



Bexley Heritage Trust unveils BEASTLY HALL

*From the home of the historic Queen's Beasts topiary at Hall Place & Gardens,
'a place where artists and creatures collide'*

28 March – 1 September 2013

Including internationally acclaimed artists: Francis Alÿs, Charles Avery, Peter Blake, Jodie Carey, Mat Collishaw, Dorothy Cross, Bouke de Vries, Tessa Farmer, Laura Ford, Nick Goss, Jonny Green, Rachel Goodyear, Thomas Grünfeld, Damien Hirst, Carsten Höller, Hyungkoo Lee, Sarah Lucas, Susie MacMurray, Rui Matsunaga, Damien Meade, Claire Morgan, Polly Morgan, Nina Saunders, Joana Vasconcelos, Carina Weidle, and Hugo Wilson.



Images from left to right: Thomas Grünfeld, *misfit (goat/fawn)*, 2001. Courtesy Hidde van Seggelen Gallery, London. Image © DACS/London, 2013. Photo: Lothar Schnepf; Damien Hirst, *Sacred Heart (with Hope)*, 2007 © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2013; Nina Saunders, *Fox with Issues*, 2012 © the artist.

Hall Place, the Tudor mansion situated in sixty-five acres of gardens in Bexley, north east Kent opens its doors to a collection of mythical creatures and world-famous artists in the new exhibition 'Beastly Hall'.

A show founded in the fantastical, Beastly Hall pays tribute to Hall Place's magnificent topiary lawn that features the historic Queen's Beasts, real and mythical creatures that were planted to mark the Queen's Coronation in 1953 and still stand proud today.

With curious parallels to these topiary beasts, the exhibition, curated by London-based curatorial collective Artwise, will feature contemporary 'creatures' imagined by artists along with subversive responses to the idea of beasts. Visitors will be treated to a mind-bending array of creations conjured up from the imaginations of artists such as Jake and Dinos Chapman, Joana Vasconcelos and Polly Morgan. Artists were invited to contribute new or adapt existing artworks and installations for display in the house and grounds, with new work shown in the UK for the first time from Danish artist Nina Saunders and Korean artist Hyungkoo Lee.

Pieces placed throughout the property challenge the concept of the 'beast' as the visitor progresses through the exhibition, from Thomas Grünfeld's hybrid taxidermy to the enchanting peacock feather installation, 'Spectacle', of Susie MacMurray. A sense of the humorous in Carina Weidel's preternatural 'Chicken Olympics' and Nina Saunder's 'Fox with Issues' contrasts with the poignancy of Laura Ford's large-scale sculptures, where recognisable characters usually at home in Beatrix Potter's stories become vagabonds in the courtyard of the museum.

Curating the 'beasts' were Artwise curators Dea Vanagan and Laura Culpan, who sought out pieces that responded in innovative and sensitive ways to create a special dialogue with the history of Hall Place.



“From Bosch to Dürer to Dali, the beast has been an undeniable part of art history,” explains Culpan. “Now, Beastly Hall brings together contemporary artists’ beasts to explore the minds and imaginations of both artist and viewer. From site-specific installation, to drawing, painting, video and sculpture, these real and imagined creatures will seek to surprise, delight and intrigue the visitors to Hall Place.”

Highlighting the context of the exhibition, Vanagan adds: “The laden history of Hall Place, built in 1540 of recycled stone from a disbanded monastery, provides a stimulating backdrop for Beastly Hall, which recollects and reforms common expectations of what is ‘beastly’. This exhibition invites visitors into a world of curious mutants where the creatures imagined by artists may not be as obvious to spot - from Mat Collishaw’s haunting sonic tree stumps of birds imitating chainsaws, to the eerily ordered flies in Claire Morgan’s visually explosive full-room installation.”

Caroline Worthington, Chief Executive of Bexley Heritage Trust commented: “We are delighted to unveil Beastly Hall at Hall Place. We know that it will certainly appeal to the curious, the art lovers – and anyone with a sense of adventure. We feel privileged to be showcasing works never seen before in the UK, alongside works from recognised names such as Damien Hirst and Carsten Höller. It is the latest in our series of innovative and engaging exhibitions as we aim to cement Hall Place as a must-visit destination and attracting more visitors from the capital and around the UK.”

Notes to Editors

Hall Place & Gardens

Hall Place is a Grade I listed Tudor country house with a 17th century courtyard, set in award-winning formal gardens. It features the Riverside Café and a gallery where local artists display their work. Displays include an introduction to the house’s history, a children’s gallery and a diverse and fascinating museum collection. Varied events programme and available for weddings and corporate hire.

Bexley Heritage Trust

Bexley Heritage Trust is a charitable organization with the mission to preserve and enhance the buildings, gardens and collections under its control, and to provide vibrant and viable cultural sites and activities for the education and enjoyment of everyone.

Artwise

Artwise is a London based curatorial collective and ideas studio, with a specialty in unique exhibitions, commissions, consultancy and bespoke creative projects. As an international concept studio, Artwise match clients with some of the most innovative thinking around today, supporting artistic excellence and championing cross-pollination between disciplines since 1996.
www.artwisecurators.com

PR and Media Enquiries

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twitter.com/BexleyHeritage **#beastlyhall**

Visitor Information

Opening hours

March 28 – September 1 (daily 10am-5pm, last entry 4.30pm)

Location

Beastly Hall, Hall Place & Gardens, Bourne Road, Bexley, Kent, DA5 1PQ

By Road

Just off the A2 at the Black Prince interchange 5 miles from Junction 2 of the M25 towards London. Free parking.

Train

From London via Cannon Street, Charing Cross, London Bridge.
Oyster card applicable route from London (fare zone 6)

Admission

Adults £7 Concessions £5 Family £20
National Trust members discount applies
Admission is free with National Art Pass
Gift Aid your ticket for unlimited entry for the duration of the exhibition