

For immediate release:

## A Summer of Sculpture at Watts Gallery – Artists' Village

28 June 2022 – 2 October 2022

This summer, Watts Gallery - Artists' Village will celebrate sculpture through a series of exhibitions and special events exploring the evolution of the medium from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

The season includes the first exhibition dedicated to the sculptural practice of George Frederic Watts OM RA (1817-1904); the world premiere of *Beyond the Waves*, a video installation by choreographer Chris Pavia following his residency at Watts Gallery; a group exhibition of work by leading contemporary British sculptors and a programme of talks, tours and artist-led workshops to discover more about the history of sculpture and about sculpture today.

Recognised in his own lifetime as one of the greatest painters of the Victorian age, G F Watts began his artistic career in the studio of sculptor William Behnes (1794-1864) who, at the time, was one of the country's most prolific and successful portrait sculptors, appointed Sculptor-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria in 1837.

After completing his studies at the Royal Academy Schools in 1835, Watts initially focused on painting, achieving wide acclaim for his portraits, murals and Symbolist works.

However, from the 1860s until his death in 1904, Watts dedicated significant time to sculpture. For the first time, ***A Fragmented Legacy: G F Watts and Sculpture*** (opening 28 June, Exhibition Gallery, Sculpture Gallery) will consider the artist's sculptural practice, bringing together key objects from the sculpture collection at Watts Gallery – all of which were saved from the artist's studios in Surrey and London – with seldom seen oil paintings and works on paper to reveal how Watts used sculpture as the base for a number of his most important painting compositions.

The exhibition will show how Watts moved seamlessly between different materials and across different dimensions to become one of the leading painter-sculptors of his time. From early sketches of the Parthenon Marbles at the British Museum (1840s) to groupings of sketches, plaster models and oil paintings in multi-figure compositions such as *Love and Life*, c.1880-89 and *Orpheus and Eurydice*, c.1900-03, the exhibition will show how sculpture was fundamental to the artist's innovative practice: experimental, obsessive and even destructive at times.

Work shown in exhibitions during the artist's lifetime, including *Clytie* (c.1865-69) and *Daphne* (c.1879-82, Tate) will highlight how, throughout his career, classical subjects provided a source of inspiration.

And, bringing together rarely seen preparatory drawings, sculptural studies and archival material with the original plaster models for Watts's monumental projects *Physical Energy* (c.1880-1904) and *Monument to Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (1898-1903), the exhibition will consider the development, reception and legacy of these two major public works and will examine their history today.

Taking inspiration from G F Watts's sculpture, ***Beyond the Waves*** (opening 28 June, video installation, Showcase Gallery) is a new dance work by internationally acclaimed choreographer and dancer, Chris Pavia, featuring dance artists from Stopgap Dance Company. The work will receive its world premiere at Watts Gallery this summer.

*Beyond the Waves* is the culmination of Chris' residency at Watts Gallery, through which he explored the dynamics and movement of Watts's sculpture, moving on to look at elemental forces in the natural world, including turbulent seas, fast-running currents and horses in motion.

Comprising three solo dances brought together in film, *Beyond the Waves* was commissioned by Watts Gallery Trust and is a collaboration with DAiSY (Disability Arts in Surrey) and Stopgap Dance Company. It is supported by Arts Council England.

**Figure and Form: Sculpture Now** (opening 24 June, Watts Contemporary Gallery) presents work by eight leading contemporary artists focusing on the human figure and how relationships are expressed through stance and proximity. Featuring figurative and abstract work in diverse media, including paper, wood, ceramics and bronze, this will be the first exhibition dedicated to sculpture to be shown at Watts Contemporary, with all works available for sale.

A programme of talks, tours and artist-led workshops will run throughout the season. Highlights include *Sculpture through the Ages*, a History of Art course with sessions led by Dr Richard Stemp, Hilary Underwood and Ben Street; *Material Matters*, a series of conversations and workshops curated in partnership with The Royal Society of Sculptors, and a series of evening *Discussions on Sculpture* talks.

Commenting, Alistair Burtenshaw, Brice Director and Chief Executive, Watts Gallery Trust, said:

“Our Summer of Sculpture continues our vision of Art for All *by All*, exploring sculpture in all its forms with opportunities for inspiration, challenge, curiosity – and participation - for everyone. From our most extensive exploration yet of GF Watts’ creative practice as a sculptor to a celebration of the work of sculptors in different media today in our Contemporary Gallery, and from our first dance commission in *Beyond the Waves* with Stopgap Dance and Chris Pavia, to a programme packed with creativity and ideas. We hope you’ll join us on our exploration of sculpture this summer”.

