



## ISOLATION ARTS CAFE

Going into furlough (from St Albans Arts Team) in March 2020, it occurred to Grae Wall that a virtual café space might be a useful resource for artists to be able to share their work and for audiences to engage with artworks during the unpredictable times ahead.

One year on, they have around 2000 followers and have received literally thousands of posts, including paintings, music, photography and poetry.

Grae says he never would have predicted how much of an essential lifeline the page has been for so many – some seasoned performers and artists, others exploring creativity in public for the first time.

# What has Lockdown Life been like for your group?

There have been unexpected positives I think in that the time, has allowed some to try something they had perhaps been putting off due to the distractions of regular life.

To witness folks posting up perhaps the first paintings or poems they have attempted since school days and then the overwhelmingly positive response to that work has been genuinely heart-warming.

I have received a number of private messages of thanks from individuals who have been struggling with mental health issues, for whom the page seems to have been a real lifeline – a place of calm, fun, contemplation and surprise.

Whilst some postings offer a shared glimpse in to lockdown life, others are a welcome distraction from the groundhog days or reminders of the buzz of gigs and galleries that will return.

Our live gigs have enabled folks to gather, watch and react to music and poetry in real time.

Whilst serving the St Albans arts scene the site has now reached far beyond attracting performances and audiences from far and wide. We have also been able to act as a signpost to the lock-down projects and workshops of other arts organisations and promoters.



Out of the Shadows - Denise Fenton



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Edgy Eddie - Abstract Portrait - John Johnston



Katherine - Jess Distill





Elephant - Debbie Thorpe



Visos in fragments - Malú Méndez Lavielle



Three drawings – Karen Reep









Estuary town - Roger Distill



Heading To The Abbey - Steve Ellis