

MEET OUR GOLDEN ARTISTS

We have some very special 'golden' artists that have taken part in all 10 years of CAOS.

We asked the golden artists 10 questions about some of their experiences and how CAOS has shaped their artwork.



Abel Kesteven



Adrienne Roberts



Caroline Warwick



Claire Chandler



Doug Shaw



Jo Sharpe



John Stillman



Kate Marsden



Simon Burder

Abel Kesteven

www.abelkesteven.co.uk

What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

I wanted to share my practice with other local artists to celebrate and be part of an emerging 'art scene' in Carshalton!

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

I have embraced the challenge of working in different mediums and approaches intentionally putting myself out of my comfort zone.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

I have learnt that there is a real appreciation and sense of wonderment from conversations with visitors about how much talent there is in Carshalton. Every year seems to yield more and more talent as a result of CAOS!

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

I feel very fortunate and privileged to have taken part for this last 10 years! There's a real sense of community and being part of something larger, (and growing) year by year!

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

I think trying to reinvent myself artistically each year. Getting a new cohesive body of work together. Framing/presentation costs can be a challenge!

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

To make sure you have a platform/social media/website presence and to show consistency in your work.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

I think the visitors enjoy the conversations with the artists. (Talking to the visitors is what I enjoy most about CAOS incidentally!)

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

Art is a form of therapy both in terms of taking part, but also in the absorbing of it! Talking to artists who are passionate about what they do seems to have a positive effect on the local community.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

I don't have a specific moment but just seeing the reaction of the visitors and their general interest in what I and my fellow artists do motivates me to keep on going!

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

A hunger for the arts and the sense that people want to support it is I think what will keep CAOS going in the future.

Adrienne Roberts

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

Talking to Neal and Helena Vaughan at Arty Drinks in The Hope and wanting to participate and be involved with their plans for an Open Studios event in Carshalton. This I found inspiring, raising the profile of art and a plethora of artists in our local area lacking in art events, something new.

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

I have significantly widened my creation of ceramics and mixed media in this period of time. From decorative 2d and 3d work inspired by nature, texture and vibrant colour to additional functional work including plates, and mugs and more recently portrait sculpture. Colour and texture has remained a constant.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

A great appreciation of art and very inspiring and interesting insights from visitors. Sometimes seeing elements of your work you hadn't thought of. Helping in their understanding of how work is made and the amount of time it takes. Particularly with ceramics and the complex processes. It's not as easy as it looks! I have learnt from other artists that there is a lot of common ground! And also hearing about different media and how they approach their work.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

It's been great to be part of CAOS and enjoy the company of a community of lovely like minded artists also with a passion for art in all different forms. And a joy to share and celebrate one's work with visitors and all the fascinating discussions that ensue. 10 years is a long time and it's a firm annual event.

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

Getting my studio beautifully tidy and organised and making enough work! Deciding how to price my work, I really don't want to give it away but do want to sell it and for it to be valued.

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

It's a talented and friendly artistic community to be part of which is very enjoyable. And don't underprice!

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

Seeing a wide variety of work in the different local locations and talking to artists who are friendly and knowledgeable about their work. Following the trail!

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

Undoubtedly raising the profile of art locally and the many artists who live here.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

There are many but a very memorable one was our first wrap party after CAOS in 2017. All of us artists were so thrilled that an idea which first germinated in the pub had happened, we had done it and there was a great feeling of pride and celebration.

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

Continued marketing, contact with regular visitors and exploring audiences further afield. To keep the artist's studio element which is to be celebrated and highlight what we do.

Caroline Warwick

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

My potter friend Kathryn Sherriff had been asked to participate and mentioned it to me. We thought it would be fun to take part together, where we could support each other in this new venture.

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

Since 2017, I've gained a lot more confidence in my work. The feedback from visitors each year has been a wonderful boost as they tell me they use their bowl/mug every day and how much they appreciate a piece of hand made ceramics and often return to buy more pieces, for themselves or for gifts for friends. I've also developed my range of work following suggestions made by visitors, the best being my French butter keepers, which I hadn't been aware of until a French visitor talked to me about them. They are a challenge to make and one of my best selling items, I even use one myself every day.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

Being part of the wonderful artist community in Carshalton and appreciating the various talents and dedication of other artists has definitely encouraged my creativity. I've always thought of myself as a crafts person rather than an artist, but now realise my design choices are art-inspired in many ways. Learning of the various workshops offered by the other artists, Dance and Draw and Art at the Sun being some I have taken great pleasure from and brought friends along to.

