

Herts Open Studios 2021 Themes

Daily Themes: Each day of Open Studios our website will host an Art Trail based on one of our Themes (which deliberately do not relate to art forms). These Art Trails feature artists who have selected the particular Theme when they registered for Open Studios.

Themes are searchable on the website and you can select which ones to join in with. Edit your Open Studios entry to make your choice, you can edit your choices up to the closing date for registrations. Whether it's your subject matter, an idea, process, interpretation is up to you.

Editing Themes is easy – they are tick boxes Open Studios entry – and you can select up to 12.

Themes are a fabulous opportunity to engage new and existing audiences – here are 2 of the ways you could interpret them.

1. Opportunity to interpret your work/gallery for inclusion in the daily Art Trail
2. Daily challenge to produce/publicise a piece, sketchbook entry, social media post around the theme

A bit more about Themes. In your Open Studios registration, you can select Themes that you want to associate you, yourself and your work with:

- Themes are like exhibition titles – how would you position your work to fit the exhibition
- they are not tied to any particular image; they characterise aspects of your practice
- not all Themes apply to every piece of work you produce, that's ok
- your signature OS image promotes you – if you chose Themes that aren't obvious in that piece, that's ok too – your Open Studios and Gallery biography, alongside your interpretive posts/blogs will cover that.

What happens next? It all depends on how much you want to engage on-line, in social media etc.

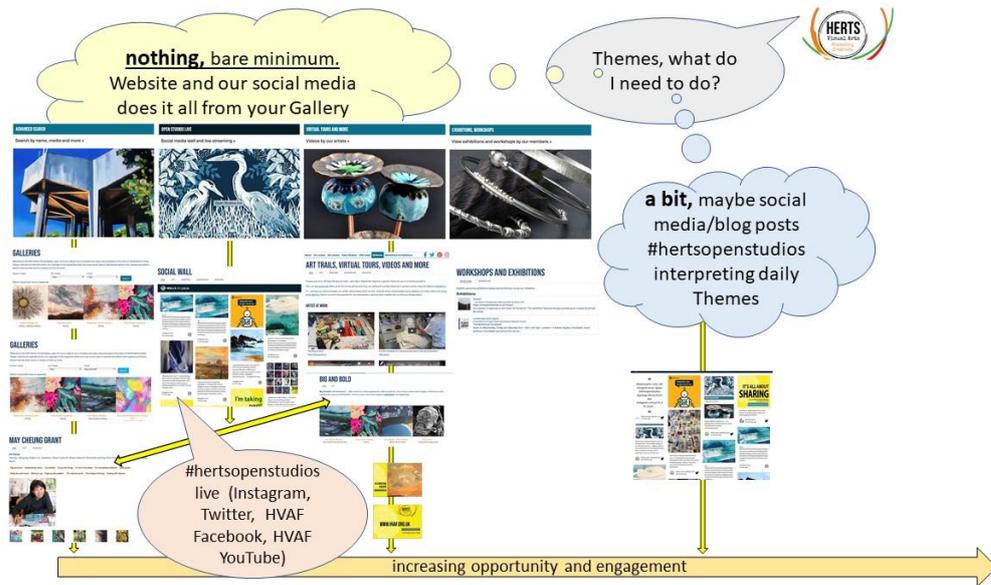
Level 1: Artists don't have to do anything here because this is what the website/HVAF will do

- Everyone who selects OS Themes will be automatically featured and searchable on the website.
- Themes feature before/during Open Studios, 1/day, via website, our social media, advertising
- Themes will remain active before, during, after Open Studios (except live/transient media)
- There will be Theme-based pages, art trail flipbooks/videos, and OS Theme search.

Level 2: Artists join in a bit more, promote their own visibility and #HertsOpenStudios

