

site07 stroud valleys visual arts festival

Stroud Valleys Artspace
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Site07 Open Studios

The Gloucestershire market town of Stroud has attracted and inspired artists for more than a century - from Victorian designer William Morris to twenty first century art superstar Damien Hirst. So it's hardly surprising that Stroud is also home to one of the country's most exciting and energetic festivals celebrating visual art. Now in its eleventh year, Site 07 builds on the success of previous years festivals - displaying work and hosting events involving around 250 local, national and international artists.



Cafe lifestyle in Stroud on market day

"This is a town with a real buzz to it," says painter Carolyn White, who has lived and worked in the area for 12 years. "Visitors passing through notice the lively farmers market, the street cafes that also host art exhibitions and the wealth of cultural events. The strong artists community here is an integral part of the vibrant town life. I think that's partly why Site 07 is such an exciting festival. It brings together a diversity of provocative and traditional art in an unspoilt rural setting, with a progressive Cotswold town at its hub. Site 07 is the annual highlight to the year-round arts scene in Stroud."



Walkers on the Cotswold Way at Frocester Hill enjoy stunning views across the river Severn to Wales.

William Morris perhaps began the trail of artists to Stroud. He has since been followed by sculptor Lynn Chadwick who set up his studio in Edge during the late nineteen forties. The establishment of renowned sculpture foundry Pangolin Editions in the nearby village of Chalford, put the area firmly on the artistic map. And when Damien Hirst established a studio in the valleys, Stroud's reputation for nurturing and inspiring artists and art was firmly established.

The organisation behind Site 07, Stroud Valleys Artspace (SVA) was founded in 1997 with the aim of promoting and supporting the artists working in the area. Starting from humble beginnings, when volunteers helped to convert a disused town warehouse into artists studios, SVA has just moved back into its building in John Street, Stroud after completing the 2nd phase of the £1.5 million building refurbishment project. This unique contemporary arts resource will provide good quality space, facilities and support to a wide number of artists and the community. The building has been designed by Tony Fretton Architects, whose back catalogue includes the Camden Art Centre, London; the Lisson Gallery, London; a house for Anish Kapoor the British Embassy in Warsaw. Stroud Valleys Artspace will feature as a key site for the Site07 festival.



Organiser Jo Leahy mops up at John Street prior to its opening.



Neil Walker and Jo Leahy, organisers at SVA

“SVA is now moving into one of the most significant stages of its development, taking ten years of arts activities into a new phase. We are really pleased to be working with prestigious Tony Fretton Architects, a London based practice which has with a reputation for designing art spaces of exceptional quality. Our newly refurbished space reflects the innovative and collaborative nature of our artist led programme and it will provide a vital arts infrastructure and an interactive cultural focal point from which the Site07 festival will be promoted” said Jo Leahy of SVA



Painter Nick Grellier opens her cottage studio doors to visitors

The festival will see the return of the popular open studios events. Last year over eighty artists welcomed visitors to their homes and studios throughout Stroud’s picturesque five valleys. This year’s festival will offer art-lovers the same opportunity to see high quality art within the diverse settings in which it was created as well as the opportunity to purchase work directly from the artists. “The open studios are important,” states participating artist Nick Grellier, “people come in and rifle through plans chests and drawings and see where the art comes from.”



Carolyn White, whose dramatic landscapes, usually painted in situ, capture the essence of the beautiful Stroud valleys, is one of those artists who has participated for six years in the Open Studios. "I love the sense of connection between the artist and the viewer that the Open Studios enables," she enthuses.

(Carolyn White working with pastels in the Slad Valley near Stroud, made famous by Laurie Lee)

But it's not just Gloucestershire artists whose work is showcased in Site 07. The event is set to attract artists of international and national standing. The festival features international collaborations, with 2007 seeing a collaboration with artists in Morocco.

After the success of last year's exhibition, at the Museum in the Park, this year's exhibition will be selected show of work by artists taking part in the Site07 festival. Darbyshire Framers will be awarding a prize of £1000 worth of framing services to an exhibiting artist who will also be offered a ten day exhibition in the newly refurbished project space at SVA, John Street. Mark Darbyshire will be part of the selection committee for the exhibition. Darbyshire Framers is a leading framer and art fabricator in the contemporary art world and has attracted a range of high-profile clients; artists like Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin and Derek Jarman to commercial and public galleries such as Gagosian, White Cube, Serpentine Gallery and the Royal Academy.

There will be talks, walks, poetry, performance, and of course exhibitions. With the final details now being put to the 2007 programme, set to be launched in April, it's a case of watch this space.

Site07 will run from 1st-30th June 2007.

The Open Studios dates are 9th-10th and 16th-17th June 2007.

To make sure you get a brochure with further info please send a large SAE (42p stamp) to Stroud Valleys Artspace, 4 John Street, Stroud, GL5 2HA.

You can also contact the organisers on 01453 751440 or site@sva.org.uk

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Photographs by Nigel Noyes.

Note to press:

Full copy and other photographs are available for usage on:
the Stroud valley area,
Stroud Valleys Artspace's newly refurbished building at John Street,
Tony Fretton Architects.

A number of the participating artists below who are also available for interview.