

Kendra Haste Oaks Park Artist

I have been fortunate enough to have had a studio in the Old Stableblock at Oaks Park for nearly 15 years now. The Old Stableblock provides 11 artists studios to rent via Acme Artists from Sutton Council. We are a diverse group of artists, many of whom also teach art at local colleges, practices include sculpture, painting, print-making, ceramics, glass, printmaking and puppet theatre.

I am a sculptor who uses wire and animals are my subject and passion. I love working at the Oaks and I start my day walking my dog Edie, meeting other dog walkers and enjoying the landscape and views. The changing light quality and colours of the trees, foliage and grasses as the seasons turn and the large array of different birds and insects makes walking in the park a real pleasure. I particularly love the spring and early summer when the birds sing late into the evening, it's a wonderful natural chorus to work to. The cold, dark winter days can be hard going with limited heat and light in the studio but the park remains stunningly beautiful, and there's always the warmth of the café to escape to!

I have been a professional sculptor for nearly 20 years, I started off studying Illustration at Camberwell College of Arts and Natural History Illustration at the Royal College of Art. Drawing has always been important to my work and led me to first use wire as a material, trying to recreate line drawing with wire in a three-dimensional form. Over the years the wire work has evolved into denser more monumental pieces often with an internal steel frame for strength and stability. Where possible I like to study my animal subjects in the flesh, ideally in the wild and I have been lucky enough to be involved with field trips to India and East Africa, but I also use zoos for close observational studies. Animals and the natural environment are my inspiration and I've collaborated with wildlife conservation charities to help raise funds and awareness of the plight of wildlife in this age of mass extinctions. When I start a piece of sculpture I build the wire mesh up in layers over a rough skeletal wire or steel form, sewing in the wire layers with binding wire to create the sense of muscle, then skin and finally the surface textures. The wire mesh, because of its holes, suggests the underlying structures of bone and muscle which helps create a sense of the living, breathing animal far more than traditional cast metals like bronze.

I work mainly to commission both private and public and have been involved with many interesting projects over the years. In 2013 I was commissioned to make 12 life-size animals for the Tower of London to help tell the story of the Royal menagerie, three lions, an elephant, a polar bear and a troop of baboons. It was a fascinating commission and in order to have the space to create such a large body of work I also rented out the old crafts centre at the Oaks which worked out well. The animal sculptures are on permanent display at the Tower of London. Also on public display is an elephant at Waterloo Station in the ticket hall area of the Jubilee Line and a Rhino in the gardens of Cannon Hall Museum in Barnsley, Yorkshire. I show my work regularly in exhibitions and collections in the U.K and overseas. You can view my work at www.kendrahaste.co.uk

For the last three years, since its conception, the Oaks Artists have been taking part with CAOS (Carshalton Artists Open Studios). This is an amazing local arts event where local artists in Carshalton open up their studios for two weekends at the end of June. It has grown year on year and the footfall this year to the Oaks was the best yet at nearly 900 visitors over the two weekends. The sun shone and there was a great atmosphere at the studios, meeting local art lovers and fellow makers, even the Mayor paid us a visit and it was a real celebration of the arts and the importance of community.

We feel very privileged to work in such beautiful surroundings, it feels good to be part of the Oaks Park community along with all the friends of this special place.

The studio that was previously gutted by fire has been fully restored and now we have two new artists to the Oaks. Jo Sharpe and Ingrid Barber moved into the beautiful studio 9 Oaks Park in February this year. They have been very busy painting and many of their pictures have been inspired by Oaks Park. Ingrid has recently exhibited in the Society of British Artists exhibition at The Mall Galleries and you can see her dog portraits on display in the café and Jo produces paintings such as 'The dogs of Oaks Park' and beautiful paintings of the meadow. Jo also runs art classes and workshops from the studio. For more info: www.jo-sharpe.co.uk. and <http://ingridbarber.com/>

They have an Open Studio day every first Saturday in the month where you can visit, discuss commissions and buy paintings and prints.



Jo Sharpe 'The dogs of Oaks Park'



Jo Sharpe



Jo Sharpe

Kendra Haste



Lions at the Tower of London





The Studio





Bear in the studio



Tower Lion in the studio



Waterloo Elephant