

This is Now

The Friendly Society of Artistic Labourers

Dorset Museum. Dorchester. March 24th. 2023

www.artisticlabourers.co.uk (f.s.a.l.2023)

How do we support young creatives to be brave, take risks, and work together to push the boundaries of what is possible?

Devised as a form of radical work experience *This is Now* is the fourth edition of *The Friendly Society of Artistic Labourers*. It brings over 100 students together to make new work that explores Dorset Museum's collection and looks at how creative practitioners learn from, and are inspired by the museum artefacts. And in turn, how contemporary creative responses breathe new life into the museum's collection.

We need art that challenges and provokes the status quo, questions what is important. Art that looks at the things we hold on to and the things we leave behind.

A huge thank you to the team at Dorset Museum for providing this wonderful platform for local, young people to have a voice, the staff at Weymouth College for going above and beyond to support the project, and of course the students for making it happen.

Simon Lee Dicker



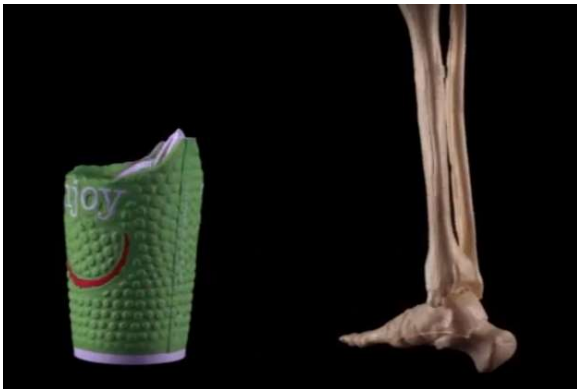
Image credit; Joel Chester Fildes





Entrance Hall

Traces - Spinning Objects Video



The Photography team looked at a number of different objects throughout the museum, settling on the Roman footprints, cast in an early version of concrete. Taking this as their starting point the team reinterpreted the footprint to be an echo of time, leaving a mark in our surroundings, the things we leave behind, human impact on landscape.

Using found objects and their surroundings the team responded in a variety of ways using photographic techniques such as photograms, photocopying, zine making and stop motion.

The result is a collection of responses that acknowledges our relationship between the natural and manmade.

Acheson Atrium – Main Stairwell

Future Archaeology - Sounds of Now



This sound installation can be experienced throughout all the floors of the museum and is split across three channels to surround you with the 'sounds of now'. This piece was generated by recording sounds from around the Weymouth area, collaged together to create an audio of 'Now'. This soundscape samples from the natural and the urban environment to generate a record of Weymouth and how we experience it today.

Library Stairwell [cafe]

Future Archaeology - Concrete Clothes



A sculpture piece exploring the over consumption and fossilisation of the fast fashion industry, created by dipping clothing in concrete. Playing with the idea of what we might leave behind for future generations. This piece also plays with the idea of museum practice through the use of zip ties, to bind the clothes together, this practice can be seen utilised throughout the museum. Fast fashion is one of the largest phenomena of our generation, with pressure from us the consumers, to keep up with trends. By fossilising these garments they become frozen, discarded by their consumers.

This Is Now Documentary (playing continuously)

A film produced by the Media team documenting and showcasing the evolution and creative working of this year's festival exploits by the Friendly Society of Artistic Labourers.

Victorian Hall

Fragmented Narrative – Textiles Fragments Hanging



Within the fragments of history at the Museum, the Textiles team were drawn to the large mosaics, and the way that the whole narrative was missing key pieces of information, filled with voids of white. What did those sections originally contain? Where have they gone? Why have they gone?

Examples of the different mending processes employed in restoration and preservation were then observed all around the Museum – stitched, glued, supported, filled, reinforced. This idea of fragments being broken apart over time and then being mended back together to tell a narrative was instantly interesting. It got the team thinking about what parts of current life they would want to preserve, and what they would want to leave out, for future generations to piece together.

Through a progressive two-week experience, the teamed worked to explore sustainable techniques that could be used to reflect the deterioration of the natural environment. You will see details of mending in the construction amongst the reclaimed fabrics and materials, recycled papers and connecting threads, with plastic intertwined to show how it is embedded within our world.

The resulting piece is large in scale and confronts you in its hanging form. The team invite you to get up close and appreciate the finer details contained within it, just as they did when exploring the mosaic.

Future Archaeology – Concretion Sculptures



The Fine Art [3D] team were provoked by the idea that much of what will be excavated in the future, as remnants of the twentieth and twenty-first century, will be the detritus and non-biodegradable products which litter the Earth and our Oceans. The team collected discarded items both in Weymouth Town Centre and the Weymouth College site. The results are a series of sculptures that worked with the found objects and the geological process of concretions **[masses of matter embedded within rock layers that take shape as the elements settle]**.

