

# Celebrating Somerset Arts Week

This autumn it's all about a very special festival in Somerset. From 21 September to 6 October the annual and ever popular Somerset Arts Week returns, transforming the county into a hive of creativity and innovation.

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Over 16 days more than 400 artists will be showcasing their work in more than 100 unique venues across Somerset.

This year the festival is exhibition-based and focuses on celebrating artistic ability and individuality with a hugely diverse range of crafts, skills and media being incorporated into the event.

The eclectic mix of artists ensures that the festival will be not only visually exciting but also stimulating for the visitor.

Whatever your taste or view on art is, the extensive variety among the artists guarantees that there is something for everyone; from contemporary art installations, video and sculpture, to print making, photography, painting and ceramics, Somerset Arts Week has it all.

A visionary culmination of sensational artistic talent inspired by the best

of Somerset makes for one exceptional festival.

## Make the most

Headlining the festival is the aptly-named Make the Most exhibition.

Staged at the renowned Barrington Court in Barrington (offered as a venue by the National Trust), five internationally-acclaimed artists will indeed be making the most of some seemingly uninspiring resources; paper, wood, leather, stone and willow.

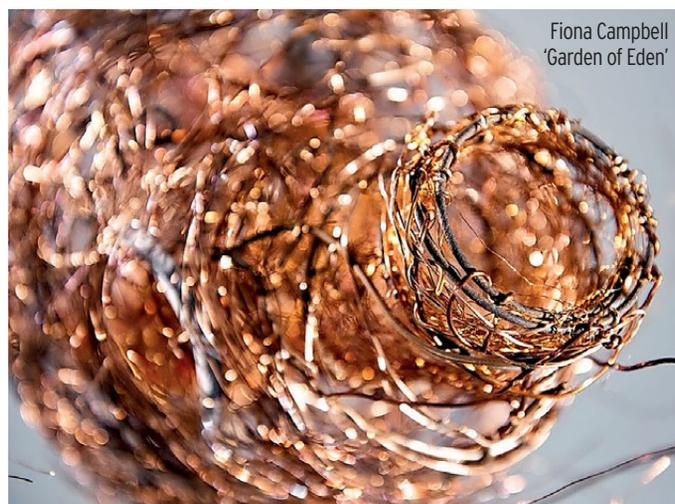
Each work has been inspired by the history and impressive features of Barrington Court, whilst challenging the artists to transform Barrington Court using the locally-sourced products. Not only will visitors be treated to a unique display of artistic innovation but they will also discover some of the treasures of Somerset's craft industry with the works

acknowledging the contribution of the local raw material suppliers and local manufacturers to the local economy and ecology of the county.

The contemporary sculptor Laura Ellen Bacon is one of the artists to have been commissioned to create a special piece at Barrington Court.

She specializes in turning raw materials into spaces in their own right and she has been collaborating with Musgrove Willows in Bridgwater to make large-scale willow works for Barrington Court's Old Kitchen.

She says: "The sculptures that I make have a closeness with a host structure or the fabric of a building; their oozing energy spills from gutters, their muscular forms nuzzle up to the glass and their gripping weave locks onto the strength of the walls. I relish the opportunity to let a building 'feed' the form, as if some part of the building is exhaling into the work."



Fiona Campbell  
'Garden of Eden'



Melanie Tomlinson's  
work will be on display



Sue Palmer  
'Flowers, where is'

Another feature of the National Trust Barrington Court transformation will be Maeve Clancy's paper work within the Great Hall.

Maeve is collaborating with the Two Rivers Paper Company, Watchet, and developing some large-scale cut paper installations inspired by the history of Barrington Court and its gardens, with specific reference to the restoration work of Alfred Hoare Powell and gardener Gertrude Jekyll.

"I want to take the stories from Barrington Court's arts and crafts past and look to the present arts and crafts movement in the area," says Maeve.

[somerstartworks.org.uk/news/make-most-project](http://somerstartworks.org.uk/news/make-most-project)

### Abundance trail

An exciting new addition to Somerset Arts Week is a partnership with the National Garden Scheme (NGS), with gardens open for charity.

It's a special arty garden trail through seven charming private gardens in the

county. Each garden has been teamed up with an artist or sculptor each of whom is creating a work of art inspired by the garden they are linked to.

Martock-based artist Bryony Tidball is creating a piece for journalist, Rebecca Pow's garden at Tuckers Farmhouse near Taunton.

The garden is a combination of formal areas and some extensive natural areas where wildlife is encouraged and Bryony plans to position her large, apple shaped sculpture made from long thatching straw in this more wild area.

"I think this will work really well for my harvest related piece. It was great talking to Rebecca about her garden ethos and together we should make a great partnership," says Bryony.

"I think combining art with the garden is a really excellent idea and this trail opens up an exciting new opportunity for visitors during the Art Week."

The garden artists will be using locally-sourced materials to complement or indeed contrast the landscape, culture and history

of each garden.

