



Fermynwoods Contemporary Art
Thrapston House
Huntingdon Road
Thrapston
Northamptonshire NN14 4NF

T +44 (0)1832 731257
E james@fermynwoods.org
www.fermynwoods.org

PRESS RELEASE

ARTS ORGANISATION WINS AWARDS DURING THE YEAR OF COVID-19

Despite the huge impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the arts sector, Fermynwoods Contemporary Art have won three awards for their work in 2020.

Named *Best Contemporary Art Gallery in Northamptonshire* in the Midlands Enterprise Awards and *Art Charity of the Year for Central England* in the Central England Prestige Awards, Fermynwoods were also one of eight recipients of the *Achates Philanthropy Prize Bursaries* from across the United Kingdom, as an organisation that has undertaken “interesting and exciting examples of proactive engagement with communities during the pandemic, demonstrating how the arts have reacted to it and the results achieved through these efforts”.

Achates Philanthropy Foundation Chair, Caroline McCormick, said “The 2020 Achates Philanthropy Prize shines a light into the role of the cultural sector at the darkest time for a generation. All of the nominations demonstrate how cultural organisations across the country have responded to the challenges of COVID-19, despite themselves being under threat ... We can’t raise the voices of all the remarkable talent across the country and the work that is being done but are very proud that we can give a brief glimpse into what culture can do.”

Fermynwoods *In Steps of Sundew* exhibition at The Arches, Fineshade Wood together with their growing online programme led to the award of *Best Contemporary Art Gallery in Northamptonshire*. The exhibition featuring work by Ikran Abdille, Tom Baskeyfield, Sarah Gillett, Ellie Harrison, Liz Lake and Onya McCausland, explores the push and pull between nature and human presence and the effect that extracting resources from the landscape has upon those living within it

Running concurrently, *Triple Harvest* is an online exhibition of video work by artists Ikran Abdille, Martha Cattell, Amy Cutler, Marie-Chantal Hamrock, Sapphire Goss, Amanda Loomes and Vaughan Pilikian, which all remix four Corby heritage films to create new narratives through the extraction of archival film material.

Throughout the first national lockdown Fermynwoods provided a variety of free online workshops, prompts and tutorials for their artist led *Isolated Moments* series, aiming to keep spirits buoyed and

creativity alive, in addition to continuing to support vulnerable young people through weekly online workshops.

The arts organisation also commissioned *Week Nine* by Anna Brownsted - a cinematic soundtrack for headphones and an isolated room, as part of *HOME Manchester's Homemakers* series, where artists create new works in isolation for an audience also isolated by coronavirus,

Fermywoods also used the difficult circumstances as a platform to launch a new podcast series featuring artist talks, discussions, original commissioned sound art and audio essays, in order for audiences to remain able to engage with contemporary art when not able to visit in person.

James Steventon, Director of Fermywoods Contemporary Art commented, “We are delighted to receive a hat trick of awards in this challenging year, particularly as nominations have come from both within and outside the arts sector. We believe deeply in our mission of supporting life through art and are proud of the resilience and creativity shown in the face of adversity by our team and the artists we have worked with throughout 2020.”

Assistant Director Jessica Harby added, “The quality of our programme reflects the relationships with our artists during a time of intense upheaval and uncertainty for freelancers in the arts. We’ve been thanked repeatedly by artists this year for paying them for their work even when in-person exhibitions have been delayed, as it was not a universal action in the arts. We’ve also received positive feedback for commissioning new online work not related to the pandemic itself, with artists reporting that the infusion of new ideas “rebooted creative energy that had slumped during lockdown”, thanking our curators for being open to numerous conversations about their evolving work.”

Editors Notes

Fermywoods Contemporary Art is an educational charity that supports life through art by commissioning innovative and meaningful ways for artists to engage with audiences, in public spaces across Northamptonshire and online.

Their 2020-2021 programme is part funded by Arts Council England, but by adapting their programme the organisation did not need to apply for Arts Council’s Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund.

Other *Achates Philanthropy Prize Bursaries* were awarded to *Echo Echo Dance Theatre*, Derry, Northern Ireland; *FEAST*, Cornwall; *Hospitalfield*, Arbroath, Scotland; *Islington Mill*, Salford; *MOSTYN*, Llandudno, Wales; *Museum of the Home*, London; and *People United*, Canterbury. These bursaries will be in the form of bespoke support from Achates Philanthropy Foundation Prize Ambassadors over the next six months.