It's wonderful to have the opportunity, through our demos on wheel throwing to show visitors the process of creating ceramics and to explain the steps in making each piece. They gain an understanding of how much work is required and why these hand made items are more expensive than factory made.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

I'm extremely proud of participating in all the 10 years of CAOS. I've been involved on the CAOS committee for most of that time, helping to grow the event year on year and we're all proud of how the Open Studios has developed. I never imagined it would be so rewarding and the visitors are all so lovely, interested and enthusiastic about art, in all its forms. It's also great to entertain the many children with our pottery throwing demos. It's a great community event and makes Carshalton a really special place, which I'm proud to live in the heart of.

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

Building up a good range of ceramics to display takes a lot of time and I need to start months before. As a host, there's a lot of work to be done to make your location attractive and easy to navigate for visitors. Over the years we have had extreme heatwaves and torrential rain to deal with and ensuring there is shelter, shade, refreshments and some seating, as well as space for bikes, buggies, wheelchairs etc can be a real challenge at times.

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

You need to fully commit to CAOS - it's only grown because the artists take time to promote the event and every participant needs to contribute to this. On the weekends of the Open Studios, you have to maintain a welcoming, chatty vibe for the whole day, but the enthusiasm of all the visitors is contagious and helps enormously to keep you going when you're flagging.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

The variety of art along the trail is tremendous and there is something for all tastes. Many families visit and it's lovely to see young children gaining interest and being inspired by the artists and their work.

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

It's connected the growing artistic community in the area, and helped them all to flourish, to share experiences, and exhibition opportunities.

Many visitors return year on year and look forward to the event, but we also manage to generate a lot of new visitors (our feedback shows about a third are first time visitors). A lot of visitors are inspired to take up art themselves and can be signposted to classes, workshops etc, many run by CAOS artists.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

Speaking to a young couple, who's first date was visiting the Open Studios trail and who, 3 years later were still together and still coming to CAOS.

Having a neighbour's child return with her mother the day after visiting to show us something she had made herself with a Thank you card for inspiring her.

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

Our vibrant, artistic community and the enthusiasm of the visitors.

Claire Chandler

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

I was so excited to be part of the local community of artists in Carshalton and part of an event that celebrates what we do.

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

In the last 10 years I've gone from taking part in London exhibitions to showing my work all over the world. My paintings have been shown at Art Fairs in Hong Kong and Singapore, I have collectors worldwide and a London gallery representing me. I also have a much better balance between teaching art and time for my own painting practice.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

I've received valuable feedback and moral support from local artists who have since become great friends! I love hearing visitors responses to my paintings. The conversations and the encouragement from the local community has been brilliant over the last 10 years.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

I am so grateful for the opportunity to show my work every year from my art studio. I really enjoy being a part of such a creative community and sharing my space with other artists has been so much fun and a great way of getting to know others.

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

The big tidy up of the garden, my studio, our home and garage that makes us ready for all the hundreds of visitors!

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

It's daunting at first putting your art out there for everyone to see, but it's such good practice to get you talking about the story behind your work and your process.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

Meeting the artists in person and seeing their workspace.

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

It highlights the creative people that live and work in this area and allows people to form new connections.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

Someone offering to buy my paint splattered floor.

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

The brilliant artists involved and our supportive local community!

Doug Shaw

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

I was at an Arts Network Sutton social event – the first one I'd been to – keen to find out more about other creative practitioners in the Borough. Someone mentioned Carshalton Artists to me, I got in touch, and the rest, as they say, is history.

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

I'm an experimenter at heart, and my practice has evolved considerably over the past 10 years. When I first started, paint was my most used medium – watercolour and acrylic. Currently I'm exploring bookbinding, printmaking, photography, creative writing and spoken word.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

We tend to think of artists as soloists – but dialogue can allow ideas to permeate and support the development of our work, so for me – I prefer to see art as more of a team sport. Other people are often a great source of inspiration.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

What really motivates and inspires me is the interesting work on show, seeing the process side of things that you only get from a look inside an artist's studio, and some of the fascinating conversations which take place during the event.

