

Modern Art Oxford

We're Going to Need a Bigger Brush!



Shadowlight Supported Studio

23 January – 22 March 2026

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Shadowlight Supported Studio

The Shadowlight Artists are a collective of talented and ambitious learning-disabled and autistic artists supported by the arts charity Film Oxford, based in East Oxford. This exhibition celebrates the inaugural year of the Shadowlight Supported Studio, coinciding with Film Oxford's 40th Anniversary.

Since 2009, the Shadowlight Artists have produced powerful work spanning painting, sculptural installation, film and theatrical production, reaching audiences within the UK and internationally.

The exhibition title humorously plays on the famous quote from the film *Jaws*, "you're going to need a bigger boat!", reflecting the size of this creative task. Since April 2025, the group has come together weekly to decide the direction of the collective, define their goals, and work together to co-create artworks in a supportive and lively studio environment. They also regularly collaborate with other professional artists, including Chris Oakley (Creative Producer), Poppy Johnson-Doherty, and Su Frizzell, enabling the group to explore new art forms and experiment with diverse mediums.

Through film, photography, printmaking, costume, and prop making, the group envision and embrace alternate identities as well as sharing their own experiences.

On display are three collaborative films made by the Shadowlight Artists. These films use the artists' drawings and collages as the foundation and backdrop for their performances to camera. Their latest film, *Shadowlight Artists at the Movies*, was inspired by old film posters, with the artists creating costumes from recycled and reused items.

Movie Madness, is a new film created by young people from Yellow Submarine, a charity supporting people with learning disabilities and autism in Oxfordshire. During workshops led by Film Oxford, the young people collaborated to storyboard, design props, make costumes, and film their work together. Similarly, Film Oxford worked with Chilworth House School to create animations of the young people's drawings of imagined characters using an AI assisted process. In these films, the young people were invited to explore film genres, stepping into roles in their own imagined movies.



Also on display are character portraits created by the group, some of which explore drag, as well as drawings, mixed-media pieces, and a series of monoprints. These works reveal the Shadowlight Artists' investigations into their own identities, self transformation, and alternate personas.

Together, the Shadowlight Artists celebrate and share their own distinct identities, as well as what it means to come together as a collective.



Ahead of the exhibition opening, the artists spoke about the themes and artworks in their exhibition:

Holly Broughton: Could you tell me a bit more about the Shadowlight Supported Studio?

Artist: We do all sorts of different projects, from filming to art. At the moment we're doing a portrait collage, and we'll get our photos taken with them. We meet most weeks on Fridays.

HB: How did you first get started making art?

Artist: I've always made art, forever. I can't remember not making it.

HB: What has been your favourite part of working on this project?

Artist: Going through the magazines and finding things to make collages with.

Artist: I do all sorts. I do the character inside me. Like someone evil, I like a villain, I like baddies.

Artist: I am just drawing what comes into my head.



The Artists: Rafi Baxter, Otto Baxter, Wendy Belcher, G.Z., Mark Hemsworth, Russell Highsmith, Abul Kasem, Katie Lloyd, Fergus MacDonald, Shakeel Marham, Raya May, Raine, Lucy Skuce, Danny Smith, Jack Wellings, with young people from Yellow Submarine and Chilworth House School.

The Shadowlight Artists Committee (and Film Oxford) currently use the term 'learning-disabled' to describe their community. However, individuals may prefer different terminology to describe themselves and their support needs. Terms like 'neurodivergent' or 'neurominorities' are increasingly popular, reflecting a broader understanding of diverse experiences. Many people also use specific medical terms such as 'autistic' or 'Down syndrome.' While phrases like 'people with learning disabilities or autism' are considered outdated by some, it is important to respect each person's right to choose how they identify. Ultimately, the language should honour the individual's preferences and promote inclusivity.



All image artwork from Shadowlight Artists

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