to their homes and studios and welcome the public to see their creations and watch them work. In 2010 over 107,000 people visited nearly 500 venues across the county.

All exhibitions are free

Oxfordshire Artweeks 2012 will run from Saturday 5th – 27th May 2012

and is organised into three geographical areas

North Oxfordshire Exhibitions: Saturday 5th - Sunday 13th May

City Exhibitions: Saturday 12th - Sunday 20th May

South Oxfordshire Exhibitions: Saturday 19th - Sunday 27th May

The *Oxfordshire Visual Arts Festival (Artweeks)* is a non profit-making company, limited by guarantee and owned by its members. Everyone is welcome to take part and there is no selection process for artists wishing to participate.

Further press information & photographs from Esther Browning 01865 821090 or 07776 196967

esther@artweeks.org

Esther Browning, and dozens of artists, are also available for interview.