

John Makepeace

Enriching the Language of Furniture

18 September – 29 October 2010
at The Devon Guild of Craftsmen,
Bovey Tracey, Devon, TQ13 9AF



An exhibition of outstanding furniture by the designer John Makepeace launches at The Devon Guild of Craftsmen this September as part of a UK wide tour.

'John Makepeace – Enriching the Language of Furniture' is the maker's first solo show, covering work from 50 years at the forefront of British design. It brings together 23 pieces from collections in the UK and abroad, some not previously seen by the public.

Key pieces have come from the Victoria and Albert Museum whose Curator of Twentieth Century Furniture and Product Design, Jana Scholze will open the exhibition. Other exhibits include 'Ripple' - a chest with wave forms carved into the surface of oaks originally planted in 1740 and harvested in 1980. The 'Phoenix' chair combines indigenous holly, oak and burr elm evoking nature's capacity for renewal. More recently 10 'Elliptical' tables have been created out of one elm tree and 3 benches made from the creamy white wood of a single sycamore. The show will tour to leading venues in England and Scotland including Somerset House in London.

The exhibition is curated by Saffron Wynne and features a specially commissioned work by film-maker Robert Golden. Other resources, including a full-colour catalogue, present different aspects of the story of an astute businessman, educator, conservationist and ambassador for the crafts. Inspired early on by Danish designers, the young Makepeace built his own workshop and soon earned national acclaim for retail products for Heals, the Centenary Dining Room for Liberty's and winning design competition entries. He gained international renown in the 1970s for his educational programme at Parnham College which integrated teaching of fine craftsmanship in wood with design and entrepreneurship. Of the two-hundred alumni, Sean Sutcliffe of Benchmark, Konstantin Grcic and Rod Wales of Wales & Wales are examples.

Through the 1980s and '90s, while directing Parnham College and running his own studio, Makepeace began to address some of forestry's most pressing economic concerns. Having been able to buy a 350-acre forest, named Hooke Park, 4 miles from Parnham in 1983 Makepeace brought together foresters, chemists, material scientists, structural engineers and designers to research and develop sustainable new technologies and building methods. Award-winning buildings at the Hooke Park campus are proof of his successful collaborations. Since 2000 Makepeace has been leading initiatives with the V&A to encourage craftspeople and businesses to be more adventurous in their approach to design.

Makepeace's work is represented in numerous collections including V&A, London, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Museum für Kunsthandwerk, Frankfurt and The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Makepeace became an OBE in 1988 for services to furniture design and was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Furniture Makers Company, London in 2010. He now works to commission for clients from his base in Dorset and is an Honorary Fellow of the Devon Guild of Craftsmen, organisers of the exhibition and tour.

"As a designer and a maker, I am constantly searching for more eloquent concepts for furniture. My objective is to achieve freer, lighter, stronger and more sculptural forms better suited to their function and more expressive of what is unique about each commission. My passion is to create masterpieces that enrich people's lives and the language of furniture."

John Makepeace 2010

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A Devon Guild of Craftsmen Touring Exhibition

NOTES

Images: 'Ripple' chest & 'Phoenix' chair by John Makepeace. Courtesy of John Makepeace Furniture.

Tour Schedule

The Devon Guild of Craftsmen, Devon	18 Sept - 29 Oct 2010
Harley Gallery, Wellbeck, Worksop, Nottinghamshire	7 Nov - 24 Dec 2010
Collins Gallery, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow	15 Jan - 5 March 2011
Somerset House, London	16 March - 15 April 2011
Crafts Study Centre, Farnham, Hampshire	26 April - 16 July 2011
Lotherton Hall, Aberford, Leeds, Yorkshire	23 Sept - 20 Nov 2011

Press

Launch 17 September 2010, 6 pm at The Devon Guild of Craftsmen, TQ13 9AF.

Champagne reception at 6.30 pm and opening by Jana Scholze, Curator of Twentieth Century Furniture and Product Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Pre-September 17, 2010 - To access a selection of hi-res images, extended information for press use and arrange interviews, go to <http://www.watershedpr.co.uk/newsroom> (client-DGC) or contact: 01308 420 785

Post September 17, 2010 - To access a selection of hi-res images, extended information for press use and arrange interviews, go to www.crafts.org.uk or contact: simon.williams@crafts.org.uk / 01626 832223

The Devon Guild of Craftsmen is the largest contemporary crafts centre in the South West. It is a Membership organisation and educational charity which supports established and emerging makers and provides professional development, marketing and learning opportunities. Its mission is to educate and develop further understanding of contemporary crafts. **John Makepeace** *Enriching the Language of Furniture* is curated by the Guild's Exhibitions Officer Saffron Wynne.

John Makepeace Furniture is based in Beaminster, Dorset where John heads a team of craftsmen who have worked with him for over 30 years. His design studio accesses indigenous woodlands allowing naturally seasoned, sustainable timbers to be used to produce bespoke furniture. John undertakes commissions for private, commercial or public projects. His studio aims to extend the boundaries of function, structure and expression beyond those normally associated with furniture.

Acknowledgements

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