



# Eagle Gallery



## Takes Off!

When a group of Bedford artists got together to set up their own gallery, cynics said it wouldn't last a week. After all, artists may be visionaries and even prophets – but practical hard-headed business people? However, the Eagle Gallery soon established itself as a highly professional showcase for locally made original art and is now about to celebrate its tenth anniversary! And it has achieved this with no grant aid or commercial sponsorship. The gallery employs no staff and almost everything they do, they do themselves - from staffing the gallery and hanging the shows to maintaining the garden and cleaning the toilet!

On Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th April gallery members will be celebrating with a weekend of special activities. Details are under wraps but there is rumour of a cake you can share with

the artists! Running alongside the celebrations will be an exhibition with an Italian theme, open from 11th April to 7th May, 10.00am to 5.30pm from Mondays to Saturdays.

The gallery started when Peter Budek, owner of the Eagle Bookshop in Castle Road, acquired the premises next door. He saw that the ground floor could become a much-needed exhibition space for local artists which would bring real benefits to the local community. A co-operative of interested artists was set up to make this a reality and within weeks the premises were transformed and the Castle Quarter had a new gallery!





The forty or so members of the co-operative bring very different backgrounds and experiences. Their exhibitions reflect this diversity and present exciting and eclectic work that ranges from the figurative to the conceptual and includes ceramics, sculpture, textiles and photography as well as painting in oils, acrylics and watercolour. The exhibitions are changed at least monthly so the gallery is always fresh, lively and interesting. In addition, a number of one-week exhibitions showing the work of individual members or small groups add to the variety.

The continuous programme of exhibitions is at the heart of what the gallery offers, but during the last ten years the co-operative has run a variety of arts activities. These have included projects with local schools, evening lectures and poetry readings, weekend workshops,



The Eagle Gallery is proud of what it has achieved - not least because it has survived the worst recession in recent history with visitor numbers and sales increasing every year. The gallery is to be congratulated on creating and developing such a successful venture at a time when several commercial galleries in the area have been forced to close.

But what makes this gallery so different from the others is also what makes it so successful.

The exhibition programme and website give all their members year-round exposure that would be impossible in a commercial gallery, so it is not surprising that artists are keen to become members - and new artists encourage new visitors. Their low overheads mean that they can offer high quality original artwork at prices well below those charged elsewhere. But the most important reasons for their success are surely a combination of the creativity they bring to their work, the enthusiasm they carry into the gallery and the warmth of the welcome they offer to visitors.

Come and see for yourself or visit [www.eaglegalleryartists.co.uk](http://www.eaglegalleryartists.co.uk)

where you can sign up for their e-newsletter and receive invitations to Private Views. Or join and Like us on Facebook under The Eagle Gallery. Come and visit us in 101 Castle Road, Bedford, MK40 3QP, Tel.: 01234 346995



demonstration days in the garden and outreach work with disadvantaged adults and young people. An exciting new venture is a partnership with the Place Theatre in Bedford, where the foyer has been developed for use as an additional exhibition space.