

**PRESS RELEASE**

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Laurence Edwards

*Making Strange*

29 May – 29 June 2024

Messums London



*Audience, bronze, 2023-2024. Photographer: Doug Atfield.*

This exhibition showcases new work by sculptor Laurence Edwards following an intense period of modelling in miniature. A series of bronze heads entitled 'Audience' headline the show – diminutive portraits which grin, grimace and frown at the viewer with a disarming old world medieval charm. These visages are accompanied by a new series of running figures, an evolution of Edwards's 'Walking Men' series. 'Flight' is a frieze of running men all looking anxiously over their shoulders as they flee a threat unknown, they run with a wary instinct, whatever lurks behind is not right and it is not good.

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*Flight (set of six figures), Bronze, E/V 1/9 bronze, Average height of each figure 28 x 17 x 8 cm. Photographer: Doug Atfield.*

The rest of the exhibition in the main consists of larger heads, busts and stupefied figures reacting to and negotiating an unnerving world that continues to challenge and at times threaten. This includes new dissipated figures by Edwards, a further development which originated with *Leaf Man* (2010). By breaking up the visible surface of the body, these works reveal the nature of the cast itself, whilst also pointing to the act of looking, and to surfaces being only the visible aspect of a largely invisible whole: the body and what it contains.



*Leaf Head 2, 2023. Bronze, E/V 1/9,, 39 x 25 x 23 cm. Photographer: Doug Atfield*

These works will be accompanied by a series of prints showing Edwards' engagement with the two-dimensional image in relation to his sculptural practice, and particularly his experimentation with etching.

The exhibition will be supported by a new publication reflecting Edwards' studio practice and his ceaseless experimentation in two and three-dimensions. It takes the form of a half sketchbook featuring collaged pages full of drawings, images torn off workshop walls, photocopies of work in progress and photographs of the studio itself, offering a novel insight into the evolution of the work set out in the rest of the publication.

Further forthcoming presentations of Laurence Edwards' work include: Blenheim Palace, 'The Walking Men' (March-June 2024); Winchester Cathedral 'Borrowed Breadth' (6 September – 3 November 2024); Defiance Gallery, New South Wales, Australia (26 October – 16 November) and Messums West (26 July – 29 September 2025). Laurence Edwards will be the inaugural artist-in-residence at Messums East (due to open Autumn 2025).

## ABOUT

Laurence Edwards' practice has long been preoccupied by the entwining of man, nature and time. One of the few sculptors who casts his own work, he is fascinated by human anatomy and the metamorphosis of form and matter that governs the lost-wax process. The driving force behind his work is bronze, an alloy that physically and metaphorically illustrates entropy, the natural tendency of any system in time to tend towards disorder and chaos. His sculptures express the raw liquid power of bronze, its versatility, mass and evolution, and the variety of process marks he retains tell the story of how and why each work came to be.

In November 2021, Edwards installed a 26-foot-high sculpture, alongside the A12 highway in Suffolk, called 'Yoxman'. This colossal figure embodies his fascination between the human figure and the environment; he is part tree, cove, cliff and figure. Organic matter is built into the casting process; a detritus of leaves, branches, stone and rope. The patina and colouring of the sculpture will, in time, reflect the nearby cliffs. Drawing together the movement of time from the ancient past through

the present and looking towards the future. Reflecting on this work, Edwards describes, “in some ways this figure deals with the crossover from a kind of male triumphalism to a more reticent, unsure confused state, battered and freighted by history, this evocation of maleness looks towards the ground, muffled, buckled and scarred, bearing witness to a complicated history evaluating what role is possible in the future”.

Based in Suffolk, Edwards studied sculpture at Canterbury College of Art and bronze casting at the Royal College of Art with Sir Antony Caro. After winning a Henry Moore Bursary, the Angeloni Prize for Bronze Casting and an Intach Travelling Scholarship, he studied traditional casting techniques in India and Nepal, an experience that not only influenced his treatment of form and technique, but also gave him the necessary tools to establish his own atelier and foundry.

In 2006, Edwards won the Royal Society of Portrait Sculpture Award, and became an Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors in 2012. In November 2019, *Man of Stones* was unveiled at the Sainsbury Centre in Norfolk. In 2018, Edwards was commissioned by Doncaster Council to create a sculpture that celebrates the lives of those who worked in the collieries around Doncaster. ‘A Rich Seam’ was unveiled in Print Office Street in 2021. Major exhibitions of his work have been held at Messums West (2022) and Orange Regional Gallery in 2023. His ‘Walking Men’ series were presented at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia in 2023.



*Laurence Edwards in his studio, 2024. Photographer: Tim Bowden.*

## **PRESS**

For further information and press images, please contact: [press@messums.org](mailto:press@messums.org)

## **ABOUT MESSUMS – MESSUMS WEST, MESSUMS LONDON AND MESSUMS ORG**

**MESSUMS WEST:** Established as Messums Wiltshire in 2016 by Johnny Messum, Messums West is a leading multi-purpose gallery and arts centre set inside a restored thirteenth-century tithe barn with surrounding buildings, exhibition space, sculpture garden and restaurant.

**MESSUMS LONDON** is a 2,000 sq ft exhibition space on Cork Street behind the Royal Academy. It hosts a rolling programmed of exhibitions for our contemporary artists.

Under the umbrella **MESSUMS ORG**, the business continues to evolve the role of the gallery from presentational space to one that offers multiple ways to access, experience, understand and engage with the creative process and its outcomes. This has included establishing a network of venues and arts communities in the West and East of England – as well as connecting with our historic London gallery space, **MESSUMS LONDON**.

Our core specialisms are represented in the breadth of the arts we engage in as part of the programme of exhibitions and events at our venues. This encompasses painting, sculpture, ceramic, photography, and performance as well as film, architecture, textiles and more. Together with our exhibitions and events, we offer international artist residencies, contemporary dance premiers, symposia, and workshops. Underpinning all of this is an appreciation and respect for nature to which most artists and individuals would readily identify, and a belief that innovation like creativity itself runs at the vanguard of our thoughts.

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