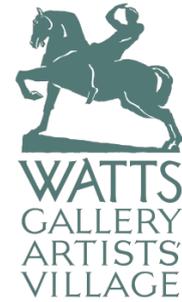


Press Release

Release: Immediate



Artistic Aviary

9 July – 12 September 2021

Watts Contemporary Gallery

Opening at Watts Contemporary Gallery on 9 July, An Artistic Aviary presents work by 17 contemporary artists in a wide range of media to celebrate the art of birds.

Bringing together paintings, ceramics, prints and sculpture, the exhibition explores humankind's relationship with birds and highlights their continuing inspiration for artists.

Birds have always been a source of wonder and mystery for artists. They have been used as powerful symbols of freedom and beauty, idolised for their extraordinary colour and form, celebrated for their song and admired for their almost magical abilities of flight and navigation.

More recently, as issues of climate change have become pressing, contemporary artists have portrayed bird life to draw attention to issues of conservation, extinction and the vital need to protect wildlife for future generations.

An Artistic Aviary features work by some of the best known UK artists currently exploring these themes, including: **Celia Lewis**, who makes her expressive mixed media designs with a distinctive interplay of pattern, design and delicate watercolour; **Robert Greenhalf**, whose oil paintings always begin with observational sketches, colour and study notes made in the field; **Daisy Clarke**, who works in watercolour and gouache to express her life-long fascination with the interaction between humans and birds; **Richard Spare**, whose etchings are created from close observation of birds using the habitats he has created in his own garden; **Claire Harkess**, whose fascination with birds and wildlife was sparked by a residency at Edinburgh Zoo and who works in watercolour for its lightness and transparency, and ornithologist, artist and illustrator **Robert Gillmor MBE** recognised for his services to both art and conservation.

Illustrator and artist **Jacqui Mair**, who has created a series of collages for

this show with carefully selected papers to create joyful bird motifs; **Tim Mitchell**, who focuses on aquatint etching and finds the ‘endless variables and challenges involved in this practice to be the most enjoyable creative process’; **Vincent Sheridan**, whose etchings seek to capture the subliminal ‘brushstroke’ patterns of birds in flight; **Richard Allen**, a winner of British Birds Bird Illustrator of the Year and **Hester Cox**, whose collagraphs capture the visual sensation of birds on the wing.

Jane Silk’s ceramics show the artist’s love of birds and their forms; **Debbie Barber**’s Raku ceramics are influenced by the exotic birds of antique Chinese wallpaper; bronze sculptures by **Anthony Theakston** express the essence and spirit of barn owls in as few lines and curves as possible; **Stephen Henderson** carefully observes birds from his studio that overlooks tidal mudflats in the Essex marshes to capture a sense of movement in his woodcarvings; highly decorated porcelain birds by **Susan O’Byrne** show the artist’s interest in folk art, collage and historic domestic craft and **Rachel Sumner**’s driftwood birds are created using materials found following winter storms on the North Devon coast.

An Artistic Aviary continues Watts Contemporary Gallery’s exhibition programme, which presents six exhibitions each year inspired by the history and heritage of Watts Gallery – Artists’ Village, and provides visitors with an opportunity to see and buy affordable contemporary art.

All profits from Watts Contemporary Gallery exhibitions support Watts Gallery Trust’s Art for All Learning Programme, which delivers artist led workshops across the community.

Comments:

“Located in the woodlands of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Watts Gallery – Artists’ Village is surrounded by beautiful bird life. This summer, we invite visitors to discover our woodland and to enjoy our exhibitions and events, including An Artistic Aviary.”

“Our founder, the famous Victorian artist George Frederic Watts, was himself a great admirer of birds and they feature in a number of his paintings, including The Wounded Heron. Painted in 1837, it was the artist’s first painting to be shown at the Royal Academy.”

“G F Watts was also committed to their protection, and he was an Associate of the newly formed Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).”

“We are delighted to be presenting work by leading contemporary artists who continue to be inspired by our birds and by our heritage, and we look

forward to sharing their wonderful work with you.”
Alistair Burtenshaw, Director of Watts Gallery Trust

An Artistic Aviary opens at Watts Contemporary Gallery on 9 July (until 12 September). It is presented in partnership with Gwen Hughes Fine Art. All work is for sale, with prices from £85

Notes to Editors

Watts Contemporary Gallery:

Watts Contemporary Gallery provides visitors with an opportunity to see and buy contemporary art and craft that resonate with the history and heritage of Watts Gallery – Artists’ Village. Located in the old Compton Pottery, today Watts Contemporary Gallery presents six exhibitions each year. All profits raised through Watts Contemporary exhibitions support Art for All, Watts Gallery Trust’s learning and outreach programme inspired by GF and Mary Watts, founders of Watts Gallery – Artists’ Village.

Open Monday to Sunday, including Bank Holidays, 10am - 5pm, free entry. Located above the Shop.

For further information:

wattsgallery.org.uk/visit/watts-contemporary-gallery/

An Artistic Aviary: participating artists

For further information about the featured artists:

bit.ly/3dcsSBG

Gwen Hughes Fine Art

For further information about Gwen Hughes Fine Art

gwenhughesart.co.uk/about

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For further information:

www.wattsgallery.org.uk | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

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Images: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/s70jkqz5jg22csc/AADBO9wJJqE-G0qiJ_5B2VVTa?dl=0

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