

Artwork by Swindon artist Ken White acquired by Swindon Museum & Art Gallery

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Swindon Borough Council is delighted to announce the acquisition of a number of paintings, prints and drawings by Swindon born artist Ken White, with the support of the Creative Wiltshire project.

Staff from Swindon and Wiltshire met with Ken in January 2016 to see his studio and learn more about his long and fascinating career. Following this meeting, Ken made a generous donation of posters and printed material to the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.

Swindon Museum and Art Gallery has acquired a selection of works reflecting different aspects of Ken's career as a painter, muralist, printmaker and skilled draftsman. All the works were carefully chosen to reflect different aspects of Ken's career and provide a fitting tribute to this popular and talented artist.

Two large paintings depict life in the GWR Riveting Shop. They show Ken's distinctive painting style with strong shadows and a keen sense of the noise and heat of life in the Works. Ken started his working life as an apprentice in the riveting shop before moving to the signwriting department which preceded his move to Swindon Art School.



Amongst the acquisitions is a print of the singer-songwriter Gilbert O'Sullivan, who grew up in Swindon, which will go on permanent display in the museum's 'Made in Swindon' gallery.

One of the most special works is Ken's original sketch for the Golden Lion mural, a Swindon landmark and one of Ken's best known murals.

Creative Wiltshire is a five year project which started in 2015 and aims to acquire work by creative people from Swindon and Wiltshire to fill significant gaps in the collections across Wiltshire.

Wiltshire Local Studies, based at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre in Chippenham, received £178,000 HLF Collecting Cultures grant towards the five year project totalling £213,550 and materials are being acquired by accredited museums in the county of Wiltshire and Borough of Swindon, including Swindon Museum and Art Gallery and the Salisbury Museum.

Ken said: "Swindon has been the subject of my work for many years. Memories of working in the GWR have inspired my paintings, and the history of Swindon has featured in many of the town's murals.

"For that reason, having work selected for the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery's permanent collection is a very special honour and I am immensely pleased that Swindon residents will be able to see my work."

Alongside the significant acquisition, the Museum has also been able to acquire some more beautiful ceramics pieces by Wiltshire ceramists, including Sasha Wardell, Katharine Pledell-Bouverie, Peter Holdsworth, Patricia Volk and Trevor Chaplin.



Ken White photographed in 2009 holding a copy of the 1977 Bayer advert

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Pictured top, Ken in front of his refurbished Golden Lion mural which he undertook in 2009.

He completed the first mural, which his original plan has been acquired by Swindon Museum & Art Gallery – below – on a job creation programme in 1976.

Ken's depiction of the bridge which crossed the canal in the town centre, where the water feature between Regent Street and Bridge Street now stands, was one of the first in a series of murals which made Swindon well known around the country in the 1970s and 80s. Nearby is the statue of the Golden Lion made by Swindon artist the late Carlton Attwood

After Ken completed The Golden Lion Bridge mural, they were both featured in a huge Bayer advertising campaign in 1977 – pictured above. As a result he was taken on by Richard Branson to paint murals in his home and in Virgin Megastores around the world, a relationship that has lasted over 30 years.

He repainted the Golden Lion Bridge for the second time in 1983 and has created over 100 major murals worldwide.

