

# Devon Guild of Craftsmen

PRESS RELEASE

## John Maltby & Breon O'Casey

*An exhibition celebrating the work of two renowned South West artists*

**Saturday 7 May – Sunday 19 June**

**Devon Guild of Craftsmen, Riverside Mill, Bovey Tracey, Devon**

Two artists are sharing the spotlight at the Devon Guild this May. Their friendship is also the basis for this combined show of ceramics and prints.

John Maltby is a nationally known ceramicist now living near Crediton in Devon. Fifty of his highly collectable sculptures will be on show. They are displayed with the striking prints and paintings by his friend Breon, artist and son of Irish playwright Sean O'Casey.

A naïve earthiness characterises both their work but in different media: two dimensions and clay. When asked about exhibiting his work at the Devon Guild last year, John suggested they share the stage. He knew their work would sit together beautifully.

John trained as a sculptor in stone and clay. He went on to teach painting and also worked with the potter David Leach in Bovey Tracey. By the 1970s he had moved away from functional pieces to more aesthetic forms which by the 1990s (influenced by Klee, Leger and Picasso) had evolved into birds, queens, kings, angels and boats dusted in muddy ochres and dipped in slips. They have says John: 'a new variety of idea' which the critic Andy Christian describes more darkly as: 'a shocking crew, ragged ravens, fishermen with bleak, bearded faces ... tigers with barred teeth ... primal beings'. The work is a personal vision of English traditions: storytelling, pirates, gardens and the death of kings.

Breon's simple, symbolic prints have similar references - the French school: Matisse, Miro and Giacometti, African masks, Celtic treasure and the caves of Lascaux. As well as being a printmaker Breon also paints, weaves and was a respected jeweller. As a boy he attended Dartington Hall school where his enthusiasm for arts and crafts began. There 'I learned to saw and hammer; to think with my hands as well as my head.' In the mid-1950s he moved to St Ives where Hepworth taught him to carve marble and Hugh Stoneman introduced him to printmaking. Breon has lived in Cornwall with his family ever since.

Andy Christian says: 'There is still something of the cave painter about Breon. The leaf invokes the tree. The cut circle recalls the moon or a hill.' Most of the prints here are expressive, uncomplicated linocuts or carborundum prints. Breon rubs and overlays natural colours: lichen orange and sage greens which complement the rich tones of John's unglazed stoneware. Their work inhabits a world which invites viewers to travel from dream to abstraction and back again.

**OPENING:** Exhibition runs 7 May – 19 June. Open daily 10am-5.30pm. Works are for sale. FREE ADMISSION.

**LAUNCH:** Friday 6 May 6-8pm. Opened by Gwyn Miles, Director, Somerset House Trust (6pm). John will also give an illustrated talk at the Devon Guild about his life and working techniques on 25 May at 6.30pm.

**PRESS:** High resolution images available on disk. **Contact:** Simon Williams (Marketing Officer) 01626 832223 [simon.williams@crafts.org.uk](mailto:simon.williams@crafts.org.uk)



THE DEVON GUILD OF CRAFTSMEN

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**IMAGES:** (top to bottom) John Maltby, 'Royal Barge' (ceramic stoneware); Breon O'casey, 'Six Hills' (print); John Maltby, 'King and Bird' (ceramic stoneware); Breon O'Casey, 'Figure with Stars' (print)



**The Devon Guild of Craftsmen** is the largest contemporary craft centre in the South West and a membership organisation for craftspeople from the region. Housed in the grade II listed Riverside Mill on the edge of Dartmoor, the gallery exhibits work by designers and makers of national and international standing. The Guild is also an educational charity which aims to educate and inspire new makers and designers through its regular programme of activities in schools and the community. [www.crafts.org.uk](http://www.crafts.org.uk)