

River & Rowing Museum to present major exhibitions by local artists this spring: Forest to Furniture and Artists & Studios



- *Two highly anticipated exhibitions open this spring at the River & Rowing Museum*
- *Britain's 'finest craftsman', internationally renowned Philip Koomen, opens **Philip Koomen: Forest to Furniture**, 14 February - 7 June*
- *Award-winning photographer, Simon Murison-Bowie, opens **Artists & Studios** 7 March - 31 May*
- *Both artists are exhibiting as part of Oxfordshire Artweeks*
- Address: The River & Rowing Museum, Mill Meadows, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1BF
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The River & Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames, is delighted to announce an exhibition programme including the work of two award-winning local residents, exploring the interconnection between creative processes and the environment that surrounds them.

Philip Koomen: Forest to Furniture

Opens 14 February until 7 June

To celebrate 40 years of working in Henley-On-Thames, Philip Koomen's new exhibition at the River & Rowing Museum examines the relationship between forestry, design and craftsmanship in wood and the creative process.

The work on display will demonstrate the rich diversity of furniture by this designer and master craftsman, acknowledged as one of Britain's finest craftsmen and recognised for 'excellence in design' by Her Majesty the Queen. The exhibition will survey a wide range of

commissions, including ecclesiastical work from Dorchester Abbey through to exquisite Egyptian-style cabinets.

The exhibition will showcase his extraordinary achievements in a career spanning 40 years. Projects on display will illustrate the evolution of Philip's work, including his pioneering semi-bespoke range from the 1980s, his sculptural furniture from the 1990s - notably the iconic *Pondlife* bench - and the development of a local cycle system to source under-utilized timber from local woodlands. A highlight and one of Koomen's most recent pieces, the *OneOak* table made from a 222-year-old oak from Blenheim Palace, will be housed in the Museum alongside other award-winning designs.

The exhibition will include Koomen's work with lesser-known species of wood. Two major commissions from the International Hay Literary Festival, including a model of the 8-metre-long *Wave & Splash* bench in tulipwood and the chair design for the stage furniture, will be on display.

The exhibition also features a series of experiments in wood, *Ideas in the Making*, a research project supported by Arts Council England, which shows how ideas begin and questions the boundaries between art, craft and design.

Koomen has developed a range of interactive adult and children's activities in collaboration with the Oxfordshire-based woodland charity, Sylva Foundation. This includes a talk and activity morning, *The OneOak Project: following the full life story of one oak tree*, by Jen Hurst, on 21 March to demonstrate the link between forestry and wooden objects.

Artists & Studios: Private Views by Simon Murison-Bowie

Opens 7 March until 31 May

The winner of Oxfordshire Artweeks' Mary Moser Prize, Simon Murison-Bowie, will be showing rare images of artists working in their studios, revealing the relationship between them and the space they inhabit during their creative process.

The exhibition will explore workspaces that have become special 'natural habitats' to the people who create them and create in them. This show looks at the wealth of talent in Oxfordshire, highlighting some of the region's finest artists. The photographs extend the physical experience of Philip Koomen's exhibition into the studios and workshops of other

artists and crafts people, giving a glimpse of the absorption of the individual involved in creative processes of all kinds.

The award-winning River & Rowing Museum, ranked in the Top 50 Museums in the world by The Times, looks set for another exciting year of exhibitions, workshops and activities with a jam-packed programme for the whole family.

Visit rrm.co.uk for more information.

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The River & Rowing Museum

The River & Rowing Museum (www.rrm.co.uk), an independent charity, is one of the UK's leading regional and sporting Museums, attracting over 115,000 visitors a year. The Museum also has a purpose built education centre visited by over 20,000 children and adults a year. The Museum provides superb value for money. Tickets are £9.50 for adults and £7.50 for children and provide free access for one year. The Museum celebrates four themes explored through a wide variety of exhibitions and events across four galleries and special exhibitions:

- The past, present and future of the River Thames
- The historic riverside community of Henley-on-Thames
- The international sport of rowing
- The Wind in the Willows

Since opening in August 1998 the Museum has received numerous awards including the National Heritage/NPI Museum of the Year award, the Sandford Award For Heritage Education and the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge.

Location, opening and ticket information

- The River & Rowing Museum, Mill Meadows, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1BF. Tel. 01491 415600
- The Museum, terrace café and shop are open every day from 10am - 5.30pm in summer and 10am - 5pm in the winter
- Tickets give FREE admission for a whole year!
- Admission is just £9.50 for adults, £7.50 for concessions & children aged four and over, FREE for children under four

The River & Rowing Museum is part of the Thames Valley Museums Group (TVMG) Family Friendly initiative - a scheme that brings together 29 Museums across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to promote their popular appeal to the whole family.

The River & Rowing Museum is a proud signatory to the Kids in Museums Manifesto and was longlisted for the Family Friendly Museum of the Year Award in 2011.

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