

Discover the beating heart of Edinburgh art as Albion Road throws open its doors

Scottish lighthouse paintings, glass sculptures inspired by photos of Victorian children and intricate silver jewellery – all feature in an open studios weekend being held in a historic former lemonade factory.

At well over 100 years old, the striking red brick buildings which now house the Albion Business Centre, are home to one of Edinburgh's most vibrant but least known creative communities.

Around 20 of its artists and makers will be throwing open their doors to the public on the weekend of 4-5 November.



Discover the 'Beating Heart of Edinburgh Art' as Albion Road Throws Open its Door Photography for Albion Studios Edinburgh from: Colin Hattersley Photography –

Albion Open Studios is a chance to explore three of the intriguing buildings that make up the site founded for the manufacture of fizzy drinks by James Dunbar in the early 1900s and meet the remarkable people who now operate from its network of studios.

Among them are Liana Moran who began touring Scotland's lighthouses during Covid after taking a cycle ride to see the one at North Queensferry.

She said: "I have a real fascination for these guardians of our coastlines. There is something magical about them, the way hope and guidance are rolled together in one great tower.

"My aim is to capture their timeless allure and evoke their majesty."

She loves to spend time sketching and painting the structures, capturing their many different shapes and colours – among her favourites are the North Queensferry Harbour Light Tower and the Rattray Head Lighthouse near Aberdeen.

Another member of the artistic community is Karen Akester who creates sculptures using glass, bronze, clay and textiles. Among them are haunting depictions of young children.

She said: "I am fascinated with the Victorian and Edwardian photographs of children – their faces staring out and so expressive, but we usually know nothing about them.

"I often start a piece with my own idea of what the child's story might be, developing it by putting them in three dimensions.

"Something I love is that by using glass, it keeps that elusiveness about them, they are quite ghostly little apparitions.

"And what I tend to find is that people come up with their own stories of what they are about, and those can be quite

different from mine.”



Hazel Frost of Frostwood Studio, who makes fine ceramics from leftover clays and chips from ground-down pots that have failed in the kiln. PHOTOS Colin Hattersley



Inspired by the way artifacts are presented in museums Karen uses fragments of cloth which give the suggestion of antique

costumes.

The studios, nestled behind the Hibs football stadium off Easter Road, are home to some of Scotland's best artists and makers.

Martha Ellis, one of the event organisers and a participating artist, said: "Albion Road is the beating heart of Edinburgh arts. We are celebrating a creative community, by showcasing the amazing artists and makers who work here.

"Unlike a show or exhibition you can meet the artists, meet the makers and see work in progress as well as finished pieces.

"And, with Christmas coming up very soon it's a superb chance to find highly unusual gifts that people will value and appreciate for years to come."

The buildings fell out of use as a bottling plant around 1985 but were soon given new life as artists' studios.

Visual artist Sharon Quigley has been at Albion Road since 1994. Much of her recent work is from public commissions within a health and wellbeing context – such as the children's areas of the Forth Valley Royal Hospital, Inverclyde Royal Infirmary and the new Edinburgh Haematology Centre.

She is currently working on projects for the renal unit at the Western General and for the Royal Edinburgh Hospital.

She said: "There's a really vibrant and exciting community of artists and makers here. A lot of my work involves collaborations and I have worked with a number of people here. It's exciting to have such a raft of expertise available all around me."

Studio visitors will be able to talk to Sharon about her work and view new paintings and preparatory drawings.

Studio Frostwood, will be showing a range of superb ceramics created by its two makers Hazel Frost and Natalie J Wood.

The pair have recently carried out a study into how to make studios much more sustainable. Visitors will be able to see and buy their work and find out how they have learned to mix up leftover clays and grind down pots that have failed in the kiln, so they can be used to make high quality new work.

Hazel said: "Sustainability really matters to us and the project has allowed us to develop all sorts of new techniques. Things that would once have gone down the drain or left the studio in a bin bag can now be used in our work."

Some of the pieces they have made from what used to be leftovers and waste are large – as they have experimented and found just how versatile the materials can be.



Pictured is art jewellery maker Nicola Turnbull, at work in her studio. PHOTO Colin Hattersley



Pictured is artist Sharon Quigley, at work in her studio.
PHOTO Colin Hattersley

Art jewellery maker Nicola Turnbull is a relatively recent arrival, having come to Albion Road in 2020 after COVID forced the closure of the studios where she was based.

Nicola said: “I think of jewellery as small-scale sculpture that you happen to wear on your body.”

The open studios are the only event she is taking part in this year, so is a one-off chance to see her jewellery which is predominantly in silver, with designs that are strongly linear and often feature concentric ovals and semi circles in moving sections.

Brigid Collins, who makes artist books and is developing her use of calligraphy after a visit to research artistic techniques in Japan, has been at Albion Road for some 20 years.

She said: “I love the art and poetry of Japan, they are a big influence on my work. I’m really looking forward to welcoming visitors into my studio to see and talk about my work – so much of which is about connecting to the natural world.

“I think that visitors will really enjoy discovering Albion Road, it’s such a wonderful and characterful warren of studios of different sizes and so many different creative people. And even though it’s so vibrant, a lot of people aren’t even aware that we are here.”

Event details

- Albion Business Centre, 78 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QZ – unit 1A, Unit 3 and Wasps Studios.
- Saturday 4 November 11am-6pm and Sunday 5 November 11am-5pm.
- Refreshment and food available from the Big Blu Pizza truck and Wee Green Events.
- Please be aware these are active working spaces, take

care when walking around the buildings. If you have any accessibility requirements, please get in touch for more information, albionopenstudios@gmail.com or 07929 862306.

















