

Dorset Art Weeks 2020 - A Fresh Approach

As a result of the review process that takes place following each Dorset Art Weeks event, DVA, the custodian and producer of, reputedly, the largest Open Studio event in the country, is seeking to evolve the event to be more in line with its charitable and educational aims.

Evaluating the statistics and feedback gathered from artists, visitors and stakeholders alike, it is clear there is huge warmth, loyalty and support for the event. Nevertheless, combined with wider research and experiences gathered from other open studio events, the evidence clearly suggests it is time to explore a new way forward.

Our primary aim has always been and remains to attract visitors to an event where they can experience first-hand the wealth of artists practicing in unique settings throughout our county. With a fresh sense of purpose and newly defined objectives, over the next two events, DVA is setting-out to reinvigorate the true spirit of the Open Studio movement alongside developing a new visual arts festival experience.

Objectives

To develop our audience and improve visitor experience.

- *attracting new visitors from a wider demographic with an emphasis on youth and diversity.*
- *making it easier to plan visits, discern quality, follow, as well as expand, interests*

To support and grow our community of artists and makers.

- *making the cost of participation proportionate to an artist's profile within the event **and** relative to the services offered.*
- *increasing the range of art and design on show - e.g. digital, film, installations, performance etc., and increasing opportunities for meaningful interactivity*

To create a sustainable future for the event.

- *developing enhanced fundraising and sponsorship initiatives around the new offer*

The Key Changes

1. Dorset Art Weeks will be organised within three categories:

- Festival Venues - 25 selected, Working Studios, Curated Exhibitions and Special Events, e.g: film, talks, demonstrations, installations and performances: exemplifying the wide range of great art, design and making created and presented across Dorset. In one way or another, Festival Venues will be expected to involve or partner an emergent artist(s).
- Core Studios and Curated Exhibitions - representing up to 100 full time, or otherwise demonstrably dedicated Artist's Studios, Galleries, Workshops, Media and Arts Centres, Educational Establishments etc.
- Fringe Studios + Group Shows - a category providing more affordable access to the event for generally - but not exclusively - individual's making art and craft and working in what is essentially a more domestic, part time setting. Also, to advertise individual's or groups of artists - e.g. an art society or local, informal grouping - coming together to form a mixed exhibition of recent works in a hired or loaned space.

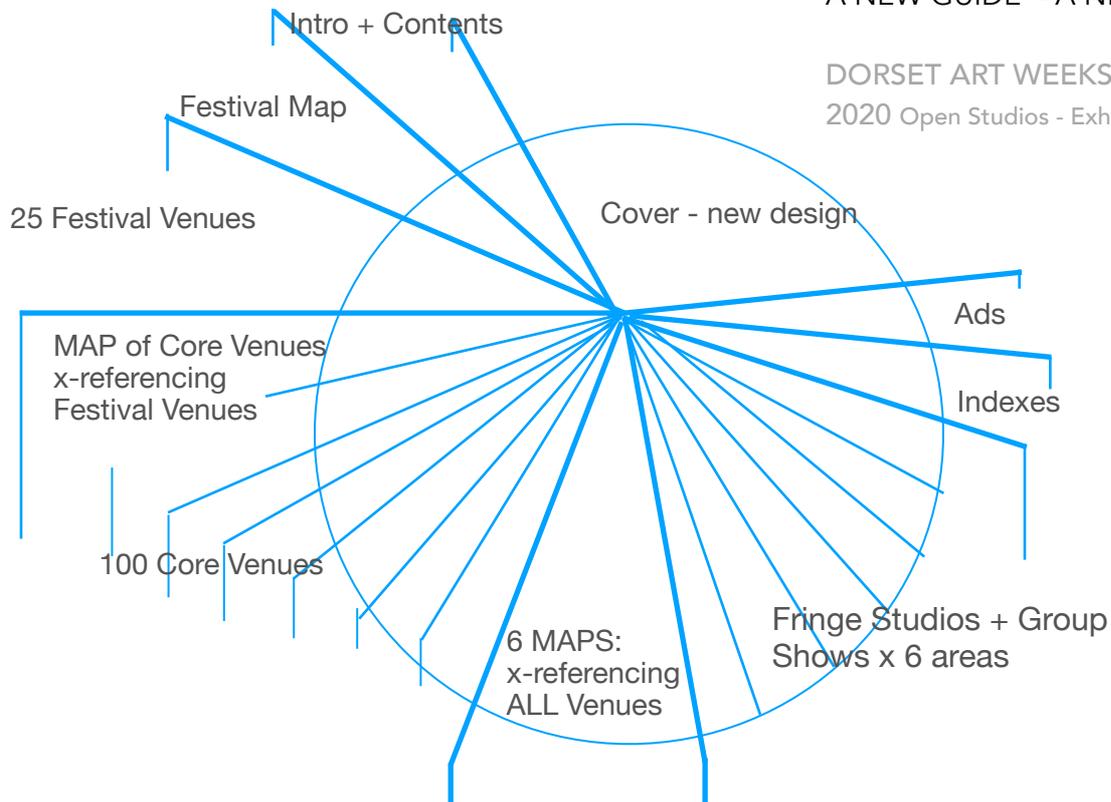
2. For Core and Festival applicants - A pre-registration / allocation process: September + October

3. Substantial re-design of the DAW Guide - and No DAW Cover Competition

4. The original red - yellow colour scheme will return; strongly evident, selectively applied.

5. Fee structure - For the majority, the cost of entry will closely match 2018. We aim to reduce the costs for those opting to participate as Fringe Studios. Some services will be modified.

Further description is given below. The definitive, guidelines and costs will be published in August.



The diagram indicates how the new DAW Event and Guide is likely to work. A square format is being considered. The design is being developed as the details are refined. One intention is to increase the size of images and reduce the quantity of text.

