

## Press Release

### **Artisans of Dartmoor exhibition reveals a thriving creative community**

Friday 13 March- Monday 3 April

Riverside Gallery, Devon Guild of Craftsmen, Bovey Tracey, Devon TQ13 9AF

Sculptors and soap-makers, potters and painters, honey- farmers and hide-tanners - Dartmoor has one of the most talented artisan communities in the UK.

In this new Riverside Gallery exhibition at the Devon Guild in Bovey Tracey, travel photographer and journalist Suzy Bennett goes behind the workshop walls to produce an intimate collection of photographs of some of the moor's finest artists, makers and producers.

Among Suzy's subjects are Jane Deane, a textile designer who breeds her own silk worms, Rima Staines, an artist who, with her story-teller partner Tom Hiron, transformed a rusty old truck into an off-grid travelling theatre, and Luke Shepherd, a sculptor who teaches London surgeons the art behind reconstructive surgery.

Several further Devon Guild Members are included. Printmaker Anita Reynolds, who runs printing courses on Dartmoor from a mobile 'print bus', is photographed atop a windswept tor. Botanical painter Rosie Sanders is in her garden studio working on her latest artwork – a giant Dandelion, blown by a gentle breeze. Dartmoor photographer Chris Chapman, famed for his candid photographs of the moor's rural communities, has the camera turned on him, while felt-maker Yuli Somme is sewing in her studio chapel, dwarfed by its huge stained glass windows.

Some of Dartmoor's most internationally-acclaimed artists also come under the gaze of Suzy's lens. There's Lord of the Rings illustrator Alan Lee in his studio, surrounded by easels and drawing boards and walls covered in Tolkien originals. Sculptor Heather Jansch is photographed tending to one of the life-sized driftwood horses for which she is famed. Sculptor and Devon Guild President, Peter Randall-Page, is captured, constructing one of his mighty stone sculptures.

*"Dartmoor has one of the highest concentrations of artists and artisans in the UK, and it's growing all the time," says Suzy. "There's something about living in a vast open space that gives people a creative freedom that's hard to find in built-up areas."*



Much of the emphasis of Suzy's project is on Dartmoor's new breed of artisans: young people who are breathing new life into traditional skills and trades. Potters, painters, dressmakers, weavers - they are all here, melding old techniques with new, putting their own spins on old classics.

*"There has been a huge resurgence of interest in handmade goods - and Dartmoor is fast becoming one of the leading producers,"* says Suzy

*"This project shows what it takes to be maker in a world of mass production. We are increasingly looking for products that last and have their own histories. These photographs show exactly where – and by whom - Dartmoor's products are made."*

More photographs from Suzy's project will be on The Dartmoor Artisan Trail website, a sister project which she has set up to help promote Dartmoor's arts scene to a national and international audience. When it launches in March 2017, the trail will allow people to visit their favourite artists, try their hand at new skills and buy products directly from the maker.

***Exhibition is open daily at the Guild, 10am-5.30pm. All work is for sale. Entry is free.***

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Notes:

To find out more about the trail, please visit: [www.dartmoor-artisan-trail.co.uk](http://www.dartmoor-artisan-trail.co.uk) The curator/photographer [www.suzybennett.com](http://www.suzybennett.com) Suzy's Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DartmoorArtisan> Facebook: [www.facebook.com/DartmoorArtisanTrail](http://www.facebook.com/DartmoorArtisanTrail) Instagram: [www.instagram.com/dartmoor.artisan.trail/](http://www.instagram.com/dartmoor.artisan.trail/)

**Related events:** Saturday 4 March 4-6pm ***opening event & meet the artist***, free

Saturday 25 March 2pm: ***artist's talk by Suzy Bennett*** (free but advance book a place on 01626 832223)

**Images:** (top) Images by Suzy Bennett: Above: Anita Reynolds, printmaker; (below) Luke Shepherd, sculptor; Yuli Somme, feltmaker,

**Devon Guild of Craftsmen:** Based in Bovey Tracey the Devon Guild is the most popular contemporary crafts venue and charity in the South West (100,000+ visitors annually) and is the hub of local and creative communities. With a reputation and influence that extends nationally, the exhibitions and events are fun, free, open to all, inclusive and inspiring. They run an acclaimed educational outreach programme to schools and communities and house two galleries and a shop with an exciting range of constantly changing displays. There's a lively, friendly café with a rooftop terrace, alongside the River Bovey. The Devon Guild is involved in two popular annual festivals that have helped put Bovey Tracey on the map: ***The Contemporary Craft Festival*** in June and ***Nourish Festival*** of food, music and craft every September.. [www.crafts.org.uk](http://www.crafts.org.uk) [DGC Facebook](#) [DGC Twitter](#)