Young sculptor from Northumberland unveils immersive installation in the grounds of Cheeseburn Sculpture

Monday 14 May, 2018

Peter Hanmer presents Plato's Lair – the winning sculpture from 2017's Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor competition.

Saturday 19 May is the 2018 opening weekend at Cheeseburn Sculpture, and also sees the unveiling of Peter Hanmer's installation, Plato's Lair. The piece was chosen as the winner of the second Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor (GDNEYS) award by a panel of judges, consisting of: founder and owner of Cheeseburn, Joanna Riddell; curator at Cheeseburn, Matthew Jarratt; artist, Joseph Hillier, and trustee for The Gillian Dickinson Trust, Alexander Dickinson. Also taken into account by the judges, were votes from visitors to Cheeseburn, and online via Facebook.

Plato's Lair has been carefully installed in the Walled Garden Potting Shed, which is situated within the 10 acres of landscaped gardens at Cheeseburn Grange in Stamfordham, and features a series of miniature figures, created by Hanmer, within a scene that has been specifically designed to immerse the viewer within the space. Many of the figures are remade action figures, with the addition of miliput, and other mixed media.

Plato's Lair draws upon the philosopher, Plato's 'The Republic', primarily from book 7, 'The Allegory of The Cave', which asserts that relying on your senses alone to inform you of the world around you is simply not enough, and that philosophical inquiry is the only true way to understand the world.

You don't need to be a philosopher, however, to enjoy Hanmer's installation - in this case, your senses are more than enough.

Says Hanmer:

"I have spent the last year creating a mixed-media installation in the Potting Shed at Cheeseburn Sculpture, combining miniature figures, sound, light and shadows into a number of connected scenes that can be interpreted in many ways.

I created forty, hybrid human-bird figures, which are divided into three main factions: the guards, citizens/prisoners and the philosophers. The guards, controlled by The Tyrant, prevent the citizens/prisoners from escaping their world into the sunlight. Philosophers come from outside offering enlightenment to the citizens, where they meet resistance.

I want the viewer to feel like they are a part of this world; to make a connection to the figures, and to whatever it is they think is occurring within the space."

When Hanmer first entered the Potting Shed, he instantly knew that this was the right spot for him to explore his ideas.

Says Hanmer:

"The Potting Shed lends itself to the story of Plato's Cave in that it is dark and atmospheric. I like the contrast between this dark space, and the beautiful gardens within which it is surrounded.

I hope that Plato's Lair is seen by and enjoyed by lots of people. I hope that it is thought-provoking, and that the opportunity, given to me by Cheeseburn, enables me to continue exploring my ideas."

Joanna Riddell, owner and founder of Cheeseburn, encourages visitors to explore the gardens and the sculptures this year: "We are delighted to open our 2018 season with Plato's Lair, and to see Peter's proposal come to fruition. It is certainly an installation that requires some quiet contemplation and the Potting Shed is the perfect place for that. We are looking forward to seeing some new faces alongside our regular visitors at Cheeseburn this summer."

In addition to Plato's Lair, Cheeseburn will present proposals from the 11 young artists shortlisted for the Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor of the Year 2018 in the Stables Gallery. The shortlisted artists (listed below) have all been awarded £300 to develop their ideas for an installation or sculpture to be sited at Cheeseburn Sculpture in 2019 and will present them for the first time to visitors and online

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from Saturday 19 May.

The shortlisted artists are:

Jed Buttress (Newcastle University), Clare Townley (Newcastle University graduate, now at New Bridge Studios), Alexander Nicholas (Northumbria University graduate, now at Baltic 39), Jenny Alderson (Goldsmiths graduate, now at New Bridge Studios), Thomas Tyler (Teesside University graduate, now at New Bridge Studios), Charlotte Palin (Teesside University), Emily Chapman (Teesside University), Sienna Shaw (Sunderland University graduate), Jonny Michie (Sunderland University), Jenny McNamara (Newcastle University) and Theo Scott (Northumbria University, now at Baltic 39).

Says Matthew Jarratt, curator at Cheeseburn, and mentor to GDNEYS winners:

“It seems as though I say it every year, but the calibre of the proposals we receive from the young artists from our regional Universities and Colleges are exceptional.

This year we present another diverse and intriguing selection of proposals and, as always, we ask the public to visit the gallery at Cheeseburn and vote for their favourite.”

Cheeseburn invites the public to visit this season, take a self-guided tour of the grounds, and marvel at the new work in the gallery space, alongside some forty other sculptures situated within the 10 acres of landscaped gardens.

Cheeseburn is open to the public as follows:

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 May, 11am – 4pm

Saturday 26, Sunday 27 and Monday 28 May, 11am – 4pm

Both weekends include pop-up artist and designer market from the Mushroom Works; a sound installation in the chapel, by Martin Eccles, entitled Trace No Trace, and new sculptures in the grounds, by Simon Hitchens.

Saturday 30 June and Sunday 1 July, 11am – 4pm

Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 July, 11am – 4pm – part of Great Northumberland 2018

Both weekends include Chinese artist, Qi Yafeng's hand-beaten, stainless-steel sculptures on display in the grounds, with photography from his Guangzhou studio in the gallery and a video performance in the Hayloft. Bennett Hogg's sound installation will respond to the sounds of Qi Yafeng's stainless-steel focus and the Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor 2018 winner will be announced. Plus, a pop-up shop from Handmade Tyneside, which sells lighting and furniture crafted from wood salvaged regionally.

Saturday 25, Sunday 26 and Monday 27 August, 11am – 4pm – part of Great Northumberland 2018

Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 September, 11am – 4pm – part of Great Northumberland 2018

Both weekends include a major solo exhibition of sculptures by award-winning artist Joseph Hillier. Hillier has developed a unique piece of work through a collaboration with Northumbrian dancer, Lizzie J. Klotz. Through a fusion of ancient bronze casting and digital 3D motion capture technology, Hillier has captured the movements and gestures of the dance in mid-performance.

Notes to visitors:

Regrettably Cheeseburn cannot accommodate dogs due to active farmland within the grounds; Cheeseburn is not fully wheelchair accessible; entry with donation; wear appropriate footwear.

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