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

The trickiest thing for me is seeking to create an engaging way of showing the work well, while retaining the feel of a real, working artist's space.

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

If you are thinking of applying to take part in future years – have a solid body of work ready to support your application. Maybe speak to some artists who have already taken part? Get a feel from them as to what is involved and ask the organisers for guidance too.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

Hopefully they appreciate the difference in skills and practices across the range of artists involved and enjoy seeing inside working spaces which are not usually open to the public.

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

CAOS shows the local community that visual arts in many forms are being practiced right here. I think this helps to raise the profile of what we do, demonstrating and sharing high quality creative practice right here in the neighbourhood.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

When someone really 'gets' your work, and maybe buys something from you that resonates, or appreciates some of the more installation-based ideas being shared. Those 'aha' moments can be uplifting for all parties.

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

It's a well-established trail so to that extent – CAOS has its own momentum. I think this will be helped by refreshing the artist's roster and encouraging artists to produce new, inventive work. From an artist's point of view – knowing the open studios is coming certainly focuses my attention!

Jo Sharpe

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

I wanted to take part in CAOS 17 as I was aware of Open Studios in other areas. The timing was perfect as I had a growing portfolio of work. I was thrilled to be able to showcase my work to so many local residents.

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

It has changed quite a lot. I now have a large studio in Oaks park where I teach and paint. I paint most days. My artworks have got bigger and I now sell through several galleries.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

It is amazing how many people love art and like to draw and paint or perhaps want to learn.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

It has been a pleasure to take part every year. I love seeing new and old faces from my community and having good chats.

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

It is very time consuming preparing for the Open Studios. It is also quite expensive, spending money on prints, frames etc.

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

I think it's important to paint or make for yourself, rather than for the audience. There are a lot of artists for the community to get around or buy from, so try not to expect or get despondent if you don't sell.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

I think it has a very friendly vibe. I would love to do a tour of all the different artists. It must be great.

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

I think it is one of the highlights on the calendar. A great thing to do on a sunny weekend.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

I can still remember the first few CAOS where my studio was my garage. It was fantastic to have chats with such a variety of local people and make some sales.

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

I think it will keep going as long as the quality of the artists remains high.

John Stillman

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

I had always wanted Carshalton to have its own art trail as I felt with the history of art and the artists in Carshalton it would be nice to celebrate the creativity of our time. I had seen other art trails in Brighton and Surrey work so well, not only for the artists but also for the local community which for me was the reason I wanted to be part of it.

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

As a 'traditional' landscape painter my work has pretty much stayed the same over the years, so I don't feel I have evolved like many of the other artists that have tried new techniques and experimented with new mediums and subjects.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

It is always nice to welcome visitors and fellow artists to your studio and show them your work. You certainly learn a lot discussing the subjects you have painted and the techniques that you have used to achieve an effect. CAOS for me has been a great introduction to seeing and learning more about my fellow Carshalton artists.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

From that first meeting with Abel Kesteven and Helena Vaughan in The Hope Pub, Carshalton to discuss the possibility of an open studios art trail to what has been achieved by all the artists and various committee members makes me very proud to have been part of it since the start and I cannot quite believe it's been 10 years!

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

I think for me it would be the weeks of work that goes into getting the studio ready and the pictures up on the walls plus all the labelling. After 10 years of CAOS I have a well timed routine of what needs to be done by a certain time and it seems to work.

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

I would say 'do it' especially for the up and coming young artists as it will be the best thing you do not only for your own confidence but you will learn so much on how to talk to the public and promote and sell your work.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

From my experience they enjoy seeing the studio and talking direct to the artist as they don't always get the chance to do that when visiting a gallery. The CAOS weekends are also a great time for friends and families to meet up and go on the trail together and enjoy the varied locations around Carshalton plus visit a few pubs along the way!

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

CAOS brings so much to our local community, it opens the doors to what a wonderful diverse collection of artists that we have working and living in and around Carshalton. I would also like to think it allows the kids that may not be very academic but excel in their art that there is a place for them and to see what a wonderful career you can have in becoming an artist!

