Norfolk Makers Festival returns to The Forum with 16 days of creative activities, inspiring exhibitions and crafty conversation

Friday 20 December, 2019

The Norfolk Makers Festival is returning to The Forum in 2020 offering people the chance to try their hand at weaving, printing, knitting, spinning, embroidery and much more.

The free annual event, which is now in its fifth year, celebrates the county's local crafts people, artists and heritage, and will take place over 16 days from Saturday, 8 February to Sunday, 23 February.

The festival offers the chance to engage and learn with the help of experienced makers, hobbyists, small businesses and organisations whose interests and expertise cover a variety of skills, making it the perfect time to try a new craft or develop existing skills.

The festival is free to enter and the exhibitions, demonstrations and hands-on activities are free of charge, with material and equipment provided.

As well as learning something new, the festival is an opportunity to showcase some fantastic exhibitions created by makers here in Norfolk. One of the highlights will be the makings of a giant tapestry which tells the story of two East Anglian rebellions against William the Conqueror. Created by a team of volunteer embroiderers and textile enthusiasts who have been meeting regularly at Norwich Castle, examples of the work in progress will be on display, showing medieval style stitch work and the history behind the artwork.

Taking centre stage in The Forum's Atrium throughout the festival will be the Ship of Light – which will form a piece of community artwork. During the first weekend visitors are invited to embellish the metal ship frame with textiles and artwork and create origami boats to put inside. The Ship of Light is part of the Creative Odyssey project set up by local artist Sarah Cannell whose son Henry was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia in 2016. It is helping to raise funds for Children with Cancer UK and for a Winter Lantern Festival, in March 2020, which will celebrate the healing magic of the arts community.

Something slightly cheeky returning for the second year will be the Nudinits, created by artist Sarah Simi. The latest releases of Sarah's stop-frame animations recounting adventures of the residents of the village of Woolly Bush will be shown in a discreet Nudinit cinema for adults to enjoy. Showing just how rude knitting can be, have a chuckle at Barbara the baker's firm buns and Robert the builder's tools.

New for the festival is the Picking up the Threads exhibition, with artists and makers invited to submit their own work to form a unique display. Three professional textile artists were brought in to judge the submissions, and the panel have selected 41 inspiring pieces from a strong field of high quality and imaginative work, which will make up the special display in The Forum's Gallery.

The festival also celebrates historical skills and Norfolk's making heritage, with the chance to get hands on and take part in both free and paid for workshops. You can learn tapestry skills, sewing and stitching to tell a story, have a go at making silver jewellery with Sharon and Neil from The Silversmithing Studio, join The Quilling Guild for an introduction to the delicate craft and so much more.

The Forum Trust, the educational charity which runs The Forum, funds the festival. The Trust's Events and Partnerships Manager, Jayne Evans, said: "This is a unique, free event which is all about inspiration and encouragement. We make sure there is a wide range of creative activities, demonstrations and exhibitions to enjoy every day. Everyone is welcome, whatever your experience or age. It's a wonderful opportunity to discover new ideas, new friends and the creative you!"

Norfolk Makers Festival features a programme of different free events each day, with the full list and details on how to book at www.norfolkmakersfestival.co.uk.

PANEL

Running alongside the main programme of events at The Forum will be a Fringe festival with events around the county. These include a Late Night Swapping event at Oxfam in Norwich where people can take along a bag of unloved clothing and swap it for new-to-you treasures to raise money for the charity. Also on offer is a two-hour workshop on machine embroidery with the

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tutors at Artpocket in Sheringham, Block Printing at the Norfolk Record Office, Colour Yourself Calm at North Walsham Library and the chance to join craftivism enthusiasts #SayItWithStitchGY for a drop-in session at Great Yarmouth Library creating stitched love notes addressed to our planet. The full list of fringe events can be found on the website along with details on how to book.

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