Dr Stacey Clapperton, Assistant Curator, Watts Gallery Trust and Curator of *A Fragmented Legacy*, said:

“This exhibition, the first to explore Watts Gallery Trust’s extensive sculpture collection, will reveal G F Watts’s unique creative process and will show that he was a leading painter-sculptor of the Victorian age. It brings together a brilliant, and largely unknown, body of work that informed not only Watts’s lifelong painting practice but his unique vision of the human form, metamorphosis, and the role of art in the wider world”.

Chris Pavia, Choreographer of *Beyond the Waves* and dance artist, said:

“I’m overjoyed and overwhelmed that *Beyond the Waves* will be shown next to the new exhibition of G F Watts’ sculptural work. It’s amazing to show it and to find out what people think of it.”

Gwen Hughes, Watts Contemporary Programme Manager, said:

“We are excited to be staging our first sculpture exhibition at Watts Contemporary, and to be showing what a healthy state sculpture is in today. The works are very varied, but they all capture small moments in people’s lives, and give insights into the wider human condition.”

For further information:

[wattsgallery.org.uk](http://wattsgallery.org.uk)

Twitter [@WattsGallery](https://twitter.com/WattsGallery)

Instagram [@wattsgallery](https://www.instagram.com/wattsgallery)

Facebook [/wattsgalleryartistsvillage](https://www.facebook.com/wattsgalleryartistsvillage)

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**FOR HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES AND MORE INFORMATION:**

**For further press information, including press visits and interviews:**

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## **Note to Editors**

### **Watts Gallery – Artists' Village**

Watts Gallery Trust is an independent charity established in 1904 to enable future generations to connect with the art and ideas of George Frederic Watts, one of the leading artists of the nineteenth century.

G F Watts OM RA (1817-1904) was widely considered to be the greatest painter of the Victorian age. He became the first living artist to have a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the artist's 'gift to the Nation' made a significant contribution to the founding collections of Tate Britain and the National Portrait Gallery. [Read more.](#)

## **Physical Energy**

Watts began work on the monumental equestrian sculpture, *Physical Energy*, in the early 1880s and continued to develop up until his death on 1 July 1904. To date, four casts have been made of *Physical Energy* from the bold and angular plaster model, on display in the Sculpture Gallery.

Plans are underway to display the fourth bronze at Watts Gallery – Artists' Village.

In preparation for the installation of the cast, the organisation is working in consultation with all our communities to re-examine the ways in which the sculpture's multiple histories can be explored and interpreted today.

## **DAiSY**

DAiSY (DAiSYfest CIC) is an umbrella organisation which promotes and celebrates the works of disabled artists and disability arts organisations in Surrey. The organisation strives to develop the South East as the lead region in the UK for disability and deaf cultural activity, making Surrey a welcoming and accessible place for all artists to practice.

DAiSY was founded as a steering group in 2011, initially with the intention of delivering festivals that celebrated the work of its members. DAiSY delivered DAiSYfest at Leatherhead Theatre in 2013 and then at GLive in 2014 and 2016.

Since this time DAiSY has changed the way it works to create a programme of activity which happens throughout the year. The focus has also shifted to encompass advocacy and training, whilst still keeping artistic delivery and networking at the heart of its delivery.

In 2020 DAiSY became DAiSYfest CIC, incorporating as a charitable organisation. During this year DAiSY also launched its [Artist Commissioning scheme](#).

**OVERARCHING AIMS:**

To raise the status and visibility of art created by disabled artists.

To establish DAiSY as Surrey's leading voice on access and inclusion within the arts.

To unite the county's disabilities organisations and create a dialogue for collaborations.

## **Stopgap Dance Company**

Stopgap Dance Company is an internationally acclaimed inclusive company, driven by a diverse creative team who use dance as a movement for change.

Stopgap's vision is to create an inclusive world where diversity is not just accepted but pursued, a world where no one is limited by prejudice against D/deaf, disabled, or neurodivergent people.

Working with an artform shaped by human touch and energised by the spark of connectivity, Stopgap's work demonstrates the compelling power of diversity and inclusivity. They move together to create a remarkable experience that transforms society's perceptions of difference and dismantle the inequity of privilege, in dance and in all aspects of living, collaborating, and creating together as humans.

Stopgap is committed to removing barriers to dance, nurturing the talents of dancers born into any body and any mind. As a global leader of disability access in dance they continuously examine best practice and actively advocate for the industry and the wider world to become more inclusive.