In addition to Bryony Tidball the other artists taking part in the Abundance Trail are: Megan Calver, Fiona Campbell, Alison Cockcroft, Kitty Hiller, Leah Hislop, Sue Palmer and Gillian Widden and they will be offering their own response to the theme of abundance whether in social, cultural, political or historical terms.

Fiona Campbell, for example, intends to recreate a Garden of Eden at the Esotera Garden at Foddington.

"Eden is almost tangible at Esotera," she says, "made more so by the impact of the proposed vibrant, exotic installation - a product of intricate labour and love created from abundant mixed media reclaimed materials on a large scale, suggesting also that Eden is everywhere in the fantastical microscopic world - if we look hard enough. A garden of earthly delights awaits."

This incredible level of thought, detail and intricate planning coupled with a large dose of ingenuity is also demonstrated by the artist Sue Palmer who will create a >

new screen-based work as a response to the Pope's Hadspen Garden, near Castle Cary, which closed in 2005. Through extensive research of the 'dispersal' of Hadspen via the plants and seeds people bought there and planted in their own gardens and conversations with plantswomen and visitors, the work studies the relationship between time, the garden and the gardener.

The finished work will be, fittingly, showed at Tintinhull, where Penelope Hobhouse, who was so influential to Hadspen, went on to garden.

The trail gives festival goers the opportunity to view one-off, site-specific pieces of art, as well as allowing them to explore some of Somerset's most magnificent gardens.

Gardens in the trail are: The Walled Gardens of Cannington (nr Bridgwater, Sedgemoor), Little Yarford Farmhouse (Kingston St Mary, nr Taunton), Stoke St. Mary Gardens (Stoke St. Mary, near Taunton), Aller Farmhouse (Williton, West Somerset), Tintinhull Garden (Tintinhull), Esotera (Foddington, near Babcaray) and Henley Mill (Wookey, Mendip).

The theme of abundance will be continued throughout the 16-day festival.

Abundance X at East Lambrook Manor Gardens is an exhibition featuring limited-edition art works. Artists include Laura Percy, Chris Dunseath, Judy Willoughby, Emma Riley, Nadja Mcdevitt, Jan Ollis, Rachel Waldoock, Sue Lowe, Margaret Wall and Linda Bristow. The Abundance Pop-up Meadow will see many different locations throughout the Taunton area magically transformed into a sea of blooms, butterflies, bumblebees and assorted pollinators as schoolchildren work with artist Freya Morgan to bring the beauty of nature to more urban areas.

On 20 September there will be an abundance feast celebrating food and drink that can only be found in Somerset.

The evening will include a special taster menu and presentation created by artist Tasha Stevens, alongside a professional chef and exploring sustainable food supply from the garden environment.

[somerseartworks.org.uk/abundance](http://somerseartworks.org.uk/abundance)

### The Company of Cranes

One of the aims of the festival is to use art to raise awareness about important issues affecting the county. It's hard to believe that the demise of one of the county's most majestic birds, the crane, came about more than 400 years ago. Recently The Great Crane Project has been working tirelessly to reintroduce this beautiful bird to the Somerset Levels.



Freya Morgan's Pop up Meadow

In an exciting artistic response to this struggle, acclaimed illustrator and metal-worker Melanie Tomlinson will present an exhibition of artworks commissioned by Somerset Art Works, in partnership with The Great Crane Project, to chronicle this remarkable program.

Melanie's vibrant and emotional response to the commission includes beautifully-crafted, hand-printed steel zoetropes, which animate her journey with the Great Crane Project team as they collected eggs in Brandenburg, Germany ahead of their hatching and rearing in Slimbridge, Gloucestershire.

"Working on the crane project has been a very moving and emotional experience," comments Melanie.

"To see cranes in the wild in Germany, and to observe the collection of eggs has put the project into a new context for me.

"It has also inspired exciting new artworks that I hope reflect the beauty of the project and the landscapes in Somerset and Brandenburg."

The exhibition will also include images and short films of wildlife from the environments of both Somerset and Brandenburg and the creation of the artworks themselves.

The festival is a fantastic opportunity for

these talented artists to project their work into the wider public sphere as well as amongst their peers. The broad range of venues being used in conjunction with the artists' means that not only is the festival a celebration of art but also a dynamic way of highlighting the best of Somerset.

Somerset Art Weeks encourages an atmosphere of adventure and experimentation in Somerset, inspiring artists and encouraging audiences to experience art at first hand.

[somerseartworks.org.uk/projects/great-crane-art-project](http://somerseartworks.org.uk/projects/great-crane-art-project) ■



The Somerset Art Weeks free guide will provide a fully-illustrated introduction and commentary on all of the artworks on display during the event.

The catalogue is available within tourist information centres and libraries across Somerset.  
[somerseartworks.org.uk](http://somerseartworks.org.uk)