

# MESSUMS WILTSHIRE

ART DESIGN PERFORMANCE EDUCATION

## LAURENCE EDWARDS 'A gathering of uncertainties'

Messums London, 13 Sept – 4 October 2019  
Messums Wiltshire Barn, 14 Sept – 19 October 2019

Press Lunch: Messums Wiltshire, 13 September - 1pm  
+ Talk by Laurence Edwards and private screening of 'Colossus'  
Buses from 28 Cork Street departing 11am, returning 5pm



### Press Release:

Half way through her book 'Time songs - searching for Doggerland' Julia Blackburn meets Professor Leendert Louwe Kooijmans, a specialist in Post Glacial, Northern Europe. Whilst they handle stone tools and implements some 8000 years old he says:

*'Studying simple yet beautiful worked tools and weapons over the years, you begin to see things through the mind of the people that made them and the landscapes they inhabited, the climate the vegetation and even the animals living near by. What you learn from these objects is not expertise but a gathering of uncertainties, and it is from these that we must work.'*

Two such 'large gatherings' of bronze - on show at Messums London and Messums Wiltshire - made by Laurence Edwards echo Professor Leendhart's sentiments: A large figure hosts the detritus of a drained river or some dried out lake, hanging from his outstretched arms, (*After the flood*, 2010-2019); A supine body simultaneously cushioned and suspended whilst being pierced, is a spiritually connected yet an ungainly intruder in an ethereal world of reed and sapling, some 16ft high (*Reed-bed*, 2019); A nomadic 8ft man covered in stones and detritus stands in weary acknowledgment of his role in an interconnected world, his individual actions for survival contributing to a larger demise (*Man of Stones*, 2019); Caravans of men walk with intent, some amidst ambivalent barricades and walls, others connected through filament and twine reliant on each other.

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These sculptures seem aware of the consequences of their actions - they allude to a natural empathy but suffer the contradiction that their mere existence may contribute to a decline. It is this new unavoidable truth that Laurence grapples with. His bound figures also point to these conflicts, tying themselves literally up in knots, or cladding themselves in cubist armour. As boundaries between ourselves and nature blur and the identifying features of masculinity shift.

It is apposite that he is making figures at the time of 'The Anthropocene', when the actions of humans have now registered in the geological record. His work is about brevity set hard. Through the metaphor of bronze casting with its relative permanence, he alludes to the impermanence of earth, land and geology. In the London exhibition you can see evidence of his time spent in Northern Siberia with reindeer herders, whose ancient way of life relies on timeless relations with environment and creatures. Traps, snares, bindings and antler appear amidst compositions collaged with figures. The tendons and sinew of attenuated men stretch over willow frames speaking of ancientness and of a contemporary neurosis and uncertainty.

Laurence Edwards lives near the crumbling cliffs of the Suffolk coast where sedimentary layers yield tooling, bone, fossil and flint as well as the fleeting - a family's footprints, the prance of a crane, the slip of a child 850,000 years ago. His bronzes seek to capture this sense of permanence and those fleeting absent minded moments that you see it in the tying of a knot or the dribble of wax. Unconscious studio acts, that like ancient footprints, seem to amplify with age and permanence.

In *A Gathering of Uncertainties* Laurence Edwards seeks to leave a record in which others might imagine or find a maker, or perhaps feel the time in which things were made, and excavate subconscious acts which might lay under the surface, in turbulent times.

## About Laurence Edwards:

Laurence Edwards studied bronze casting techniques in India and now uses the bronze casting itself as part of the language of his artistic expression. Unique among sculptors, and certainly those that use the figure as their principle language, is Laurence's association with the act and art of bronze making. Bronze casting is an alchemic process, passed on like DNA from generation to generation. Edwards has studied bronze casting more than most and built his first foundry on the Suffolk Marshes where you can still find ancient ingots of bronze squirrelled into the soil by those who once travelled the country plying smelting as a trade.

Edwards is uniquely alone in this fertile territory moving seamlessly across those perceived borders. The vitality that is preserved as a consequence of having a hand to the entire process is evident in the finished work, but it also allows for the viewer to see and to respect the process of making set within the wider concept of the exhibition.

## About the Exhibition:

The show is divided into two parts, the first exhibition to occur across both Messums' gallery venues simultaneously, with large-scale public and private commissions on view in Wiltshire and recent works and studies in Cork Street.

There is a preview and introductory screening of *Colossus* – a film by Phil Cairney, part of a study into the male psyche and Edwards' ongoing project to create one of the largest bronze sculptures and an edifice to evolution on Friday 13 September from 7:30pm at Messums Wiltshire.

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The narrative in Laurence's work is explored in an accompanying catalogue written by Calvin Winner (Deputy Director and Head of Collections at the Sainsbury Centre) that includes an essay on the Siberian expedition by Piers Vitebsky (Head of Social Science at the Scott Institute, University of Cambridge).

## **Laurence Edwards: 'A gathering of uncertainties'**

Messums London, 28 Cork Street, 13 September – 4 October

Preview: 12 September, 6.30pm

Messums Wiltshire, Barn 14 Sept – 19 October

Preview and screening: Friday 13 September, 6.30pm

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### About Messums Wiltshire:

Messums Wiltshire is a leading multi-purpose arts centre, which opened in autumn 2016 after a two-year restoration project. Originally set inside the thirteenth-century tithe barn, we have since expanded into a restored nineteenth-century dairy, called the Long Gallery. In early 2018 we opened The Mess, our restaurant.

Our aim is to offer a unique environment to experience and engage with the arts across genre including performance, dance, design as well as sculpture, painting, photography and ceramics. We are situated in an area renowned internationally for its ancient art-making, beginning millennia ago with Salisbury Cathedral, Stonehenge, and Tisbury's Jurassic fossil coral, which is found underneath the hills of Cranborne chase – argued by Dr K P Oakley to be the location of the first signs of human aesthetic appreciation. At Messums Wiltshire we distinguish the significance of the hand's skill in art for its role as the creator of chance and also for its value as a non-verbal means of communication. The unique character of which is likely to be especially pertinent to a future where the digital is expected to dominate.

Notable events to date include our inaugural Festival of Spoken Word in July 2018 with contributions from Edward Fox and Rupert Everett; pioneering contemporary dance performances from The Alexander Whitley Dance Company with a world premiere of a *Between Two Fires* (2018) and Russell Maliphant's *Conceal / Reveal* (2016); Contemporary fashion with collections by Henrik Vibskov, Joshua Millard and Sadie Williams as well as solo shows for Judy Pfaff, Michael Hulls, John Walker, Bruce Munro and Dante Marioni. The programming is led by material as the by way of access point and has celebrated Clay, Wood, Glass and Textile with contributions from some of the principle makers and minds in each field. A full list of past and future exhibitions can be found on our website.

For all press related requests email: [hannah.hooks@messumswiltshire.com](mailto:hannah.hooks@messumswiltshire.com)