

Aldeburgh Festival Exhibition
Remains To Be Seen: Paul Benney, Laurence Edwards and Kiki Smith, co-curated
by Messums Wiltshire and Britten Pears Arts

Snape Maltings, Snape, Suffolk, IP17 1SP

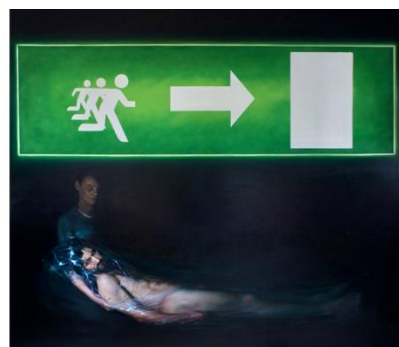
3 - 26 June 2022



Laurence Edwards 'Walking Men' 2022



Kiki Smith 'Seer' 2020



Paul Benney 'Pieta' 2020

Signalling a step-change in visual arts programming for Suffolk, and responding to the expansion in the audience demand for contemporary art in the regions, Britten Pears Arts is delighted to announce a three-year creative collaboration with Messums Wiltshire for the Aldeburgh Festival in 2022, 2024 and 2025.

It starts with *Remains To Be Seen*, featuring recent and historical works by Paul Benney, Laurence Edwards and Kiki Smith. Following Benney's extraordinary 2020 *Night Paintings* projection event at Snape, he is joined this summer by longtime colleagues and kindred spirits Edwards and Smith in an exhibition spanning familiar and unconventional spaces across Snape Maltings.

The show takes the stunning and archaeologically rich heritage of Suffolk – globally famous for the finds at Sutton Hoo and beyond – as the ground from which to explore the artists' common interests in the body as narrative and site. Working in a variety of media and disciplines, from oil painting and sculpture, to film, printmaking and textiles, Benney, Edwards and Smith share a reverence for the natural world and the human form as symbol and vestige, exploring connections between myth, religious iconography and ritual.

Benney first met New York-based Kiki Smith when he was part of the lively East Village art scene in the 1980s. His move to Suffolk in 2018 connected him with a similarly vibrant local community of contemporary artists, notably Laurence Edwards, who returns to Snape fourteen years after his *Creek Men* first guarded the estuary.

Coming to prominence with a series of works focusing on anatomy and the female body, **Kiki Smith's** intuitive creative process has seen her developing an imaginative and distinct cosmology all of its own. A dream, and a conversation about extinction with a Harvard scientist in 1994, turned her focus to the relationship between humans and the environment. "We have the same interests", she said in a recent interview. Fairy tales and medieval bestiary have become a way of pulling together these strands. The Catholic dualism of Smith's upbringing which initially saw her taking the body – in whole and in parts – and

placing it in a political context, has evolved into a syncretic vision embedded against a wider cosmic landscape, drawing out the continuum between heavenly and earthly bodies, the detail and the bigger picture. The festival exhibition presents a wide-ranging insight into her brilliant output in sculpture, tapestry and printmaking.

The cluster of derelict Victorian buildings on the banks of the Alde that have been slowly reclaimed to form the Snape Maltings arts complex, were the childhood playground of British sculptor **Laurence Edwards**. His artistic complexion was forged in these Suffolk hinterlands, a landscape against which Edwards' ragged figures have arisen as witnesses to resilience and personal survival. A keen walker with a fascination for its history and the increasingly visible archaeology being revealed as a result of coastal erosion, his relationship to the land of his birth has been sharpened by a growing sense of entropy in action. It's at its most visible in his 26ft *Yoxman*, now a local landmark by the A12 at Yoxford. His passion for what he calls "the poetry of casting" is consummate and consuming, and finds expression in his evolving experiments with the iterations of making. His recent *String Sculptures* join *Carrier*, *Leaf Man* and *Walking Men* in sites across the Maltings.

Paul Benney's interest in Renaissance painting and the iconography of saints, biblical stories and ancient symbolism are the starting point from which he sets out to interrogate contemporary symbology. Speaking of how these old master paintings served didactic and edifying purposes, as means of moral guidance – models and exhortations to lead a "morally respectable" life – he asks what is the equivalent symbolic language of our time, now that the church is no longer there to show us the way. "I think one of the things that's taken its place is we've given that responsibility to the municipality. We're completely surrounded by images that tell us where to go, what to do... Is this an emergency exit, or a cul de sac?" The mysticism and virtuosity of Benney's visionary paintings and hybrid digital/painting installations, together with his status as one of the country's leading and most garlanded portrait painters, belie a provocative and iconoclastic questioning of contemporary authority, with its signage and Nudge Theory, and the use of behavioural science to influence the behaviour and decisions of individuals and society at large.