The team want to shock people by showing what a mess we are all making of our planet and the legacy that will be left. These sculptures reflect the context of NOW.

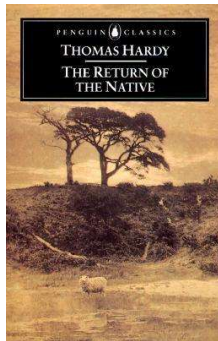
Traces - Photogram Print and Slideshow



A second series of work by the Photography team, this work is a series of photograms and scans depicting plastics and other non-biodegradable items likely to be left behind by our generation and fossilised. Inspired by the core samples in the Dorset Museum that feature plastics as a major element of the top layer.

It highlights our destructive consumerism and reminds us of the effect our wasteful behaviours are having on today's world and the future. Throughout these images the items are carefully organised, mirroring the approach used within the museum to display artefacts.

The Friendly Society of Artistic Labourers Band (6.20pm and 7.40pm)



The Reddleman – Llewana Mathews

The Reddleman is a character in Thomas Hardy's 'The Return of the Native'. The inspiration to write this song comes from exhibits in the Thomas Hardy gallery which show aspects of Victorian rural Dorset. In the story, the Reddleman (Diggory Venn) travels the county supplying farmers with a red mineral called redden which is used to dye sheep. He is stained completely red from his work but wants to marry another character in the book, Thomasin Yeobright despite the fact that she refused to marry him two years before. The song hopes to capture the imagery and character of The Reddleman.



Warrior God – Charlotte Grinstead

'Warrior God' is inspired by the story of the Ridgeway Vikings, Viking skeletons found in a mass grave near Weymouth in 2009 and now displayed in the Ancient Dorset Gallery. The lyrics are written from the perspective of a Goddess watching over her kingdom. In the song, the people of the kingdom decide to invade the neighbouring country and the Goddess goes with them in a human form. They end up losing the resulting battle and she gets trapped as an immortal human, watching as her kingdom fades into obscurity and she is forgotten.



The Horse – Alesia Mallinson

This song is inspired by a painting on display at the Museum called 'Katie on Josephine' by Gertrude Mary Powys (1877-1952) who was a famous impressionist painter based in the West Country. It simply features a girl on a horse (it turns out that this is her daughter), The lyrics come from imagination to represent the scene and bring it to life.

The Lulworth Gallery - Natural Dorset

Living Statue - Cyril Day's butterfly collection (Living statue will perform at regular intervals through the evening)



Based on Cyril Day's butterfly collection this work aims to create a bridge between the living and animated performance and the pinned forms in the artefact. To reflect the way butterflies are appreciated for their beauty and the way they symbolise a soul. Linking to the theme *This Is Now*, butterflies are often represented on social media platforms; butterflies are a common theme with the use of filters in order to enhance physical appearance as well as an aesthetic way to personalise photos and capture memories.

Being covered in butterflies is intended to look editorial, it also relates to themes based on the Garden of Eden and the story of how Adam and Eve lived in the natural world and in contrast, how we live today.

Living Statue - Mary Anning (Living statue will perform at regular intervals through the evening)



Mary Anning was a fossil collector and palaeontologist. During the time she was alive she made countless discoveries across the Jurassic Coast, she is now finally receiving the recognition she deserves for her work. In my performance I will be dressed as Mary Anning engaging with the examples of her work, finally on display for her to enjoy.

Song – As The World Caves In (7.25pm and 8.35)

Responding to *Commonplace* the book by Mary Anning, the team created this song from her story of the world ending and of her last day on earth.

Living Statue - Quarry Men (Living statue will perform at regular intervals through the evening)



Contrasting with traditional renderings of masculinity and the generalised stereotype that men worked in labour, they don't cry, and the rigid code of the career's men could pursue. This painting by Alfred Palmer of Quarrymen contrasts with today's society, where men are allowed to explore different aspects of work without judgement or abuse. *This is now*.

Traces - Zine on footprint

An imaginary narrative juxtaposing current day Weymouth seaside with the scenes that would have greeted a roman soldier. Produced using photography methods and written word, with Japanese stab binding.

