



**Our exhibition finished off a superb year of meetings, discussions, inspirational pieces, encouragement and loads of learning, not to mention cake!**

**It first came to life for me when I planned the displays on cardboard models which were maquettes of both the gallery spaces and the pieces to be displayed.**

Although I had organised one exhibition before, all it had involved was to collect photographs - all identical in size and uniformly presented - and put them up on racks, in category order.

This one was quite different as, those who saw it know, the 45 pieces from 21 artists represented had used different media, different sizes, different subjects, different objects. Some images were framed, most were hung using bulldog clips of different sizes (I now have a sparkling mountain of those which I will return to people at next year's meetings!); my husband had converted all the various exhibit sizes to fit the scale of the model, and had also made a lectern for the book on display; some exhibits were to be looked at some were to be read; there were interactive sections; some exhibits could be handled, some couldn't; most were by individual artists but one was a collaborative piece, and one reflected a collaboration but was by one author. So there was quite a hard mix of different experiences.



I used the maquettes to try out various placements based on what I knew of the work and there was enough flexibility in the setup to change at any time.



(Photo by Anna Goodchild)



(Photo by Patricia Howe)

The exhibition was called “Work-in-Progress” because it reflected what had been going on in the meetings we have had over the last year. In the last two hours of our monthly meetings, we looked at work brought in by the attendees and we discussed it. It was a title suggested by tutor Michel Whiting at our meeting in March which is when we first started considering the exhibition. Until then, the Autumn Exhibition was just an item on our programme.



Except for a few tweaks, what went up on the walls (very fast!) was what was on the models. Paddy Howe, Krystyna Dembny, her friend Jonathan Bird, gallery owner Alison Cosserat and I put up the pieces - as we conferred on heights and arrangements, it was good to have the help of so many who are aesthetically aware. We would have finished the hanging on the first day were it not for the fact that there was a class going on in the long gallery space and Alison, having sole access to the electric drill and screws, had to go & fetch her kids from school.

We are very grateful to Paddy for finding the gallery space! We started off needing just one space & we ended up with three. I divided the spaces to reflect the general bodies of work which, on the whole, represented nature (in the main gallery), people and the built environment (in the long gallery space) and the Palimpsest gallery which combined both. Although Paddy was quite ill for most of it, she was a tower of support not only in helping with the hanging but also in hosting me and in deliberating about various aspects of the exhibition before, during and after putting it up.

Taking the exhibition down involved six of us: Rosie Mowatt and John, Derek and Michelle Youd, my friend from Paignton Ruth Morris and me. Without them, I would still be taking down & packing up the work! But, on reflection, all the teamwork in putting up and taking down echoed the attitude of collaboration which has been evident in all our meetings.

Many thanks also go to Sue Parr who produced such a wonderful flyer and poster and who liaised with OCA administration to get the right fonts & sizes, colours and blurb for the advertising. She had to rein me in when I wanted to use all sorts of colours & layouts for the catalogue! I thoroughly enjoyed working with Sue as we planned the publicity & its schedule.

**Work-in-PROGRESS**

An exhibition by a group of OCA students and tutors based in the South West.

**20th - 26th November 2017**  
10am until 4pm

**Private View: 19th November 2017**  
5-8 pm

**The Old Brick Workshop**  
Higher Poole,  
Wellington  
Somerset.  
TA21 9HW  
Tel: 07989 465427

**ocasa**  
OCCUPANCY CULTURE AND SOCIAL ACTION

**THE OLD BRICK WORKSHOP**  
Higher Poole, Wellington, Somerset

**University for the Creative Arts**



**Tutor and OCA Photography lead, Jesse Alexander, kindly opened the exhibition** (with his penknife in the absence of suitable scissors):



(Photograph: Paddy Howe)

There was such a buzz of excited chatter at the PV that it took quite some time to subdue it so that we could officially open the event. The gallery fell silent and dark just after 8pm when we had managed to convince people that they had homes to go to.

In order to get a feel of how the exhibition was received but also to see what could be done better for future events, I broke down the elements of the process into four sections: *Preparation, Coordination, Gallery space and curation*, and *What I took away from the experience*. Then I split the 20 participants randomly into four groups and asked each group to feed back on a different section. Nobody knew who else was in their group and response time limited to a few hours so there was minimal conferring 😊.

The full set of responses is in an attachment to the email, but this is a synopsis:

**Preparation:****Pros:**

The respondents felt that the preparation, publicity material and setting up a FaceBook page were excellent.

They valued the time they were given to prepare, the promptness of the replies to queries and the clear communication and attention to detail in the instructions. They also felt that there was a good relationship between the organisers and the gallery management.

**Cons:**

There was not enough publicity in the Taunton area and it was felt by one respondent that there should have been a group Twitter account but he realised that there was a time factor given that all the organisers did the work in their spare time.

**Coordination:****Pros:**

There were clear reminders and deadlines, and regular, relevant information so that those new to the process did not feel overwhelmed by it all. Anna was not afraid to ask for help when it was needed.

The gallery owner was very accommodating and helpful.

**Cons:**

One respondent felt that clearer instructions were needed on limitations to how work was to be presented and displayed.

**Curation and Gallery space****Pros:**

Excellent space and lighting and there is a contemporary feel to the gallery

Given the diverse nature of the work, it all hung together well. Each piece had its own space reflecting good planning and the end result was a very professional display.

Wellington is a central location for the vast area that OCA SW covers.

It was easy to find by car.

The gallery owner was very accommodating regarding delivery and collection of the work.

