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1. Fens Cluster Group Meeting:

The Fens cluster group held a meeting of members on 21st February and, as a result, member John Lincoln has reached agreement with the Stamford Arts Centre Gallery to hold another show there in 2011. Last year he was able to organise a show of work from both the Fens and the Vales clusters of AOTM in the gallery. He won't know dates until after the management of the Centre has met in October of this year, when they will plan the programme of events for 2011.

One of the problems of this joint show last year, that needs highlighting, was locating sufficient plinths for work produced by 3D artists that needed them. It may be necessary to advise 3D artists for next year to provide their own stands. John mentions this now to give artists sufficient time to prepare for the possibility that not enough plinths will be available at the Centre. Much nearer the time, probably early next year, an invite will go out to all members of the AOTM Fens and Vales clusters to submit work for the show. This serves as a reminder to us all to prepare for all presentation eventualities well in advance of any exhibition.

Another result of the meeting was that the Foresters Court Gallery, adjacent to Arts Coritani, in Swineshead was generously offered as a venue for an exhibition of Fens members' work for May this year to coincide with the Open Studios weekends. This offer was accepted and work will be delivered on 27th April.

2. AOTM Spring Open Studios Article in *Lincolnshire Pride*, April Edition:

The April edition of the 'Lincolnshire Pride' high society magazine has seven full pages devoted to our AOTM spring Open Studios. This excellent feature includes 25 images and 15 quotes from members. All five Cluster Group areas are represented and mediums mentioned include: drawing, ceramics, textiles, sculpture, furniture, calligraphy, ironwork, batik, photography, glass, plaster art, printmaking, mosaics, blacksmithing and painting. The magazine is on sale in shops across the county.

3. Additional Open Studio Publicity:

The Steering Group can only do a certain amount of publicity for the Open Studios, such as producing the brochures, flyers and the website, as well as talking to the radio and the press and working on articles such as the one in Lincolnshire Pride. From past experience, we know that those members who spend their own time on extra local publicity do much better than members who may just hope for visitors because of what has already been done by the Steering Group.

Please also make sure that your personal AOTM website page is kept up to date, as we don't want the embarrassment of visitors turning up at a studio to find that it is closed. If you are unable to open your studio (we hope that you will be open) then please make an appropriate, clear comment in your web page text box, such as: *'Sorry, but studio will be closed on xxxx'* or *'Regret, visitors by appointment only'*.

4. Welcome to New AOTM Member:

We are delighted to welcome Anne Samuel, who is our latest member for 2010. Anne works in a wide variety of mediums and lives in the Vales Cluster Group area.

5. Summary of Visitors to AOTM Website:

Since we started the new AOTM website we have had 10,753 visitors (excluding search bots). This information has been provided after a request from some members. Our webmaster is currently reviewing the best method to collect our future website statistics.

6. Call for Outdoor Colour Installations for the SO 2010 Festival:

This summer, Skegness will be hosting the second 'SO' (Skegness Organises) festival from Thursday 22nd to Sunday 25th July, 2010 - a new, vibrant, culture & arts festival for the East Coast, supported by the Arts Council East Midlands.

SO 2010 has the ambition to create a series of installations and 'dressings' of landmarks, buildings, gardens and beach areas of the Skegness seafront for the four days of the festival. They are calling for expressions of interest from visual artists, creative minds and designers that they will commission to create a series of temporary artworks or design installations. They are particularly interested in hearing from East Midlands based artists, creatives and designers who would like the opportunity to 'dress' the famous Skegness foreshore and sea front.

SO 2010 are looking for imaginative ideas that can include the use of flags, banners, dressings, ribbons, streamers, wrappings, tying, painting, masking, spraying, repeated objects, images & patterns and other two or three dimensional forms and techniques. Experience of making artworks for outside environment in public spaces is desirable. They are interested in colour! For views of the Skegness sea front open spaces, buildings and parks look at Google maps street view.

To apply by the very short deadline, please send them an initial expression of interest by email, with a brief resume in PDF document format about your current & previous work and experience plus images (each image file size up to 500kb) and any website links that you wish to include. They will not accept posted information for practical reasons. **Deadline is Friday 16th April.** See www.sofestival.org for more details.

SO 2010 will select a number of artists, creative minds and designers, who will be invited to visit Skegness to look at potential sites and discuss ideas to form proposals. They will pay expenses for this site visit. Please send your expression of interest to Emma Hamilton, Festival Co-ordinator, at emmalouise.hamilton@e-lindsey.gov.uk.

7. East Midlands Visual Arts Consultation Event, March 2010:

AOTM were represented at the East Midlands Visual Arts (emVAN) Consultation Event, held in Derby on 29th March, 2010. About 90 delegates from the five counties attended and the keynote address was from Baroness Lola Young. Items on the agenda included:

- a. Strengthening the Visual Arts in the East Midlands
- b. Eight Discussion Workshops, based on a wide range of Partnership Topics
- c. The National Turning Point Strategy
- d. Feedback from the Workshops and a Question and Answer Session

This event will be followed up by a similar 'local' event in each of the five counties, where more local artists and craft-makers will be invited to attend. Details of the date and venue will be announced soon.

8. Call for Lincoln Artist's Markets 2010:

Lincoln Artist's Network are organising the Lincoln Artist's Markets this year with *Lincoln BIG* and are looking for artists that wish to have a stall to sell and promote work. Lincoln Artist's Markets are organised on the last Sunday of every month from April to October 2010.

If you are interested, contact Lincoln Artists Network at caroline@ontherebound.co.uk for more information. Details of LAN can be found at: sites.google.com/site/lincolnartistnetwork/.

9. Iron In The Blood Book Published:

AOTM Cluster Group Coordinator Bob Oakes has published his book entitled 'Iron In The Blood'. Priced £9.99, a signed copy can be ordered from Bob by phoning 01673 866700. Though the names of places and characters portrayed within this book have been changed, the content is based upon true happenings and events. *Iron In The Blood* is a unique portrayal of the blacksmith's craft, endeavouring to thrive as a successful business in this day and age, thereby providing invaluable advice to anyone who is considering making blacksmithing their hobby or career. Full of humorous anecdotes and social history, the story also relates an incredible personal discovery which is intended to captivate, entertain and amaze!

10. Blacksmithing Course in Organic and Sculptural Forms:

Cold Hanworth Forge and Blacksmithing School is extremely fortunate that Don Barker, who starred as the Blacksmith in the *Master Crafts* series on BBC 2, has agreed to take a course in Organic and Sculptural Forms, working 'Pure Iron', from the 19th to the 21st of August, 2010.

The cost of the course is £310.00 (£290.00 if paid for with booking) otherwise a £100 deposit is required. Two lunches and two evening meals at a local restaurant are included in the cost of this course. Visit www.teachblacksmithing.com for more details. If you care for a taste of the wonderful sculptural experience of forging hot iron, then this is your chance.

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Please send your news for next month's issue to the Newsletter Editor: graham@forgearts.co.uk

Please note that the order of news articles is based solely on the order that they arrive on the Editor's desk.