John White Learning Centre

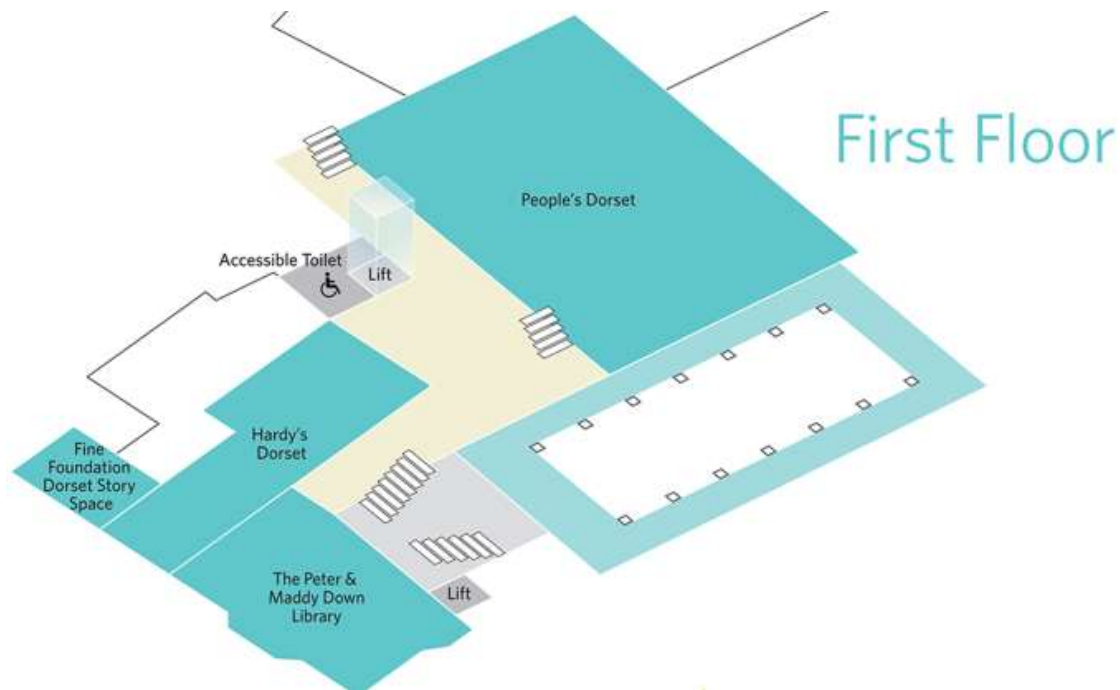
Representing – Interactive Map



Research from sources such as ancient DNA shows that the Beaker culture brought Bronze Age and pottery technology to Britain was connected to a migration that almost completely replaced the island's earlier inhabitants.

Around 4,500 years ago, a new, bell-shaped pottery style appeared in Iberia, in present-day Spain and Portugal. These 'bell-beakers' quickly spread across Europe, reaching Britain fewer than 100 years later.

The Fine Art [2D] team utilised ideas such as trade, migration, interaction, patterns and movement and these have been integrated into an interactive artwork that reflects the history of how the Beaker people influenced and changed Britain.



Peoples Dorset

Cataloguing Now – Artists Books, Zine and Drypoint Prints



How can you prepare for the afterlife in 2023? This is the question the visual communication team sets out to answer.....

Inspired by the Portesham Mirror, the team set to work exploring how grave goods could be considered in the present day. Questionnaires were completed by fellow students explaining what they would need or want in their afterlife.

Referencing the museum's practice and archiving methods, the work enables active participation in the discovery of what modern grave goods could represent. 30 archive boxes, each containing an artist's book, which reflects one individual's responses to the questionnaire.

You are invited to put on white gloves to examine the boxes and the contents.

The colours and aesthetics of the Portesham Mirror informed two further artworks; Gilded dry points of modern grave goods.

A "zine" has been designed and printed utilising artwork created by the group.

See also "Top Trumps" game is ready to play in the [Fine Foundation Dorset Story Space](#)

Performance - Bench Dance (6.40pm and 8.00pm)

Originally built in 1899, these Victorian seaside benches are a staple of Weymouth promenade. A replica that stands in the Peoples Dorset gallery inspired the Dance. Using this replica as a performance space and interactive prop, the dancers will perform this choreographed work which explores imagined meetings and scenarios at the bench and references dance styles through the ages.

Fashion Reinterpretation - Slideshow



Drawing inspiration from the Hardy exhibition, paintings, objects, sculptures and of course the characters that Hardy created for his books, in particular the Illustration for Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Ernest Borough Johnson (1891)

This work re-imagines a number of different characters from the Hardy books, as a series of fashion-based images which alter the course of narratives, reimagining them in the modern context of *This Is Now!*

Hardy's Dorset Room

Living Statue - Katharine Hardy's red dress *(Living statue will perform at regular intervals through the evening)*



Inspired by Katharine Hardy's red dress, this living statue shines a light on the expectations of women in Hardy's era to wear modest and restrictive clothing, for example the colour red was seen as disrespectful. However, red is now seen as a colour that represents power. The statue will be dressed in a red suit to show that women now are able to wear what was once seen as "men's" clothing and that the colour has no negative meaning. This performance highlights that women can wear clothes to empower and express themselves in any way they want to. The statue will represent Katharine Hardy writing a poem.

