



## Art Trail Report – 2019

The 2019 Art Trail saw more than 50 artists take part across 23 venues. As usual, everyone's feedback gives a slightly different picture but we've tried to pull together a general picture of the weekend.

The move back to the end of September has been a real bonus in publicity terms as it means we can hit all the big summer events like Potfest and Art in the Pen with our catalogues, as well as advertising in the trail brochures of Silverdale and Arnside and EVAN, and also the Printfest catalogue.

**Publicity** - We advertised in all the usual places and had increased paid social media advertising, some of which was very carefully targeted. In the week commencing 27 September, our Facebook posts reached 12,700 people with 1,300 engagements. There was also an excellent write up in the Westmorland Gazette.

**Brochures** - Shaun did a great job on the brochure again, we always get lots of compliments on it. We do get people suggesting that we should make a charge for it but this would cause great difficulties in distribution. The trail venues are so widely spread I can't think of a way we could have enough places prepared to take money for brochures on our behalf. It is not like the Silverdale and Arnside Trail which is a local event and has its local supporters (shops etc) who sell the brochures. The distribution to participants worked really well this year with people collecting from Abbott Hall carpark and later from Booths

**Website** - Liz does a great job of getting the brochure onto the website and the fact that the catalogue can be downloaded from it really helps in getting the information out to supporters who live outside our geographical area. We do consistently have visitors from much further afield (details further on in report).

**Finances** - The trail fee was kept the same at £80 which is very good value. It is great that we can be completely self funded from the exhibitor fee and some local advertising.

It was very obvious that the majority of members feel the Trail is an important part of what we do as Green Door and that it should be kept as an annual event. It was also very obvious

from the Feedback that came in that the vast majority of you had enjoyed the trail whether your sales were good or not. The people in group venues seem to have particularly enjoyed the company of the other artists as well as the public. It isn't just about sales (although they are very nice!) but it can lead on to commissions, opportunities to lead workshops etc and lots of people do keep hold of the brochures for future reference.

Thank you very much for the suggestions for improvements etc. I have copied and pasted them all onto one document which will be a good basis for discussion and planning for next year.

Finally, can I say that this is my seventh and last trail as organiser. Although it is hard work I have enjoyed doing it but it is time to pass it on into the capable hands of Sue Rowland. The trail is a real team effort between me, Shaun, Janice and Liz. I'm the person who does all the nagging (and often gets the credit) but I couldn't do it without their expertise We each have our own strengths and support each other well.

And of course, the trail couldn't happen without all of you and the hard work you all put in getting your houses and studios ready, distributing brochures etc. and welcoming the public in to see your work. Thank you all very much!

We have a lot of loyal trail followers and the trail really does raise Green Door's profile.

*Elizabeth Shorrocks*

## **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was sent to all the artists who took part in the Trail and 44 were returned. The figures below relate to the responses received and not the Trail as a whole.

### **1. How many visitors did you have?**

Total visits – 1,837 (1,846 in 2018)

It isn't possible to measure how many venues are visited by individual visitors.

By venue, the lowest reported number of visitors was 20 (24 in 2018) and the highest for a non-group venue was 100 (150 in 2018). The highest number for a group venue was 216 (260 in 2018).

Five respondents either didn't count their visitors or didn't reply to this question. A further 12 didn't reply as they were in a group venue and one person from the venue was in charge of counting so this figure avoids counting the same visitor twice.

*"The only significant feedback I can give is that, from our point of view in the gallery, there were quite a number of people (local/fairly local) who came in for the first time doing part of the trail. Having been in, it was clear that they would certainly be back! This made the trail a*

*very worthwhile thing to do from our point of view as it introduced a good number of people to the gallery who, for a variety of reasons, hadn't been in yet."*

*"Visitors seemed very positive and appreciative - even if they didn't spend much."*

*"I did feel that many people were enjoying a day out viewing but not interested in buying."*

## **2. Was this up, down or about the same as previous years?**

Seven respondents said their visitor numbers were down, five said they were similar and only two said numbers were higher than previous years. The remaining artists either didn't reply to the question, said it wasn't applicable as they hadn't taken part in the Trail before or were in a group venue.

The weather on the Sunday was appalling which may well have affected visitor numbers adversely.

