

Worcestershire Open Studios 2023

18-28th August

Report and Evaluation



Our thanks to all 118 participating artists in 2023, our sponsors Bevere Gallery and Elmslie House and to everyone who visited and supported Worcester Open Studios. We estimate there were 12,500 studio visits in total over the ten-day event.

Background

Worcestershire Open Studios (WOS) is in its ninth year. It is an independent not for profit organisation run by a small team of three artists and is entirely self-funded.

Last year we made the decision to extend the event to run over a ten-day period offering artists the option of opening for one or both weekends, plus weekdays. Following great feedback from both artists and visitors we continued this into 2023.

2023 in summary

We surveyed our visitors and participating artists, asking for feedback on the event. 97 artists (76 percent) responded to our survey and 251 visitors completed our online survey. This is what they had to say:-

- Great feedback from artists and visitors
 - 88 percent of visitors rated WOS 2023 as excellent.
 - Visitors' NPS score of 87.5 percent shows an extremely high likelihood to recommend WOS to others.
 - 91 percent of artists said they would take part again.
 - Artists rated the event organisation an average of 9.1 out of 10,

- Visitor numbers
 - Visitor numbers were perceived to be down. However extrapolating data from the surveys indicates studio visits were slightly higher than last year. We received approx 12,500 visits over the ten days. Each person visited an average of 6 artists each. Therefore, we estimate 2074 people visited open studios. This compares with an estimated 11,000 total visits by 2061 people in 2022.
 - It should be noted that visitor numbers vary widely by artist and location
 - In a similar pattern to last year, visitor numbers were even over the first weekend and midweek, then doubled at Bank Holiday weekend. This was not surprising as the event is established as a bank holiday event. Most artists were open over bank holiday, not all opened for the full 10 days.
 - Over half of visitors saw up to 5 artists each, and an additional 30 percent visited 6-10

- Marketing and communications

- We achieved strong coverage in the local media both printed and online across the county including front page features.
 - Two features in Living Midlands magazine including a three-page illustrated colour article.
 - Interviewed on local radio on first weekend on BBC H & W
 - The event was featured in other local and national printed and online publications and events guides
 - Social media campaigns including paid advertising were successful in generating visitor numbers. 17 percent of visitors said they found out about WOS through social media with a further 13 percent stating the website. We saw a significant spike of website visitors corresponding to the start of the advertising campaign.
 - Printed materials remain important – 33 per cent of visitors saw a leaflet or poster.
 - Fourteen thousand copies of the guide were distributed across the county. We extended coverage into parts of Warwickshire and the Cotswolds. We also advertised and were featured in Worcester Festival guide who distributed around 15 thousand copies across the county and neighbouring areas, plus shared our guides from their Worcester Crowngate hub.
 - Website traffic was high, and we saw peaks corresponding to the online advertising campaigns.
 - Banners were placed at strategic points across the county.
 - Through general marketing and the prize draw postcards we gained an additional 132 subscribers to our email newsletters
- Year-round benefits.
 - Although this report focuses mainly on the August event, it should be remembered that there are year-round benefits of taking part. This year there has been: -
 - Increased take-up by artists promoting their events and workshops on the WOS web pages.
 - More emails sent to WOS subscribers and social media posts to create awareness of the events/workshop pages.
 - Artist profiles give artists an ongoing web presence. Evidence that this has generated opportunities and enquiries to artists throughout the year.
 - Artists have grown contact lists for their own ongoing newsletters and promotion.
- Breakdown of Finances
 - We received income from artist participation fees, sponsorship and advertising.
 - The event costs are shown in the attached pie chart. We achieved break even of income and costs for the year.
 - Prize draw winners have been notified
 - £200 Beveridge voucher plus 2 x £100 voucher
 - Artists' total sales during Open Studios are estimated at £95,000. This is an average of approx £800 per artist. Figures vary widely from less than £200 to over £2000.

Points to take forward

- The economic climate had an impact on our costs and visitors' willingness to spend. This has generated comments on value for money of the event and how many days to open.
- Artists' top priority is to sell work, however this is not the main motivation to visit.

- The first drop-in evening for potential new artists worked well. Zoom briefing and regular email updates and action prompts were also appreciated. Should continue and explore possibilities to increase networking opportunities further.
- The increased size and scale of WOS, number of artists taking part and geographical area has introduced changes to the event itself, organisational challenges and altered expectations and behaviour of artists. The model going forward has to continue to adapt to address these changes.
- Maintaining the ethos of community and working together as the event grows. Unfortunately, this year we have seen a growing minority of artists who have acted in their own self-interest - resulting in complaints, impacting visitor numbers all at the cost of other artists taking part.
 - Open Studios' strength is in artists coming together as part of a shared event which is greater than can be achieved individually. Its success depends on two basic commitments from all taking part.
 - Opening your studio and being present at the times promised
 - Contributing as part of a community of artists, not benefiting at the expense of others.

