

MakeSpace Arts & Well-Being Report for 2022/23

At Raven Studios we continue to focus on providing studio space, bursaries and local art community support, and a lively source of publicly accessible art exhibitions. Our Window Gallery on Smithfield Rd has become a feature that is noted by local passersby, who look to see what's new while stuck in traffic! We again have monthly exhibitions booked until the New Year. Our spaces have remained fully booked and we have added a visual art networking role to our list of projects.

Spaces

At the end of year 4 we have 10 studio spaces occupied long term, with our 11th part-time space experiencing a boost after some successful advertising on social media. This keeps our community lively with the regular introduction of new people. We took part in the Shrewsbury Arts Trail again in July and August 2022, involving an Open Studios weekend and increased interest in the studios. We also ran a winter Open Studios, and aim to continue this pattern of two open weekends a year.

Online

The Zoom Social Studios group has grown due to word of mouth recommendation, and we have participants from many places including outside Shrewsbury and Shropshire. We continue to promote our free downloadable art activity packs to coincide with half terms and holidays, and have added two more to our offer.

Exhibitions

Our monthly exhibitions continue, with slots already booked for the rest of 2023 at the time of writing. Most are local artists but some are artist or community groups, such as the Wellbeing Arts Group run by NHS staff.

Bursaries & Commissions

We have awarded 6 enabler bursaries this year, providing half the funds up front and half on completion. Two have completed so far, and the rest will complete by the autumn. We have withdrawn the window commission advertised on our website due to lack of interest and in order to have more funds available for other projects.

Other projects

We have set up a new networking group called the Shropshire Visual Arts Forum, in an effort to improve the mutual awareness of the many and varied visual art

organisations in the area. We met successfully in February and agreed to meet again in the autumn. As a result we now have new county-wide art listings on our website that are complementary to our visual arts map of venues, galleries and individuals accessible to the public. The map and listings need improved visibility, but both continue to be updated as word gets out.

Social Media

Our Instagram engagement has remained steady, contributing to Shrewsbury and Shropshire's art scene and offering opportunities and inspiration to the local community, and our following has increased from 1,969 people to 2,015.

We have had 7,000 website visitors which is a 40% increase year on year.

The Numbers

This year we have provided space for a total of 32 creatives who have hired either permanent or part-time space with us, or shown in our window gallery. Our hire rates have not increased and we have taken on a volunteer, providing part-time studio space in exchange for a contribution to the day-to-day running of the studios.

MakeSpace Arts & Wellbeing has provided £4,659 of funding or employment to 14 different creatives over the financial year for project management, bursaries, studio improvements and promotion.

Studio Future

Finding a new home for the studio is proving difficult; a possible site fell through due in large part to our non-commercial status. We have been advising another Shrewsbury artist studio site (English Bridge Workshops), which is in need of funding, in the hope that by the time we have to move out, it will be in a better place to accommodate artists.

Jancis Vaughan

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