Living Statue - Rebecca Steward by Thomas Beach *(Living statue will perform at regular intervals through the evening)*



An oil painting by Thomas Beach, portrays a beautiful young woman, with the title of Rebecca Steward (1766-1859). This work is exploring how we capture and display beauty in the 21st century compared to the 18th century. Today, we open our phones and log onto Instagram to see an edited selfie of a beautiful model that fits the expectation of our beauty standards. On the surface, this seems to be wildly incomparable to portraits from the 18th century. However, it shows the progression of how as a society, we feel the need to capture beauty in its best form to display and 'prove'.

Fine Foundation Dorset Story Space

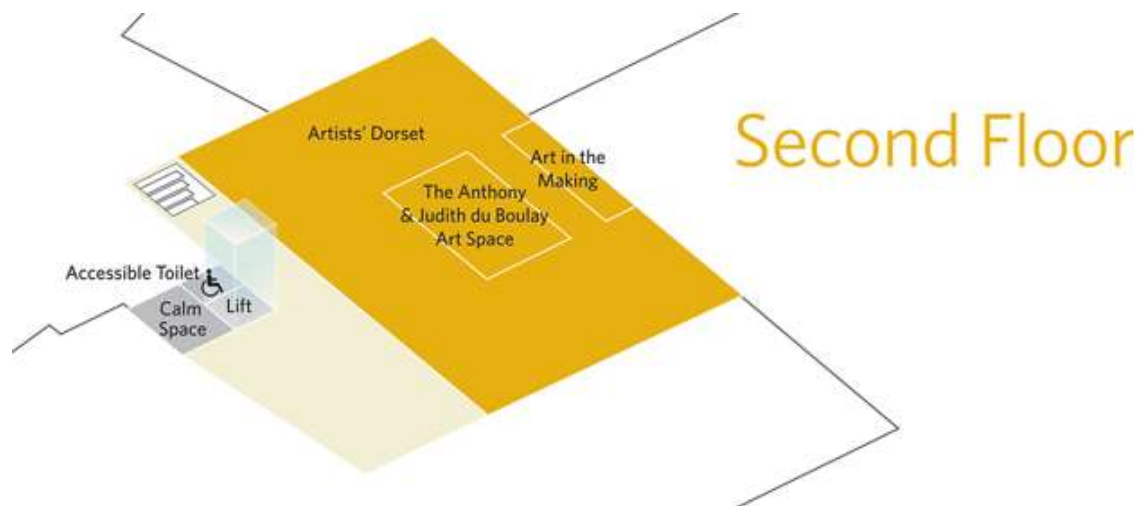
Performance - Alfred Wallis Auction Drama *(6.50pm and 8.10pm)*



Using non-traditional materials and with an untrained approach to painting, Arthur Wallis, a fisherman, shot to fame for his depictions of the fishing world before it was overtaken by modern practices and ships. Set in an auction room, this playlet begins with the sale of his painting "Fishing Boat with Two Masts and Yellow Sails" and the story reflects upon his work and its worth from a contemporary viewpoint.

Cataloguing Now - Grave Goods, Top Trumps

Another work by the Cataloguing Now, visual communication team who have responded to the interactivity they had observed when visiting a modern museum to create a set of Grave Goods "Top Trumps" playing cards. Visitors can play together and question the values attributed to modern day objects.



Artists Dorset

Performance - Frink Inspired Dance. (7.15pm and 8.25pm)



This choreography piece is based on the sculpture's created by Elisabeth Frink. The 'Artists Dorset' gallery holds the sculptures on which the dance is based. The sculptures by Elisabeth Frink were inspired by the war and this physical theatre piece echoes this. Elisabeth created the sculptures by using pieces of shards from aeroplanes which fell from the sky during this time. With the theme *This is Now*, this work refers to the Ukrainian war. The piece shows the effects of the war on different family members as well as soldiers who have to leave their families and fight for their countries. The sculptures form an important part of the performance, framing parts of the dance and then claiming attention with the use of lighting.

Traces – See plastic; animation

Stop motion animation from the Photography team highlighting the impact of plastic waste on our oceans, in particular VAPE waste.

Traces - Spin, Spin, Spin; animation

Experimental stop motion and soundscape responding to the notion of footprints in time.

EVENT PROGRAMME

6.20	Friendly Society of Artistic Labourers Band	Victorian Hall
6.40	Bench Dance	Peoples Dorset
6.50	Alfred Wallis Auction Drama	Fine Foundation Dorset Story Space
7.15	Frink Inspired Dance	Artists Dorset
7.45	As The World Caves In	The Lulworth Gallery
Living statues will perform at regular intervals throughout the evening		Hardy's Dorset Room The Lulworth Gallery
7.40	Friendly Society of Artistic Labourers Band	Victorian Hall
8.00	Bench Dance	Peoples Dorset
8.10	Alfred Wallis Auction Drama	Fine Foundation Dorset Story Space
8.25	Frink Inspired Dance	Artists Dorset
8.35	As The World Caves In	The Lulworth Gallery