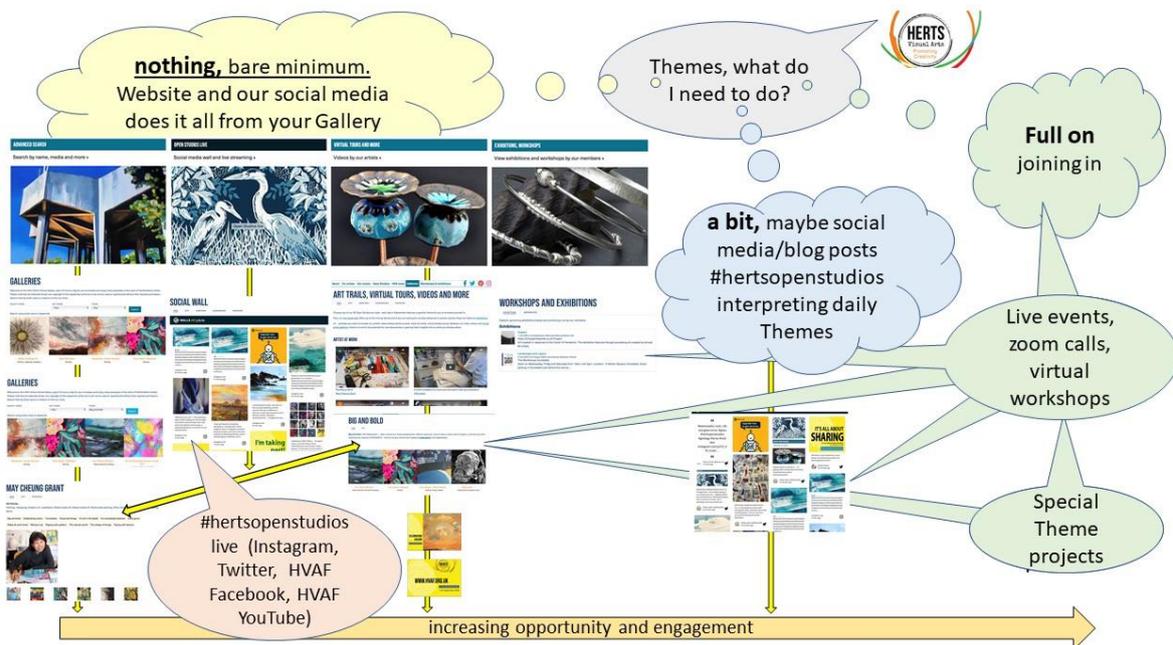
- Create videos that will feature on the website
- Interpret the daily themes around their practice and enhance their own story

- Post (daily) on social media using #HertsOpenStudios to feature in our live stream



Level 3: Artists join in even more

- Consider a live studio tour, a live artist at work, live something (Facebook Live, IG live) etc.
- Consider whether you have a great project that entirely encapsulates Open Studios or a Theme. Let HVAF know – where possible we want to promote great Theme projects on that day.



Theme descriptions for artists

There are 23 Themes, one for every day of Open Studios. Here they are listed in alphabetical order. This is not the day order (what Theme is on what day) - that will be announced in August.

A walk on the wild side — push your boundaries and show us your wacky side; explore inhospitable places or untamed emotions; stay within your comfort zone and focus on the wild you know — wild flora and fauna, a bad hair day, stormy weather; or, go with the slang meaning of “wild” and think about excellent, special, or unusual!

Anything goes — “in olden days, a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking, but now ...” – what more needs to be said? With apologies to Cole Porter: “if driving fast cars you like, if low bars you like, if old hymns you like, if bare limbs you like, if Mae West you like, ... ” this is the theme for you; it’s a free-for-all in terms of subject matter, medium, technique, source of inspiration. Go for it!

Bits and pieces — calling all you collectors of miscellaneous scraps and odds and ends, broken or otherwise; calling too those who might be inspired by that Dave Clark Five Golden Oldie (see also **Going for gold**). Show how you use those bits and pieces in your work – do you recycle, repurpose, make patchwork, incorporate them in collage, or what?

Building blocks — could remind you of something physical to do with bricks and mortar, architectural shapes, children’s toys; patchwork – indeed, any units of construction or composition; or, it could relate to the thought processes/steps that are required in the creation of a piece of art. It’s up to you to make something out of this theme.

Close to home — home is where the heart is, so what’s close to yours? Is it something which affects you directly, or is of particular personal concern – any subject (animal, vegetable, mineral, intellectual or emotional)? Or, more literally, is this about things in, or within close proximity to, your home – an interior-scape (is there a word for that?), a view from your window, your garden, your local environment?

Colour me happy — speaks for itself. Focus on the happy and the entire colour spectrum is open to you – what turns you on, what gives you joy in your work? It could be specific colours – complimentary, analogous, primary, secondary, tertiary, riotous or subdued (see also **Cool, calm and collected** and **Toning it down**) – but maybe it’s something else that gives you a happy glow?

