

MakeSpace Arts & Well-Being CIC Report for 2023/24

MakeSpace Arts & Well-being CIC was given unofficial notice in May 2023 to move out of our beloved Raven Studios premises by the end of October 2023, to allow for demolition of the building. Our connections with charity English Bridge Workshop Ltd (EBW) eventually bore fruit, as we were able to rent all of their available space, sufficient for 7 permanent spaces and 1 temporary space, from Aug 1 2023. To allow for studio alterations, etc, the move overlapped with the Smithfield Rd premises by two months, and we vacated at the end of Sept 2023.

During negotiations for our moving in, it was suggested that we take over the running of the English Bridge Workshop, so our search for a new home is over! We are now the official tenants of an 1860s Victorian school building, which has a long history of acting as an arts venue.

Studio Spaces: The move to EBW meant saying farewell to several of our members, who chose not to come with us for various reasons. A core group of 6 remained, and now share studios at EBW according to the space available - architect James Smith and printmaker Jacqui Dodds (Studio 2), illustrator Joseph Coyle and mosaic artist Jackie Coyle (Studio 7), painter/printmaker Jancis Vaughan and textile sculptor Jan Hunt (Studio 6), and

James Fitzpatrick, who continues to use the temporary space (now The Loft), as before, in return for studio volunteering.

We did however gain two new members, painter/printmaker Felicia Dutton (Studio 2), and Dungarees & Squeegees (Studio 4), run by printmakers Joey and Ash. Resident artists who remained at EBW with the change of management are Jean Mills, art therapy practitioner and printmaker (Studio 8), and Anthony Vettise, painter and lecturer (Studio 5). EBW Ltd continues here with the hire of the office (Studio 3). Our waiting list is healthy, and was used to fill the recently vacated Studio 4.

Hall Spaces: We now also have two hall spaces to manage, with bookings from the community for a range of arts and well-being activities. On taking over EBW, there were 7 regular groups: Life drawing, Tai Chi, Shropshire Art Society courses, Well-being Art Group sessions, portrait painting, Guild of Enamellers' workshops and iconography courses. To this we have added Landscape painting, mosaic workshops, monthly Arts Award sessions, a community disco and live music events. The halls have also been booked by community groups for occasional meetings, etc.

The Shropshire Art Society have decided not to continue using the building however, due to the conditions no

longer being suitable for their ageing membership. We hope that the planned refurbishment will eventually bring about their return.

Online: The Zoom **Social Studios** group has a steady core of 6, with 4 participants based outside Shrewsbury. Our free downloadable **Art Plan** activity packs are still available, ideal for half terms and holidays.

Exhibitions: Our monthly exhibitions in the Cycle Hub Window Gallery on Smithfield Rd ran until the end of August. We have since come to an arrangement with the Market Hall, where a new community exhibition space has been opened up, **The Viewing Deck**. This can currently be booked via the hall booking page on our website.

Events: Since moving to EBW we have enabled a number of live music events in the Upper Hall - two gigs showcasing post-punk bands, and a DJ'ed community disco with bar, which is booked monthly for the rest of 2024. We have acquired a music licence and ensure that Temporary Event Notices for the gigs are also arranged.

We have also become the lead organisation for **Shrewsbury Open Studios** which has returned for 2024, and will be hosting participating artists for 4 Open Studios weekends.

Bursaries & Commissions: The last two bursaries for 22/23 were awarded to Sam Pooley Stride and Daisy Pooley Tolkien for the creation of two new Art Plans for the Raven website, and to Ev Hann to support the making of a series of large portrait paintings for initial display in the Smithfield Rd window gallery.

The bursary program has been put on hold for 2023/24 due to the need to fund the studio move, and is unlikely to be revived in the near future due to the general maintenance costs of the building we are now in.

Other projects: Shropshire Artscape, our visual arts map, has been advertised for free in Shropshire libraries, and there have been regular enquiries about additions. It is particularly useful for artists who are more rurally situated.

Further meetings of the **Shropshire Visual Art Forum** took place in September and again in February. We hope to continue enabling a sense of community amongst our art organisations.

Social Media: Our Instagram [@ravenstudios.shrewsbury](https://www.instagram.com/ravenstudios.shrewsbury) consistently maintains over 2,000 followers and we are also managing the new EBW account [@english_bridge_workshop](https://www.instagram.com/english_bridge_workshop) which we are using to inform

the community of building improvements and changes, etc.

The Numbers: Since Sept 2023 there have been an average of 500 users per month of the hall spaces at EBW. There are 10 regular group activities, 10 individual artists renting space and a printmaking business that offers open access and courses.

Studio Future: We believe we have found the ideal home for a vibrant and exciting grass roots arts hub for Shrewsbury - our future now depends largely on securing a long term lease on the building, and funding, as without major refurbishment, our time here at the English Bridge Workshop will be limited. We are however confident that this will come about, and have already been successful with a number of small grant applications. We are very grateful to our local Belle Vue Councillor, Kate Halliday, Shrewsbury Town Council, Veolia and EBW Ltd.

Jancis Vaughan

28/03/24