

Bampton gallery invites flower-lovers

GARDENERS and flower-lovers will enjoy an exhibition being held at the West Ox Arts Gallery, Bampton, next month.

The show, *Plant Life*, features award-winning botanical watercolours by Janet

Callender, mixed media artist Joy Perkins, and calligrapher and botanical painter Isabelle Spencer.

The show runs from March 4 to 25, at

the town hall, Market Square. The gallery is open from Tuesday to Saturday, between 10.30am and 12.30pm, and between 2pm and 4pm. On Sunday, it opens between 2pm and 4pm only.

ART: PLANT LIFE – WEST OX ARTS, BAMPTON

Three gifted artists explore the alchemy of plants. Janet Callender's botanical illustration, inspired by her garden, have a precision and a translucent quality from the *Magnolia grandiflora Goliath* with its rich creamy petals to the delicate *Gladiolus papilio* that graduates from pale to deepest lilac. One can almost hear the crackle of the *Dried Leaf* studies that swirl like skirts in shades of brown and burnt umber. Her unframed mounted studies are worth considering as well as her cards from original paintings, I particularly like the clematis *Perle d'Azure* with its dark petals contrasting with the golden yellow of the leaves. Do examine *Apothecary Garden*, a collection of botanical artists displaying a range of technical detail and luminosity.

Isabelle Spencer combines her love of the natural world with the written word, paint and letters come together to highlight meaning. As part of the long tradition of medieval artists and scribes her penmanship displays classical and contemporary literature. On her retirement from teaching Isabelle became a founder member of Oxford Scribes; she always selects the most appropriate hand and likes Italic, which is "light and crisp and well suited to poetry", while the classical Roman letter fits well with *Blackbirds* as the lines "dance across the page". For the *Klimt Tree of Life* she opts for Indian natural grass paper with its subtle colour and texture and uses raised gold leaf for the letters. Each frame is carefully selected, the mark of a fine craftsman.

Dynamism comes to mind with Joy Perkins. In 2003, she was awarded the Mary Moser Award, given to an artist who achieves excellence with a second career. Presently studying at the Oxford and Cherwell College of



Art, this lively, creative painter and designer, in her eighties, finds her inspiration from the River Thames that she has always loved with its changing shades, shadows and moods. The three-in-one linked life-size pastel of the giant *Hogweed* is "drawn from life dragged from the river" while the delicate black-and-white silk decorative hangings move gently with the light. Suggestions of swans, wings and thistles (*pictured*) are especially evocative in the purple and gold of her 'Oxford Landscape'.

The exhibition continues until March 25, Tues-Sat 10.30am-12.30pm and Sun 2-4pm (Tel: 01993 850137)

Jan Lee