The final design will be confirmed along with the the entry sizes and fees in August.

The *likely* allocation of space will be: Festival Venues = 1page / Core Venues = 0.5pages / Fringe = 0.25page / Group Shows 0.33page.

Mapping the event is the biggest design challenge. We aim to cross-reference each section with the next so visitors can better plan and navigate their interests, and make the most of a locality.

Applying To Take Part

For artists, the most significant change is the introduction of a pre-selection, or allocation, process. The following points seek to outline how this will work. As already stated, the definitive criteria and application guidelines will be published on the DVA website from mid-August.

Overview

Application will be made to one of three categories. 1. Festival Venues 2. Core Studios + Curated Exhibitions - 3. Fringe Studios + Group Shows. NB > The Core Category will include the opportunity to express interest in selection as a Festival Venue.

Pre-applications for the Festival and Core will be submitted between 05 September - 05 November, using a downloadable form and submitting digital images. The guidelines will offer considerations regarding the nature of access and interactivity you are able to offer.

The number of entries accepted to the Festival and Core categories will be capped. Acceptance to a category will be confirmed by a selection panel. The panel will be looking to confirm places rather than to re-allocate. NB > Given the diversity of artists' practice and to ensure the process has some creative flexibility, it will almost certainly be necessary to have a discussion with some applicants during the process.

On confirmation of selection to a particular category, applicants will complete their registration for DAW on-line on the Dorset Art Weeks website - pretty much as before.

The likely composition of the selection panel is given at the end of the document.

The DAW Categories - In More Detail

The thrust of the changes to participating in DAW is to effect a genuine balance between artist's and maker's self-selection and respect for their practice alongside meeting visitors' needs. Many visitors - and, indeed, many artists - say the event has become too large, and determining both quality and the level of interaction with the process has become a matter of too much guesswork. The allocation of space in the guide is, often seen to be an inadequate reflection of what, in terms of experience, quality and informed engagement, is on offer. Add a rationale that young artists and several art forms are almost entirely missing and the need for change becomes pressing.

- a. **Festival Venues:** 25 selected venues made up of Working Studios, Curated Exhibitions and Special Events e.g: film, talks, demonstrations, installations and performances: exemplifying the wide range of great art, design and making created across Dorset. In their own unique ways, Festival Venues, based to some degree on track record, will offer specific, enriching opportunities for visitors to be inspired by some of the following opportunities: the ambition of the work: specific ways to acquire knowledge: opportunities to engage interactively - practically perhaps: and, or, to be entertained. **Each will act as a gateway, or reference point, for visitors planning to visit other venues - both by type and geographically.** Collectively the Festival Venues will summarise the contribution the visual arts make to the cultural life of Dorset. Festival venues will be expected to find a way to host or otherwise involve or signpost young, emergent talent.
- b. **Core Studios + Curated Exhibitions:** up to 100 Artist's Studios, Galleries, Workshops, Media and Arts Centres, etc. These will demonstrate the fantastic variety of ways a professional or semi-professional studio environment operates: whether alongside the artist's domestic habitation, a farm based studio, a commercial workshop, or an educational environment. In the context of its setting and alongside the work, the presentation will include clear evidence of the process and 'some' degree of interpretation illuminating the artist's imagination, skill and knowledge. Where appropriate, there may be the offer of some degree of interactive engagement - particularly demonstration. **Public and Commercial Galleries** included in the Core will be presenting themed and interpreted exhibitions with one or more 'manageable' event(s) - tours / talks - tailored for Art Weeks visitors.** We anticipate a balance of historical and contemporary exhibitions in this field. The number of venues is capped for three reasons: space in the DAW Guide: selection against the criteria: geographical spread. NB> Studios in this context can include a partnership practice or an 'established studio complex'. However, the nature of representation will be different than in previous Art Weeks. ** We appreciate geography influences the potential of any public programmes.
- c. **Fringe Studios and Group Shows:** Fringe Studios - The intention is to provide more affordable access to the event for individual's making art and craft and who are not able to provide the studio environment or achieve the exhibiting contexts described in the categories above. Mostly, the expectation is that artists applying in the category will not be working in a fully professional or semi-professional context, or, perhaps, with the 'trained' or 'long-acquired' skills and exhibiting experiences commonly understood by this terminology. We know there are many enthusiastically wishing to open their home or workspace to celebrate their work with others and make modest sales and budget accordingly. The changes to the category and the cost will likely provide for a slightly larger image than previously, but with reduced word count and some changes to the type of service. **Group Shows** will be included in their geographical context, but to a standard size: i.e groups cannot buy additional entry space. In terms of design, think more akin to a poster type presentation - i.e. listing rather than featuring individuals.

The DAW Selection Panel

The members of the panel will be confirmed in August. The expectation is it will include:
2 artists: 2 makers: 1 photographer: 1 filmmaker: 1 curator: 2 x DVA Board Members.

+

Non-voting observers / advisors: DAW designer + DVA Director + Programme Curator

+

Representatives of Sponsors

Further Consultations

Area Contacts:

We will discuss the changes with some of our previous DAW Area Coordinators, hoping to further test the details and local opportunities are clear before the guidelines are published.

Young and Emergent Artists

We aim to involve more young artists. We are consulting on ideas with contacts at the Arts University and other relevant arts organisation. New ideas welcome.

AND - For the Future

Urban Participation

A separate consultation aimed at making further positive changes to DAW in the Bournemouth Poole conurbation in 2022 will begin soon. We anticipate that one or two issues might even be able to be addressed during the registration and design phase for 2020. If you live in Bournemouth and Poole and would like to be involved, please look out for a discussion document which will be published on the DVA website late July - early August.