Most memorable CAOS moment?

I had a lady who had been to every CAOS and always bought three cards each year of my paintings and she said to me,

'I love your pictures and I have your cards framed and on my wall to enjoy. I cannot afford an original painting but you never know I may win the lottery one day!

She must have had over 20 of my cards framed and on her wall at home. The following year she came into the studio with a big smile and said 'This is the year John I am going to buy an original painting!' She had been left a gift in a friend's will and she wanted to celebrate her friend's kindness by purchasing an original painting. She chose a painting of Grove Park, Carshalton as over the years her and her friend had enjoyed their walks together through the park. That was and still is the best CAOS moment for me.

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

Well, this is our 10th year and for me I would say just keep doing what we've been doing all the previous years as it seems to have worked just fine as it is!

Kate Marsden

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

I'd taken part in Dulwich Artists Open House in 2016, and had such an amazing time. When Helena approached me later that year and said they were thinking of organising something similar here I jumped at the chance!

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

It's changed dramatically. Back in 2017 I was producing fabrics, products and prints featuring my mid-century inspired illustrations. When Covid came along I ended up changing direction, and I now focus on my fine art textiles and painting, plus teaching art on a permanent basis.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

What a wonderful creative community we have in Carshalton - we're so lucky. There's so much enthusiasm for what we do. I've also made some amazing friends - the CAOS artists are incredibly supportive of one another, and I love taking part just to hang out with some of my favourite people.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

I'm amazed I've managed it if I'm honest! I've always talked about taking year off so I can go and explore the trail myself, but the FOMO is too great so every year I sign up again.

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

There's a lot of prep. I also used to look after the social media and that involved a huge amount of work. To be honest though I find it useful to have an annual event to work towards each year. When it comes down to it, the only challenge for me nowadays is not falling asleep the second I get home on the last day!

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

Apply! It's such a fun event and always a highlight of my year. If nothing else you'll make lots of new friends.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

Getting to spend time chatting to the artists and being inspired. There's no pressure to buy anything and the atmosphere is great.

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

Carshalton is always buzzing during CAOS. It's so nice to see the same people coming each year and groups of people meeting up to do the trail together. They end up exploring parts of our area they wouldn't otherwise go to. From my point of view I struggle to go anywhere nowadays without seeing someone I know, which I'm sure is because I've met so many people each year.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

Probably the first year. Visitors were so excited because it was new, and the reaction to my work was amazing. I've been in three different locations over the 10 years and each one has a different feel to it (and every year has its highlights).

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

We have a team of really committed people behind it. As long as the enthusiasm is there I see it continuing for many years to come.

Simon Burder

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What made you decide to take part in the first CAOS in 2017?

Neal and Helena asked artists at Oaks Park Studios to join in.

How has your art practice developed since CAOS17?

My work has become more focussed around the local area, specifically Woodmansterne Road, alongside Oaks Park.

What have you learnt from talking to visitors and other artists?

I have got to know a wider range of artists based in the area. I haven't learned anything specific from taking part in CAOS as we had already held Open Studios at Oaks Park Studios every year since I first arrived there in 1995.

What does it mean to you to have taken part in all 10 years?

It has become part of my art practice to open the studio annually to the public. I see it as a commitment both to myself and the community at large.

What is the most challenging thing about taking part in CAOS?

Answering the same questions to visitors over and over again, while trying to remember that for each visitor it is the first time they have asked the question!

What advice would you give to artists thinking of doing CAOS?

It is better to show as part of a group of artists, either like we can at Oaks Park Studios or if in a home studio situation, to share the space if possible.

What do you think visitors enjoy most about CAOS?

Discovering such a diversity of creative activity in their local area. Seeing how artists work and being able to talk with them.

How do you think CAOS benefits our local community?

It definitely enriches the local culture and general sense of pride in Carshalton.

Most memorable CAOS moment?

Persuading the Mayor to draw on one of my litho stones!

What do you think will keep CAOS going in the future?

So long as there is a steady stream of artists continuing to support the event and enough who can commit time and talents to organising, it will have a good future.