For the future, look to reinforce this ethos to bring everyone's focus back to basics and to appreciate the impact all artists' individual actions have on each other and on the event as a whole.

Thank you from the organisers of Worcestershire Open Studios
Gillian Simpson, Richard Nicholls, Sally Morgan

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Attachments

- What did visitors say about the event?
- Visitor survey responses
- Breakdown of Finances

What did visitors say about the event?

We asked an AI tool to summarise all the visitor comments. Here is what they said.

The Worcestershire Open Studios event, a cherished annual tradition, once again offered a remarkable opportunity for art enthusiasts and curious visitors alike to immerse themselves in a world of creativity and inspiration.

This multi-day event was characterised by its inviting atmosphere, which encouraged meaningful interactions and deepened the appreciation of art.

Visitors consistently praised the warm hospitality of the artists. The artists not only welcomed guests with open arms but also willingly shared their insights, experiences, and advice. This personal touch added a layer of depth to the event, fostering a friendly and enjoyable atmosphere that made the experience all the more special.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, there were some constructive suggestions. Several attendees noted that the signage guiding them to the studios could be more eye-catching. This enhancement could make it easier for visitors to locate the venues, ensuring that no one misses out on this wonderful opportunity to engage with art.

The event was not just about admiring finished artworks; it delved into the background stories of the artists and their artistic journeys. Visitors had the chance to explore not only the artworks themselves but also the processes, inspirations, and motivations behind the creations. This insight added depth to the experience, making it more meaningful and inspiring. Moreover, the event provided a glimpse into the picturesque Worcestershire countryside, where the beauty of nature harmonised with the talents of passionate local artists. One visitor even highlighted the exceptional hospitality of one artist, who offered a warm welcome, an engaging taster session, and homemade treats, making the journey a truly worthwhile experience.

The event didn't merely showcase art; it celebrated the diversity of art forms and styles. It allowed visitors to discover different types of art they might not have considered exploring otherwise. This diversity was a testament to the rich tapestry of creative talent within the Worcestershire region. What truly set this event apart was the opportunity it provided for visitors to connect with the artists on a personal level. Attendees got to know the artists, learned about their creative processes, and discovered what motivated them to pursue their art. This personal interaction added an extra layer of richness to the event, making it an experience to remember.

In conclusion, the Worcestershire Open Studios event was a remarkable celebration of art and creativity. While there were minor suggestions for improvement, such as enhancing signage and extending venue hours, the overall sentiment from attendees was one of gratitude and excitement for the event's future. This annual celebration not only showcased the exceptional talent in Worcestershire but also served as a source of inspiration for all who attended. It was an event that brought the community together and shone a spotlight on the vibrant artistic culture of the region."

Visitor survey responses	Percentages
Did you support any of the artists that you visited by	
Purchasing prints, cards, or other goods	40.7%
Purchasing artwork	24.6%
Subscribing to a mailing list	19.2%
Signing up for a workshop	8.3%
Other	7.2%
Do you live in Worcestershire?	
Yes	80.0%
No, specifically travelled from(please specify)	12.8%
No, but was visiting family or friends	7.2%
Have you been to Worcestershire Open Studios before?	
Yes	59.8%
No, it's my first time	40.2%
How did you find out about Worcestershire Open Studios?	
Saw a leaflet or poster	32.6%
From social media	17.4%
Other	15.4%
Visited the website	13.1%
Received an invitation	12.0%
Saw a road sign	5.1%
From a newspaper or magazine article	4.3%
How likely are you to recommend visiting Worcestershire Open Studios to a friend or relative? 1 is least likely, 10 is most likely	
3	0.4%
4	0.8%
5	0.8%
6	0.4%
7	1.3%
8	6.3%
9	12.7%
10	77.2%
How many studio venues did you visit over the 10 days of the event?	
1-5	53.7%
6-10	29.3%
11-15	11.2%

15+	5.8%
How would you rate your overall experience of Worcestershire Open Studios?	
Excellent	87.7%
Good	11.1%
Fair	1.3%
What were your main reasons for visiting Worcestershire Open Studios?	
To see artwork	29.5%
To meet and talk to artists	27.7%
To get ideas and inspiration	18.3%
To have an enjoyable day out	11.3%
To purchase artwork	10.4%
To explore Worcestershire	2.0%
Other	0.7%

Breakdown of Finances

Income

Artists' registration fees.	£15,044
Sponsorship & advertising	£ 1,140
Total income	£16,184

Expense

Printing	£4,944
Website	£3,531
Distribution costs	£ 675
Roadside signage	£ 609
Meet up - virtual	£ 68
Exhibitions	£. 312
Graphic design brochure/flyers etc	£ 900
Marketing/promotion	£2,362
Honorarium	£1,500
Misc - incl travel, fees, insurance, prizes	£ 715
Total expense	£15,616

