

Skills Unearthed: Art of the Blackdowns

Art Exhibition: 14 September – 6 October 2013

Venue: Cotley Tithe Barn, Cotley, Nr Chard, Somerset

Skills Unearthed: Art of the Blackdowns brings together a collection of artworks that meditate on the importance for artists to make work that is connected to their locale. Housed within the Tithe Barn Cotley, and incorporating works by renowned and emerging artists the exhibition brings together the best critical work from artists associated with **Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers**.

Reflecting the unique surroundings, heritage and landscape of the Blackdown Hills the works on show each examine a different facet of the social, physical and culturally unique environment. Carly Batchelor's moving portraits of veteran airmen taken at their homes in the USA is offset by Jon England's exquisite Iodine paintings drawn from the experiences of the same group of men. Men who were based at airfields across the hills during world war two and who were subsequently made famous when their story was told by the HBO TV production *Band of Brothers*. Louise Cottey uncovers lost industrial heritage by remaking ancient woollen cloth. Tim Martin investigates a transect line across the hills, walked and recorded at fifty points the work offers a view on the physical environment, the thresholds of public and private spaces, on time and scale. By contrast Sarah Hitchens intimate ceramic work *Blackdown Vessels* charts the rural, cultural identity through the makers and producers who operate within the area. Gillian Widden's imposing and fascinating large sculpture created from Ash wood and dyed *Dipsacus sativus* teasels is inspired by past agriculture. As is Bryony Tidball's sculpture, which provides a subversive twist on the traditional representation of the corn dolly. Andre Wallace's new sculpture explores religious imagery and environments found in the Blackdown Hills and through its making Wallace references and evokes traditional skills and techniques.

People familiar with the Blackdown Hills will recognise themes and motifs unique to the area, such as the lasting connection to WW2, ancient folklore and the farming history. However the artists, presenting work here do so not only in connection to the hills but as artists critically engaged nationally and internationally. Their ideas and artworks extend beyond this corner of the South West, but for this special exhibition it is possible to view their work through the unique prism of

where they choose to call their home.

The exhibition marks the finale of 'Skills Unearthed', a successful two-year project, inspired by the industry and crafts of the Blackdown Hills. Funded by Arts Council England and Making it Local the project has supported artists and raised the profile and access to contemporary art across the Devon-Somerset border.

The venue for the exhibition is the ancient Tithe Barn, Cotley, nr Chard, TA20 3EP. Located a mile or so south west of Chard, down single-track roads, it is a gem of an exhibition space for those who can find it.

An events programme of workshops and talks for everyone will be run alongside the exhibition.

Please note the exhibition is open Thursday – Sunday, 11am - 5pm in the Tithe Barn at Cotley, nr Chard. The exhibition will also be part of Somerset Arts Weeks Festival (21st September to 6th October 2013).

ENDS



Andre Wallace - Black Vessel



Tim Martin – Slice of the Blackdowns,



Carly Batchelor – Hemyock Homeguard

Journalists Notes

For project and media enquiries please contact:

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Other high res images and specific artist details available.

Exhibition venue details:

Admission Free

Open: 14 September – 6 October 2013

Thursday – Sunday 11am-5pm

Special Events (Free):

Private View

Thursday 12th September, 7.00pm

Artist Talks.

Saturday 28th September, 3.00pm

Dance presentation followed by Jive lessons.

Friday 4th October, 7.00pm

Address: Tithe Barn, Cotley, Nr Chard, Somerset, TA20 3EP

Directions: From Chard on the A30 West/Honiton. On leaving Chard take left at Toll House, take left again, turn left at red sign for Cotley, one mile turn right down tree lined driveway.

Disabled access: Partial (Access to limited areas of venue, including uneven surface such as gravel and narrow access) Parking: Onsite parking

Information:

- The Blackdown Hills is one of 36 areas of outstanding natural beauty in the UK (AONB). It is a group of hills lying on the Devon and Somerset border. Broadly, the area extends from Wellington in the north to Honiton in the south and from Cullompton in the west to Chard in the east.
- As part of the only extensive outcrop of Upper Greensand in the region, the geology of the Blackdown Hills is unique in Britain.
- The area is best known for the dramatic, steep, wooded north facing scarp, a wide plateau and valleys in which nestle villages and hamlets surrounded by ancient and intricate patterns of small enclosed fields and a maze of winding high-hedged lanes.
- **Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers (BHAAM)** is a membership organisation of creative practitioners who live, work, and have an interest in the Blackdown Hills on the Devon/Somerset border. See: www.bhaam.org.uk

BHAAM

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Devon and Somerset

The *Skills Unearthed* project is funded by:



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ENGLAND**

www.bhaam.org.uk