

Meet The Artists

Ahead of the 41st instalment of Oxfordshire Artweeks – the UK's oldest and biggest open studios and pop-up exhibition event – meet some of the artists who will be showcasing their creative talent, explaining their materials and, often, demonstrating their methods, from the newcomers to the regulars.





Greg Whiteman

Greg Whiteman is a new face for this year's Oxfordshire Artweeks festival, exhibiting in East Hendred, near Wantage. Using a combination of precise pencil-drawing hyperrealism and airbrushing techniques for his open studio exhibition, he has been working on a series of animals including a Eurasian Eagle Owl with a life-size wingspan of 1.8m. It certainly packs a punch.

"I love owls", says Greg. "I find them really interesting. They can rotate their necks 270° and did you know they can control the size of their pupils independently so one can be larger than the other for accuracy of vision? Their ears are slightly offset too so they can detect their prey accurately.

I am also drawing some cats. While I love all animals, I suppose I am most drawn to species that are majestic and powerful. And yet, there's a paradox in that: while they're the hunters and at the top of the food chain in their environments, so many are still endangered.

I am working on a series where the animals – or birds – are

against a striking sunset-orange glow. Orange is my favourite colour and it evokes warmth, the sun and bright days. I've always been inspired by the American artist and illustrator Drew Struzan who designed the iconic posters for the Indiana Jones films. They use deep orange as a backdrop which adds drama and a touch of danger and excitement.

Closer to home, I draw horses too. Living in East Hendred, near Ardington and Lockinge, it's the thick of racehorse country and there are horses everywhere."

As well as portraiture of animals and people, during Artweeks, Greg will also be showing a series of automotive-inspired paintings including the E-type Jag ("my wife's favourite") and the first Land Rover off the production line in 1948, as seen in the British Motor Museum in Gaydon.

"Cars are quite a challenge to draw," he explains. "The ellipses of the wheels have to be absolutely perfect – they're like a face in that you can tell instantly if they're not exactly right. With an animal you have a little more freedom," he smiles.