



PRESS RELEASE

Jean Jones: Oxford's Forgotten Artist

Zuleika Gallery, Woodstock
25 February – 11 March 2023

Jean Jones: Oxford's Forgotten Artist. Jean Jones (1927-2012) was a figurative painter who exhibited regularly in Oxford and London in the 1970s and had a solo show at the Ashmolean Museum in 1980. For several reasons – her rejection of artistic fashions, time consuming duties as a wife and mother in a deeply patriarchal society, and struggle with severe bipolar disorder – she was unable to successfully develop her career and fell into obscurity. Despite all this, she continued to paint up until her final years, producing an impressive body of work. Inspired by her post-impressionist heroes, Cézanne and Van Gogh, she felt that through close observation, she could express her passion for the people and places around her.

One of these places was Oxford – the city to which she moved in 1949 to marry John Jones, an ambitious young academic who would become the university's Professor of Poetry in 1978. The Jones couple immersed themselves in the city's literary circles, becoming close friends with Iris Murdoch, William Golding, and JRR Tolkien. Jones's friendship with Murdoch was central to her artistic development. She particularly admired the philosopher's book *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970) which argued that naturalistic representation is a moral process because it encourages attentiveness to the world beyond the self. Murdoch even proclaimed that Jones would 'one day be as famous as Van Gogh'!

Driven by this enthusiasm, the Jean Jones Estate was established in 2019 to research and share Jones's life and work. Since then, the Estate has organised numerous exhibitions in Devon, Oxford, and London and Jones's status as an unknown artist has been changing. Her pictures have entered museum collections and been written about by art historians and journalists. In 2022, a landmark exhibition at Pembroke College, Oxford, *Jean Jones: In Dialogue with Modern*

British Painting, placed her work alongside many of the twentieth century's great painters, including John Piper, Paul Nash, Duncan Grant, and Patrick Heron. Her work is finally being seen as a substantial and unique contribution to the history of British art.

This exhibition is the first collaboration between the Estate and Zuleika Gallery. As a prestigious setting for recent British art close to Oxford where much of Jones's work was painted, the gallery is the ideal place to continue to reclaim her legacy. The display focuses in particular on her portrayal of Oxford and Dartmoor, where she had a small cottage, demonstrating the contrasting ways she responded to different places. Her Dartmoor landscapes encapsulate the wild, expansive character of the region's terrain with their coarse brushwork and distorted compositions. The Oxford pictures, meanwhile, evoke the dense fabric of the ancient city using unusual perspectives – looking up at trees and streetlamps, or across a river towards the opposite bank. In this way, Jones effectively includes multiple layers of the city in single images – rivers, walls, roads, trees, leaf covered ground and low hanging sky. Transcending these subtle differences, however, is the effervescent use of colour, distinctive approach to evoking human vision on a flat, rectangular picture plane, and close attention to the changes in light across the seasons that have driven the revival of Jones's reputation in the last few years.

For more information about Jones and the work of the Estate, visit jeanjonesestate.com

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Illustrated

1. *Sheep in the Hedge*, 1973. Oil on canvas, 76 x 81 cm
2. *St Cross Church*, 1972. Oil on canvas, 76 x 76 cm

Venue

Zuleika Gallery, 6 Park Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1SP. www.zuleikagallery.com

Opening Hours




10 – 5pm Wed-Sat or by appointment – please contact philippa@zuleikagallery.com
+44(0)7719060962– to make another arrangement

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About Zuleika Gallery

Zuleika Gallery's focus is on Modern British and emerging contemporary art. The gallery was founded in 2015 and held premises in St James's London before moving to Cromwell Place in 2022. In 2020, the gallery opened premises in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, now the gallery headquarters, with a regular exhibition programme. Zuleika offers bespoke art advisory services for private or corporate collectors, using our extensive experience in the art market. We enjoy placing art in the right context, whether public or private, and helping collectors making considered choices - balancing pure visual joy with stimulating ideas, while also

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inspiring change through art. The gallery is committed to showing art that inspires, and to making art accessible without compromise to quality, working with both the entry level collector and the connoisseur.

www.zuleikagallery.com