**Cons:**

The gallery is out of the way and lacks connections to public transport.

The information sheets should have been placed in each of the gallery spaces or on the wall next to each piece.

The purpose of the interactive pieces should have been made clearer.

**What I took away from the experience:****Pros:**

The Private Viewing was seen as an excellent time and place to meet up with other students and tutors, to be inspired and to see people being inspired by the work on view.

There is a lot of preparation work needed to curate a show.

The realisation that exhibitions need to have a good coordinator with a disciplined approach.

New ideas inspired by the super quality of the work exhibited.

A sense of achievement in seeing your own work displayed alongside that of other students and tutors.

Seeing one's work in dialogue with others' work.

The importance of collaboration.

That a relatively large group of artists including both students and tutors can work together given the right circumstances!

The nurturing nature of the OCA SW group.

**Cons:**

Only one response: "At the PV, I was too busy chatting to have a good look at the work on display."

The visitors' book, the pages of which are scanned and attached to the email, had very similar responses in that the vast majority commented positively on the presentation and the diversity of the work on display and how it all worked well together. They also commented on how they enjoyed the lively conversations. One of the visitors was a past graduate of OCA, Sue Gilmore.

**In conclusion**, it appears that it was a very worthwhile exercise and the outcomes of which exceeded our expectations. It reinforced the value of collaboration and cross-curricular meetings. Participants found it a valuable tool in their personal development.

Cake, present at all our meetings this year, was also present at the exhibition proving that artists have the best priorities. 🍰🍰🍰🍰



A second page scanned from Paddy Howe's palimpsest book.

### Statistics:

Even though the venue is off the beaten track, the exhibition drew 99 visitors over the week with the the PV attracting the biggest attendance (37) of any one time.

During the exhibition, we had 16 people, students and tutors, each stewarding for three hours at a time either in the morning or in the afternoon. Many thanks to you all as you were an integral and vital part of the whole operation.

Although it was not initially part of the plan but was instituted at the suggestion of the gallery owner, we made £13 from donations from refreshments.

OCASA awarded us the £400 requested for the event and we came in under budget! If you are interested, see the attached balance sheet for how it was spent.

Of the 45 pieces exhibited, two attracted the attention of people who were very interested in acquiring them. As this was a 'Work-in-Progress' exhibition, the pieces were, technically, not for sale, but who knows what will happen next? 🤔

It goes without saying that all this would not have been possible had it not been for the financial support of OCASA and the great team of students who run it. Many thanks to you all.

### BLOGS:

**Please can participants write up their experiences of this event in their blogs and let me have the links to be shared with the others in the OCA SW group?**

Anne Bryson, really fast off the blocks, has written hers and can be seen here:

<https://annebrysondoc.wordpress.com/2017/11/25/work-in-progress-exhibition/>

**Our meetings in 2018 will take place on  
the SECOND Saturday of each month.**

This will allow students who normally attend TVG to attend ours and vice versa.  
Please make a note of this.

The programme for 2018 is as follows, with a possible trip to see the work of David Hurn and Trish Morrissey early in the year.

OCA South West: 2018 programme

	Time	Tutor	Topic	Venue (TBC)
<b>Jan 13th</b>	11 - ?	Students	Work in progress	<u>Paignton</u>
<b>Feb 10th</b>	10 - 4pm	Helen Sear	Photography	Bristol
<b>Mar 10th</b>	10 - 4pm	Doug Burton	Creative Arts	Plymouth
<b>April 14th</b>	10 - 4pm	Michele Whiting	Drawing	Bristol
<b>May 12th</b>	10 - 4pm	Michele Whiting	Professional practice and curating	Bristol
<b>June 9th</b>	10 - 4pm	Brenda Miller	Textiles	Bristol
<b>July 14th</b>	10 - 4pm	Steve Monger	Visual communication	Plymouth
<b>Aug 11th</b>	10 - 4pm	<u>Neil Musson</u>	Textiles	Wellington/Dorchester
<b>Sept 8th</b>	10 - 4pm	Jesse Alexander	Photography	Plymouth
<b>Oct 13th</b>	10 - 4pm	<u>Polly Harvey</u>	Block printing	Bristol
<b>Nov 19th - 25th</b>	11 - 4pm	Exhibition	Work in progress	Wellington

The first meeting is at my house in January. Please let me know if you would like to come along - there is plenty of space. We can share work from 11 to 1pm, have a bowl of soup & then have a lunchtime rave party!



To everyone who participated in this  
year's meetings a huge  
**Thank You**  
and to those who have not  
participated yet, come along and meet  
some students who may be trying to  
go through the same stone walls as  
you are.

For next year, as I prepare to finish my studies with the OCA, it is vital, if you value the meetings, that we have different people running the meetings and writing up a summary of what went on. As you will see above, the groundwork has been done i.e. there are great tutors and speakers who have agreed to lead. If the meeting is led by a person on your learning pathway, please would you consider running it, and contact me as soon as you can?

**Running a meeting** involves:

- \* getting in touch with the tutor / speaker about 3 weeks before the meeting & asking him/her if there is anything the students attending the meeting need to bring or read up on, & then letting the students know;
- \* introducing the tutor / speaker,
- \* keeping an eye on the time;
- \* giving each person a chance to talk;
- \* collecting everyone's share of the cost of the venue & tea/coffee.

**That's it for this year!!!**

I hope your Christmas is  
filled with fabulous  
discoveries, excitement,  
good will and laughter, all  
bundled together in ribbons  
of gratitude tied by a good  
but crazy friend.