

COMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

BRIEFING NOTE

May 2023

Operations

The Easter holidays saw a busy programme of activities focused on clay and Halima Cassell's work. In April we also took part in the Art Fund's Wild Escape with the Wild at Watts project. 75 pupils over 3 classes from Loseley Fields Primary School and St Joseph's Primary School were invited to participate in a day of activities. We were joined by artist Anna-Marie Garrett who worked with the pupils to discuss habitats, inspired by animals found within our art collection. The groups experimented with creating a habitat using layers, colour and textured collage. These abstract collage artworks were brought together to form an exciting installation in our beautiful woodland on Earth Day.

On Earth Day we had 70 participants taking part in activities at Tent, which included Drop-in and Draw, Reptile Walks in the Orchard and wonderful discussions took place with Chris Sharples our Verey Head Gardener and COPSE (Community Orchard Project South East) about the array of wildlife and varied plant species found on our site. Artist, Anna- Marie Garrett developed and delivered a Badge Making workshop, with 40 participants taking part in this drop-in activity throughout the day.

In April we sadly lost our Head of Estates and Facilities Matthew Carter who passed away suddenly whilst on holiday. Matthew had lived and worked at Watts Gallery for 7 years and had made a huge impact on the organisation, from major repairs to buildings to the painting and decorating of our temporary exhibition galleries ahead of install to liaison with all of our suppliers, staff training and arranging summer barbecues, staff socials and events. From alarms and utilities to first-response snow-clearing and flood management, Matthew cared for and kept Watts Gallery open every day. We will miss him dearly and are in the process of planning how to remember him properly.

Chris Sharples and his team of gardening volunteers have been hard at work looking after the gardens as they spring in to live. They spent some time creating insect sculptures from natural material to decorate the entrance to the site as part of our coronation decorations. The sculptures highlighted His Royal Highness's passion for the environment and climate change. As part of the celebrations, we also took part in the Big Help Out designed to encourage volunteering with recruitment activities on the Bank Holiday Monday.

Thank you to all staff, volunteers, and visitors for your continued support.

Exhibitions

Halima Cassell: From the Earth opened on 14 March 2023 with a private view and friends first view and has been popular with visitors. This major exhibition celebrates her work as one of Britain's leading contemporary sculptors and explores her evolving practice. A range of events linked with the exhibition are planned for its run to 18 June, these include curator's talks, an intimate In Conversation event with Halima and an outdoor evening celebrating women in jazz to close the exhibition.



Watts Ceramics: Living Traditions opened on 30 March and will run until 18 June 2023. Works in this exhibition draw on centuries-old techniques of slipware, delftware, Limoges porcelain, Staffordshire figures, Persian 12th-century tiles and William de Morgan lusterware, by leading makers including Shriyani Batuwitige, Katrin Moye and Hannah McAndrew and Chris Keenan. As always in the contemporary gallery all works will be for sale.

Reinvented: The Art of Upcycling will open in the contemporary gallery on 22 June and runs until 3 September. Making art from found or previously used material is not a new phenomenon, but it has become very fashionable with the current focus on green issues. The artists in this exhibition draw inspiration from old books and magazines, cardboard boxes, empty tin cans and bent cutlery, driftwood and sea-smoothed fragments of glass. Artists include Adam Robinson, Celia Lewis, Christine Hopkins, Dee Evans, Hannah Battershell, Naomi Beevers, Rachel Sumner, Stephane Godec, Tudor Evans and Zoe Rubens.