**International Artists Welcome 20th Anniversary**

**Swindon Open Studios; Proof Swindon DOES Have Culture!**

* **Featuring Aviation Artist David Bent (Hon CRAeS)**
* **Mural Artist Ken White**
* **Painters Andi Theokle and Tim Carroll**

**2nd July 2024 - Swindon, United Kingdom –** On its 20th Anniversary, Swindon Open Studios (SOS) proudly presents several internationally-renowned artists among nearly 130 fellow creatives, who all open their studios to the public during the last two weekends of September. Entrance is free and with 56 venues, this is the biggest ever event in its history. The public will see a wide range of creative talent ranging from oil paintings, acrylics and watercolours, prints, lino cuts, ceramics, stained glass, jewellery, mosaics and digital art, to children’s illustrated books, life-size film props and even Steam Punk sculptures.

 Swindon Open Studios is a community-based art event which started with a few artists inviting family and friends. By 2004, fifty-three artists were involved. SOS has grown into a well-organised, thriving group and one of the most well-known artists globally is David Bent Hon CRAeS. Renowned for leading a new movement in aviation art, he was invited to be the first ever “Artist in Residence” for the Red Arrows, The Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team. David Bent’s first exhibition in 2003 at the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT), Fairford, led to a series of photo collages called “Aerobots” which captured people’s imagination globally, including leading futurologist Ray Kurzweil. David Bent’s work is now collected by numerous fast jet pilots and people in the aerospace industries. The Red Arrows collaborated with Breitling on a book containing David’s paintings, which was presented to then Prince Charles at RIAT 2014. David’s recent work emphasises social issues such as the displacement of people and the Digital Age.

 Ken White is another legendary Swindon artist who has achieved global fame with over 100 large-scale murals. For over 25 years, Ken was the personal artist for Virgin boss Richard Branson. Ken completed assignments throughout the world in Virgin record shops, hotels and airport lounges. In 1984, Ken White was commissioned to produce the "Scarlet Lady" emblem featured on all Virgin Atlantic aircraft. Ken’s recent work is strongly influenced by life in Swindon’s Great Western Railway workshops where he was an apprentice.

 More recently, Andi Theokle joined SOS. Before becoming a professional full-time artist, Andi was an international award-winning interior designer with blue chip and high-profile clients. She has exhibited worldwide and her paintings hang in private and public collections in Paris, New York, Dubai, Hong Kong, Toronto and Belgrade. Andi Theokle’s abstract collections inspired by water and sky create a sense of calm, while her nudes celebrate the beauty of the human form.

 Tim Carroll is another founding artist of SOS, and in 2009 he was elected member of the Bath Society of Artists. His abstract figurative paintings are full of vibrancy, mystery and imagination. One of his paintings is with a collector in New York. Another large commission for a family portrait in the style of the Egyptian friezes, is in Paris.

 Recent research revealed that in the world’s biggest galleries, visitors only spend about 20 seconds in front of the most famous, iconic works of art as the crowds pass relentlessly by. However, David Bent says “You really need time with artworks to study them. One of the great benefits of Swindon Open Studios is that you can see the full catalogue of an artist’s work, see themes developing and gain real insight into what their work is about.”

 Unlike Open Studios in other towns where artists are vetted before being allowed to exhibit, Swindon Open Studios is an inclusive community event where all artists: amateur, part-time or professional can take part. However, the standards are very high. Art groups where people paint for pleasure are included, as well as individuals who are self-taught, and those who have only recently begun selling their work. For a “behind-the-scenes” look at the breadth of work by so many talented creative people, save the dates: Saturday/Sunday 21st/22nd and 28th/29th September. See swindonopenstudios.org for details or follow **#swindonopenstudios** for updates.

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**For further details, interviews and hi-res images, contact:**

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**Image Captions:**

Red Arrows No. 1 Jim Turner, Presents David Bent’s book “A Celebration of The Red Arrows” to Prince Charles at Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) 2014 Photo Credit: CALYX

Ken White’s most recent work Man On A Bike

Andi Theokle’s most recent work Pink Lady Reclining

Tim Carroll’s most recent work The Beach

**Editor’s Notes: Not for publication**

Swindon Open Studios is a community-based art event which started informally with a few artists inviting family and friends over and sending them on to visit other local artists. Artists from Swindon and surrounding areas invite the public into their studios, homes, and pop-up exhibitions over the last two weekends in September each year. The first SOS event was more than 20 years ago, but it ran alternate years at the beginning. In 2004, there were 53 participating artists, but the number has more than doubled to circa 130 artists at 56 different venues in 2024.

The Committee is run by six volunteers and the event is sponsored by local companies. Alongside registration fees, the money is pooled to cover the costs of marketing.

**For further information on the artists:**

**www.davidbentstudio.com**

[**http://www.kenwhitemurals.co.uk/**](http://www.kenwhitemurals.co.uk/)

[**www.anditheokle.com/**](http://www.anditheokle.com/)

For access to Tim Carroll’s work, go to <https://www.bsaorg.uk/> then click on category “C”, find his name and image, then click on the link which redirects you to his website.