The exhibition is curated by **Isabel de Vasconcellos**, Messums Wiltshire.

Paul Benney is represented by Anima Mundi Gallery
Laurence Edwards is represented by Messums Wiltshire
Kiki Smith is represented by Timothy Taylor

All three artists will be available for interview as part of the opening events.

Exhibition open daily, across the Snape Maltings site. Visitors will start their exploration at the Pond Gallery HQ.

Exhibition talk 2.30pm on Sunday 5th June Peter Pears Recital Room

The artists will discuss their work and relationship in a conversation chaired by Isabel de Vasconcellos.

Images can be found [here](#).

For further press information please contact:

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Notes to Editors

Paul Benney (b. 1959) has exhibited extensively in the US and Europe and is represented in public and private collections worldwide including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (USA), The Brooklyn Museum (USA), The National Gallery (Australia), The National Portrait Gallery (UK) as well as prominent corporate collections including the Eli Broad Foundation, AIG and Standard Life. Benney has twice won The Visitor's

Choice Award in the BP Portrait Award and was short-listed on two other occasions. He has been a judge for numerous art competitions including the Threadneedle prize in 2013 and the Koestler Trust in 2015. A member of the Neo-Expressionist group of the early 80's in New York's Lower East Side, Benney became known for his depictions of stygian themes reflected in the devastation of some parts of Manhattan at the time. Today Benney continues to explore themes of religion, mysticism and the symbolism embedded in the natural world that have occupied him throughout his career, engaging with a wide range of media including painting, digital projections and music. Paul Benney lives and works in Suffolk. UK.

Laurence Edwards (b. 1967) studied sculpture at Canterbury College of Art and bronze casting at the Royal College of Art. 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, he 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. For the Aldeburgh Festival in 2008, Edwards created three 8ft bronze figures inspired by the marshes. On first meeting them, writer Robert Macfarlane commented, "I came over time to see the Creek Men not as eldritch paramilitaries set on vengeance, but as more ethically neutral emanations of the Suffolk terrain itself." 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. In November 2021, he completed and installed a 26ft bronze landmark sculpture named Yoxman, which stands next to the A12 in Suffolk.

Kiki Smith was born in 1954 in Nuremberg, Germany. She has been known since the 1980s for her multidisciplinary work that explores embodiment and the natural world. She uses a broad variety of materials to continuously expand and evolve a body of work that includes sculpture, printmaking, photography, drawing, and textiles. Smith has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions worldwide including over 25 museum exhibitions. Her work has been featured at five Venice Biennales, including the 2017 edition. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in 2017 was awarded the title of Honorary Royal Academician by the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Previously, Smith was recognized in 2006 by TIME Magazine as one of the "TIME 100: The People Who Shape Our World." Other awards include the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture in 2000; the 2009 Edward MacDowell Medal; the 2010 Nelson A. Rockefeller Award, Purchase College School of the Arts; the 2013 U.S. Department of State Medal of Arts, conferred by Hillary Clinton; and the 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center, among others. She is an adjunct professor at NYU and Columbia University. Her work will also be on show in *Feminine power: the divine to the demonic* at the British Museum, 19 May 2022 - 25 Sep 2022.

Britten Pears Arts is a pioneering cultural charity based on the Suffolk coast at two popular, historic visitor destinations: Snape Maltings and The Red House, Aldeburgh. It emerged from the determination of composer Benjamin Britten and his partner, singer Peter Pears, to ensure that everyone could enjoy and experience music. Britten Pears Arts aims to continue their legacy to develop talent, celebrate their heritage and engage with communities. The organisation has a national leadership role in the areas of talent development and music, health and wellbeing. We use music to transform people's lives, to bring communities together and enhance daily life. We want the arts to effect powerful positive change in, and for, society. Or, as Britten himself would have put it, we make the arts "useful." brittenpearsarts.org

MESSUMS WILTSHIRE is a multi-purpose gallery and arts centre set inside a restored thirteenth-century tithe barn and surrounding buildings with exhibition space, sculpture garden and restaurant. The programming is across genre, supporting creativity in the fields of painting, ceramic, sculpture, photography and contemporary dance. A comprehensive list of past and future exhibitions can be found on our websites. www.messumswiltshire.com | www.messumslondon.com |