

PRESS RELEASE

MATERIAL: WOOD – ART & DESIGN



08 August – 09 September 2018

‘Since opening in 2016 with a remit to support and encourage creative process and thought across artistic genres, Messums Wiltshire has been a platform for a wide variety of art forms from contemporary dance to clay and ceramics. None have been more fitting to our wooden building than the connection to the material and makers in wood’.

Johnathan Messum

On 8 August 2018 we open our third annual *Material: Wood – Art & Design*, a threefold programme comprised of an exhibition, festival and hands-on making experiences. Set in our thirteenth-century barn – the largest thatched building in the country – artists and designers including Paloma Varga Weisz, Christopher Kurtz, Thomas Heatherwick, Gareth Neal, Chris Eckersley, Richard Woods, Rob and Nick Carter and John Makepeace lead a survey of some of the most inspiring contemporary artists using wood and seeking inspiration from trees. The design element of the show will focus on chair design; Henry Brudenell-Bruce’s colossal, outdoor chair epitomises the spirit of this ambitious show and will be complemented by designs by Russell Pinch and Christopher Kurtz.

At a time when our outlook is increasingly shaped by the information of digital media, the value of the handmade is more important than ever. Our programme illustrates that there is an underutilised means of expression in the process of making, one which connects both viewer and creator. This comprehension can be a vital part in encouraging us to look through objects to the person behind the work. *Material: Wood* brings together a curated

collection of talks, exhibitions and makers' courses – unlike any other seen – that celebrates a material that has been part of our cultural landscape since the dawn of wood henges. Put simply, wood has driven – and been driven – by artistic and innovative thinking.

Join other 'makers-on-benches' for courses led by some of the best practitioners working today, from lofting to steam bending, paddle making and green chair crafting. We will host a talks programme with subjects as varied as the history of boat design and how we can grow furniture rather than make it. *Material: Wood* is about making and about celebrating the 'object', with an exhibition space dedicated to some of the finest in design, art and craft. Artists including James Dodds, a shipwright-turned-painter will be exhibiting in the Long Gallery. His works illustrate the anatomy of boats, revealing how knowledge of trees and craftsmanship allow individual component parts to come together to the finished vessel. His paintings are rich in colour, tone and texture, moving beyond the literal and simultaneously evoking sailing's mythical and historical dimensions. We are also pleased to welcome back designer Luke Hope who hand-carves ergonomic, functional implements as well as delicate, abstract vessels. He says that he loves 'the calm of the process...working with an organic material, revealing natural form and creating new lines and shapes'.

Workshops will include chair making with artist and designer Chris Eckersley from 8-10 August, maker and designer Dom Parish will be leading the children's workshops, creating steam-bending propellers modelled after the natural flying capacities of sycamore seeds, and lattice weaving with strips of willow. We are delighted to welcome Colin Henwood on 23-25 August, one of the leading restorers and boat builders to take a two-day course in Ash paddle making, before taking his charges to the waterside on Fonthill lake and setting them sail. Nick Ashley-Cooper, the 12th Earl of Shaftesbury and former New York DJ will close out the show on 8 September with a Supper Club to launch of his new book 'The Rebirth of an English Country House', charting the restoration of his family home and a celebration of great craftsmanship. A pop-up exhibition by award-winning photographer Justin Barton visually documents the conservation process.

ADDITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Messums Wiltshire is delighted to announce a rare opportunity for makers. On Tuesday 9 and Friday 10 August, 10am – 5pm, there will be the chance to design and make a 'Wiltshire chair'. After a short introduction to traditional country chair making, artists and designers Chris Eckersley and William Warren will facilitate a workshop of 'design-through-making', commencing the process by fashioning a small, maquette-like model.

Once all chairs have been created, the winning piece will be selected by Johnny Messum of Messums Wiltshire and David Green of specialist furniture making company "Sitting Firm" with the possibility of the winner being turned into a limited-edition series production. Recommended for all skill levels, age 18 and upwards.

ABOUT:

Our Wood season is a summer visit not to be missed, with the popular Mess Café serving new wave international cooking that celebrates delicious, fresh and healthy food. Inspired by the cooking and ambience of Southern Asian and Australia, the Mess is a warm social venue with an emphasis on quality ingredients and taste.

Messums Wiltshire was set up in September 2016 to celebrate creativity across all of the arts, after a five-year restoration programme. In September 2017 the Long Gallery, a

restored stable with a north facing glass wall, was opened for two-dimensional work and in January 2018 was joined by The Mess Restaurant.

Messums Wiltshire is run by Johnathan Messum and his team. The Messum family held Royal Warrants in boat building on the Thames in early Twentieth Century. The boat building firm E Messum and Sons specialised in inshore and coastal wooden craft and their skiffs are amongst the most recognisable boats from the Edwardian age.

The curatorial team from *Material: Wood* includes Carmel Allen, previously of Conran, Heals and Linley as Creative Director and Messums Wiltshire's curator Catherine Milner, art journalist and writer.