## **3. What were your sales?**

Total recorded sales - £12,420 (£13,149 in 2018) from 38 artists, which were buoyed by the few who sold well. Sales ranged from £6 to £1,700 (£17 to £1,400 in 2018). Six artists didn't reply to the question or said their sales were 'minimal'.

There were a few people who had really good sales and, interestingly, these all seemed to be painters. There were also significant variations in sales among artists in the same venue – one group venue had sales ranging from £70 - £800, and another from £47 - £1,500.

Some artists sold work online following the Trail, and others reported interest in commissions and workshops/courses from Trail visitors.

## **4. Were sales up or down on previous years?**

Twelve respondents said their sales were down, four said they were similar and six said sales were higher than previous years. The remaining artists either didn't reply to the question or said it wasn't applicable as they hadn't taken part in the Trail before.

## **5. Any comments about the publicity, did you get any idea of how people had heard about the trail?**

Some respondents reported that the majority of visitors were local while others noticed more people from out of the area. There doesn't appear to be any consistency to this, and

we'll continue to promote the Trail both locally and further afield. A lot of people were doing a full day or weekend going around the Trail.

Visitors came from Carlisle, Chorley, Lockerbie, Manchester, the Midlands, North Lincolnshire, London, Preston, Staffordshire and Yorkshire. International visitors came from the Czech Republic.

Specific ways people had heard about the Trail included Art in the Pen, Kendal Tourist Information office, tourists who found catalogues in their accommodation in the Lakes. There was a complaint that the Brewery didn't have any catalogues on the Trail weekend and that staff knew nothing about the Trail, even though members had regularly dropped off catalogues.

Themes from responses were:

- Generally, artists were happy with publicity. Publicity for Greenodd was singled out for praise (it does seem as though the venues in the Ulverston area had a higher profile this year).
- Facebook was seen as important although one artist felt their own social media posts were being shared by Green Door.
- The catalogue remains popular and the main method for people to find out about the Trail. A lot of visitors were carrying catalogues with them although one venue gave out 'a lot' of catalogues to people who weren't aware of the Trail.
- Some people visited simply because they had seen the signs.
- Visitors like to have several venues in close proximity.
- Some members said that we need to attract visitors who want to buy art and not just look at it while others had visitors who came specifically to make a purchase.
- Personal contacts of members remain important in promoting the Trail.

All suggestions are taken on board when we plan the next Trail. Specific suggestions of how to promote the Trail included:

- Local art societies
- A flyer for the Athenaeum as well as the general flyer
- Create space on the A5 flyers for artists to fill in their name and location
- Some visitors didn't know how an Art Trail worked and it was suggested that we explain this in the catalogue.
- Incorporate specific routes in the catalogue eg 'red route' for half a day's trip, etc.
- The colour of signs could be improved as "blues and mauves are receding colours and don't really attract the eye of someone not specifically looking for them" (we know the signs are due for replacement as they're getting tatty).
- It was suggested by the organiser of another local event that we focus marketing spend outside the local area as the event is very well established.
- Several people commented that the Kendal town centre map was difficult to read.

## 6. Any significant visitor comments?

The Trail was described by one visitor as “a great asset to the town” and something which is seen as an annual event with people planning visits around it.

The balance between group venues and individual studios needs to be carefully considered. Some people enjoy the opportunity to visit a home studio whereas others prefer group venues. One comment was that “a gallery can be visited any time”.

## 7. What comments would you like to make about the Trail, any suggestions for ways we could improve?

The Trail was felt to be well organised.

This year, the Trail clashed with the Kendal Torchlight event which had changed its regular date and also spread into Saturday. This caused problems for artists in the Green Door studio and on for other Kendal artists who opened their studio on the Friday evening.

Other comments included:

- One organisation gained some potential new volunteers.
- One of the shops which hosted an artist had double its usual Saturday footfall and felt that taking part in the Trail was generally good advertising for them.

Quotes included:

*“It was a brilliant weekend for getting my work out there (it’s the first time I’ve exhibited multiple pieces!) and chatting to visitors which was invaluable in terms of confidence and insights. Bizarrely I’ve sold 3 paintings online since the event as I did quite a few Instagram posts about it so although people couldn’t physically come to the event they became more interested in my work.”*

*“It seems our reputation (GD) is very positive and widespread, a good number of people know about the Trail and look forward to it each year.”*