



Membership Secretary Report for the LSA AGM- 2025

Introduction

This past year has been one of significant progress and renewed purpose. We have focused on strengthening our community, supporting our artists, and building a sustainable future for the Leamington Studio Artists. Our mission to foster a vibrant visual arts scene that inspires and connects our community is now stronger than ever, and our membership is at the very heart of this success.

Your Voice, Our Progress: A Look Back at the LSA Members' Survey

Last autumn, many of you shared your valuable insights in our October/November 2024 Members' Survey. We listened carefully to what you said were the most important benefits of being an LSA member and what additional offerings you'd like to see.

Although we have since had to tackle the unforeseen challenge of relocating the Art Room, we have worked hard to remain focused on reflecting your views in the progress we have made. It is important to say, too, that none of this would be possible without the army of dedicated volunteers who make the LSA what it is.

Priority 1: Exhibiting Your Work & Networking with Fellow Artists

You told us that exhibiting your work and networking with other local artists were the most important benefits of LSA membership. We have been working tirelessly to expand these opportunities.

- **Sustained and Expanded Gallery Spaces:** We have worked hard to maintain our two gallery spaces and create even more exhibition opportunities.
- **The Art Room's New Home:** With the incredible support of many members, we successfully moved the Art Room to its fantastic new premises in the Royal Priors. In just four weeks, we refurbished the space and triumphantly reopened with a fabulous textiles exhibition!
- **Exhibitions that are Open to All:** We have continued our regular four-weekly exhibitions in the Art Room and successfully hosted two open exhibitions at East Lodge. These have showcased around 1400 pieces of work made by our members. We have also worked to make the selection process transparent and widened the number of people on the selection panel. We try hard to balance the aspiration of many of you that we should build our reputation as an organisation that showcases high-quality work, with the desire for as many members as possible to have the chance to exhibit.
- **Natural Networking:** Our galleries naturally foster networking opportunities. We try hard to make them welcoming and inclusive for all of our members. Through volunteering and attending private views, members regularly connect with fellow artists, share ideas, and build valuable relationships.



Priority 2: New Benefits You Asked For

You also shared what additional benefits you would like the LSA to offer. Your top requests were: joint exhibitions and curated group shows, educational courses and workshops, and more studio spaces. We have worked to make progress on all of these.

- **Group Exhibition Opportunities:** The Jephson Gardens Gallery and Studios continues to be available for booking by groups of artists, encouraging collaborative exhibitions.
- **The Art Room's Special Focus Weeks:** We have developed special focus weeks at the Art Room, providing unique opportunities to concentrate on specific art forms and curate themed exhibitions. These weeks are combined with engaging demonstrations showcasing the skills and techniques involved.
- **Dedicated Workshop Space:** We are thrilled to have created a dedicated workshop space in our new Royal Priors premises. It is quickly becoming established, with several successful courses already completed and a broad range of workshops run by LSA members already advertised.
- **New Studio Spaces with Springboard Studios:** Our new Springboard Studios initiative has provided much-needed studio spaces for six members, with five spaces already taken! Our first studio artists have made the space warm and inviting, and we are really pleased that we have been able to make progress toward meeting the demand for dedicated creative environments.

Priority 3: Promoting Visual Arts and Members' Work

You asked how the LSA could better promote visual arts and the work of its members, specifically through participating in national arts events, engaging with the local arts community, and increasing our social media presence.

- **Strong Local Engagement:** While we haven't participated in national arts events recently, we have significantly deepened our engagement with the local arts community:
 - We collaborated with WOS (Warwickshire Open Studios) to host their Summer Exhibition in the Art Room.
 - We supported the successful WOS Plein Air Event.
 - We partnered with the Leamington Photographic Society to host a thrilling joint competition.
 - We actively participated in SPARK, further connecting with the local creative scene.
 - We have collaborated with Art Friends of Warwickshire in promoting art.
 - We continue to foster artistic talent by providing workshop opportunities for members to learn new skills or improve their creative practice.
 - We also highlight individual artist achievements through "Artist Spotlight".
 - We have maintained strong relationships with the Warwick District Council Arts Team.



- We collaborated with the Leamington History Group on two new, exciting books.
- **Enhanced Online Presence:** We have invested significantly in building our website and social media presence to showcase your work more widely.

Beyond the Survey: More Achievements

In addition to directly addressing your survey feedback, we have been busy with other important initiatives:

- **Growing Gallery Visitors:** A key success over the past year has been expanding public access to our artists' work. We estimate that we had over 14,000 visitors to our Jephson Garden Gallery and 18,000 to the Art Room over the year.
- **Bursaries:** We have developed and implemented our bursary programme to offer valuable support to emerging and established artists within our community.
- **Supporting Young Carers:** We initiated a fantastic collaboration with Young Carers, providing creative outlets and support.
- **Schools Exhibitions:** We successfully hosted two vibrant Schools Exhibitions with Trinity and Aylesford, fostering artistic talent in the next generation. We also supported Coten End Primary School with providing equipment for their exhibition.
- **Community Engagement:** LSA actively supports community projects, such as The Esther Project, which uses creativity to support women facing life challenges. We supported the Refugee Week Art exhibition with Warwick District Council by providing equipment for their exhibition.
- **Trustees' Choice Award:** We are thrilled to announce the new "Trustees' Choice" award, a special honour that will be presented annually at the AGM to a volunteer who has gone above and beyond.
- **Growing Membership:** We're delighted to report a healthy growth in our membership figures, demonstrating the increasing value and appeal of the LSA. Our membership model isn't just about subscriptions; it's about fostering a vibrant community of artists.
- **Our Volunteers:** This incredible progress wouldn't be possible without our dedicated volunteers, who contributed close to 28,000 hours to make these initiatives a reality.



Looking Ahead: Challenges & Future Plans

We will continue to closely monitor and adapt to the evolving arts landscape in our region. This includes staying abreast of key local developments, such as the creation of the creative quarter, to ensure our plans align with and contribute to the wider cultural ecosystem.

While we have achieved so much, we are aware of the challenges that lie ahead as well as ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of our charity. We are tackling these challenges head-on by building upon our recent successes.

Strategic Priorities for the Coming Year:

- **Community and Audience Engagement:** We are committed to fostering deeper connections with the local community. This includes developing new programmes and initiatives aimed at broadening our audience and creating more inclusive and accessible art experiences. We will also actively seek new partnerships with local businesses and cultural organisations to expand our reach and resources.
- **Organisational Infrastructure:** A key focus is the continued development of our digital infrastructure. We will implement the next phases of our website project, which is critical for streamlining our internal systems, reducing the administrative burden on our dedicated volunteers, and providing the technical foundation necessary for the organisation's continued growth. We will also leverage new technologies and digital platforms to enhance our online presence and engagement.
- **Artist Support and Development:** We will continue to champion our member artists by identifying and implementing innovative ways to provide enhanced support and opportunities. This includes curating more diverse and impactful exhibitions that not only showcase their talent but also provide meaningful platforms for their work.
- **Financial Sustainability:** While we have made significant progress in achieving financial stability, we recognise the importance of long-term financial security. We will continue to explore and implement strategies for diversifying our revenue streams and ensuring the organisation's viability for years to come.

Conclusion

I believe we have a strong foundation and a very bright future. By championing bold and diverse visual art, we can continue to inspire dialogue, collaboration, and imagination within our community and beyond. With the dedication of our members, volunteers, and the board, I am confident that the Leamington Studio Artists will continue to thrive and make a lasting impact on the arts scene in our wonderful town.

Linda John *Membership Secretary*