Cool, calm and collected — is this you? Does this theme relate to a state of mind (are you relaxed and ready for anything when you work – or not?), a colour scheme (see also **Colour me happy** and **Toning it down**), your reaction to a specific piece of work, or how you resolve problems? We’d love to know.

Facing forward — of course, this could be about portraiture/faces in your art; or, the front face of any object; or, it could be about progression, an optimistic approach, looking to the future – you decide. But also take a look at **Reflections**.

Getting greener — is very “on message” right now and this might be about anything you do, make, use, or observe that is environmentally/eco friendly; or it could simply be your use of that particular colour, your response to new plant growth, etc.

Going for gold — think Olympics; think Golden Oldies; think gold leaf, gold pigment, gold metal, gold thread, gold beads; and what about the Incas or Sun gods; think about aiming high, creating competition level/prize winning work; think sunflowers, marigolds, buttercups ... the list is endless, so go for gold!

Highways and byways — do you take the main or less-travelled roads/routes in life or on journeys on foot (or by other means of transport)? Do any of these actual or internal highways and byways impact on your creative process? Can we see this in your work?

Other worlds — let your imagination take you out of this world into others – actual, virtual, and imagined. Think about fictional and fantasy realms, different cultures and their worlds, computer-generated worlds, outer space, spirit and spiritual worlds. The world is your oyster, or is it lobster, or am I thinking about **Surf and turf**? Anyway, this theme is it!

Reflections — on water, in a mirror, in glass or any shiny surface; thoughts, musings, meditations; looking/sending/casting back (see also **Facing forward**); signs or indications of something; echoes – I’m sure you can come up with other interpretations.

Serendipity — is an unsought, unintended, and/or unexpected, but fortunate, discovery and/or result that happens by accident – we’ve all experienced that. I’m sure, so show us how serendipity has featured in your work.

Small pleasures — could be absolutely anything – a small finished piece, a process or technique that gives you pleasure, a small animal or person who delights you; a cup of tea or a glass of wine; possibly something that’s **Close to home**; whatever gladdens your heart.

Smoke and mirrors — if you’ve ever obscured or embellished or used a technique with the intention of deceiving or confusing the eye, this is the theme for you. Come on, now, ‘fess up – even if you are quite legitimately using *trompe l’oeil* and not trying for a cover-up.

Squaring the circle — is impossible, right? But maybe you have tried to find a solution to an insoluble problem, or brought together things which are normally thought best kept apart. Maybe you’ve had a success as a result – but whatever, let’s see your attempts.

Straight and narrow — sounds a little constrained, maybe? But this could refer to the shape of a finished piece of work, or the constituent parts of a work (like strip patchwork), or the marks made in the creation of a work. It could relate to specific landscape features, a bodily shape, some of the tools of your trade (a ruler, a paintbrush, a needle). So take a broad brush approach to this one.

Surf and turf — never mind the steak and seafood combo (unless you specialise in a certain type of still-life) – turn your attention instead to the sea and those white breakers, your lovely green lawn, or even horseracing and other turf associations. Be imaginative and show us your interpretation of this theme.

The long view — a landscape view, a piece made over a lengthy period of time, a long strip of weaving, perhaps? You might interpret this in terms of looking to the future (see also **Facing forward**), or considering the long-term effects/consequences of using the materials/techniques that you do (see also **Getting greener**). No need to be short-sighted however you approach this!

Toeing the line — might be for those who tend to conform to a rule or standard and are naturals with the **Straight and narrow** – we'd love you to engage with this, but let's also widen it out and think about the use of line in drawing, painting, calligraphy, and other mediums; depictions of sporting or other events (tennis, foot races, darts, parliamentary debate) where a toe-line mark is used, and more – get those creative juices going and think how you can toe the line with this theme!

Toning it down — is all about being muted without losing impact: old black and white movie stills, sepia photographs, pen and ink or charcoal sketches, black/whitework embroidery, simple calligraphy, pastel or soft monochrome palettes – those are the vibes we are looking for here; but also think about what you take away/erase to make your work more effective.

Touchy-feely — is definitely focussing on the tactile – which means texture – and/or being emotionally or physically open. If your work calls out to be touched, and/or is a visible expression of your sentiments, then this is the theme for you.

Theme Day Plan/Schedule

The Day Plan will be announced in August.

Theme descriptions for visitors

These will be presented in August, once the OS Theme Pages on the website are up.