

Aug 1st
2018

Artists are getting crafty to raise cash

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A CELEBRATION of local art began on Saturday with a three-week exhibition of unique creations at a West Oxfordshire gallery.

More than 20 artists will showcase their work at the Contemporary Arts and Crafts show at West Ox Arts in Bampton, with a range of works for sale including ceramics, textiles and prints.

The display runs until August 18 and brings together amateurs and professionals united in the skill, passion and dedication they bring to their craft.

West Ox Arts has run similar exhibitions since the 1970s, and its chair Sue Turner estimated that more than 60 people visited the display and bought items on its opening weekend.

She said: "We have a wide following throughout West Oxfordshire and people come specially to our exhibitions because they know they're getting something locally made.

"There's still lots of high quality local arts and crafts to buy.

"We're looking forward to welcoming a number of locals and tourists to the gallery."



HOME-MADE: Gallery manager Anna Gillespie is displaying her stained and fused glass in the West Ox Arts Contemporary Arts and Crafts show; right, some of the artwork on show

Picture: Anna Gillespie

The show's success is hugely important to the charity, which welcomes the funding boost from artists selling their works.

West Ox Arts' only other income comes from the £25 yearly fee paid by its 180 members, while the gallery pays two part-time staff to work 20 hours a week. Membership is non-selective and artists can join

regardless of experience.

But Mrs Turner is confident those erring over whether to buy or not to buy will part with their money in support of the local creations.

She said: "The whole ethos across the country is changing and people are more concerned about buying local.

"People are much more prepared

to spend their money knowing they're supporting the local economy."

Several artists displaying their work in Bampton have done so for years, with many knowing gallery staff personally.

While some exhibitors are in their 70s, at the other end of the scale is 22-year-old Eilish Lynch, a fashion, textiles and accessories student at De Montfort University in Leicester.

Miss Lynch is living with her boyfriend in the village and has been volunteering at West Ox Arts over her summer break.

The second-year student will display her designs in Bampton and believes working at the gallery has given her the best possible start in the industry.

She said: "I've exhibited my work a few times at college but this is my biggest one yet.

"I'm really excited as volunteering here has helped me out so much already.

"There are so many really good artists here and it's been nice to learn from them and find out about how they got started."

The exhibition will be open 11.30am to 4.30pm from Tuesday to Saturday and from 2pm to 4pm on Sunday.

● For more information visit westoxarts.com

