

“MESSENGER” THE UK’S LARGEST BRONZE SCULPTURE TO BE INSTALLED IN PLYMOUTH IN SPRING 2019

*The Maquette for Messenger sculpture and more information will be available at Beaux Arts
London from January 2019.*

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Artist Joseph Hillier stands beneath his unfinished Theatre Royal Plymouth sculpture “Messenger” at Castle Fine Arts Foundry in Wales. The sculpture will be installed in Plymouth in Spring 2019.

Theatre Royal Plymouth has announced that “Messenger” the UK’s largest bronze sculpture will be installed in front of the theatre on Royal Parade in Plymouth in Spring 2019. The monumental sculpture catches a young actor in mid-performance, embodying the energy and creativity at the heart of the Theatre Royal and cultural life in Plymouth.

Weighing in at nine and a half tonnes with a height of seven metres (23ft) and nine metres (30ft) wide, Messenger is the largest lost-wax cast bronze sculpture to be cast in the UK and by far the largest bronze sculpture by volume at 25.6 metres cubed. Commissioned by the Theatre Royal Plymouth as part of a 7.5million pound regeneration project which saw the theatre reopened in 2013, “Messenger” has been created by the acclaimed contemporary artist and sculptor Joseph Hillier.

Hillier’s inspiration for the sculpture came from a split-second pose struck by an actor during rehearsals for Othello, Theatre Royal Plymouth’s award-winning and explosive co-production with Frantic Assembly in 2014. The sculpture has been created using 3D scans taken from an actor poised before bursting forward into the choreographed chaos of the play. Although gargantuan in scale, the pose of the sculpture is small, crouched and loaded with the potential to spring forward at any

moment. A monument to creativity, Theatre Royal Plymouth's sculpture will reflect the rapid pace of cultural and economic development in the city and its creative future ambitions.

Joseph Hillier said: *"The title, "Messenger" refers to the pivotal role the performer takes to breathe life into the words of a writer and the intent of a director. The sculpture celebrates the potential of creativity as a dynamic catalyst for change. This work offers a young powerful woman, a potent force, about to transform the world by her actions. The actor carries the voice of her playwright or director - she carries a message. It's a metaphor for what great theatre does."*

Messenger is currently in the process of being cast at the Castle Fine Arts Foundry in the tiny Welsh village of Llanrhaeadr-Ym-Mochnant, using the ancient technique of lost wax casting, and is due for completion in Spring 2019. Made from over 200 bronze panels, each section of the sculpture must be cast individually before being welded together by over 30 master craftsmen at the foundry.

While monumental in scale, Hillier is keen that the digital design of the sculpture, made using 360-degree Computer Aided Design (CAD), will be clearly visible when unveiled, showing a true marriage of technology and tradition, old and new.

The Theatre hopes that the sculpture will be installed and unveiled to the public in Spring 2019.

How is *Messenger* being made?

Designed using 360-degree Computer Aided Design (CAD), the software used to scan the actor's body, there are over 14 million polygons within the structure of the sculpture. The first step of the process was to carve sections of the 30ft sculpture from a giant block of polyurethane foam. Pattern cutters broke down Joseph's design for the sculpture into the 200 panels that make up the sculpture. A giant cutting machine was then programmed to carve each panel into polyurethane using a drill bit revolving at 7,000 times a minute. Once all 200 panels were cut they were transported to the Castle Fine Arts Foundry in Wales.

The foundry creates a silicon rubber mould around each polyurethane panel to make a negative version of each of the 200 panels which are then hand-painted with layers of wax. A shell of ceramic is then built around the wax. This is fired in a kiln, which burns off the wax but leaves behind a hard-ceramic surround. Ingots of bronze are then heated to 1200 degrees C before the molten bronze is poured into the new ceramic mould. Once set, the ceramic shell is broken away leaving behind the bronze version of the pattern. Once each of the 200 bronze panels are forged, they are then welded together to create the finished sculpture.

Joseph Hillier said: *"By combining contemporary technology with ancient sculptural processes this piece of sculpture will harness a moment from the work of the Theatre Royal Plymouth and present it at a monumental scale in bronze for perpetuity. The work is an attempt to capture a vital, fleeting moment from a performance and hold it as solid tangible form, to stand as a monument to creativity, to transform the way Plymouth is seen and its potential felt."*

Adrian Vinken, chief executive of the Theatre Royal Plymouth said: *"We always knew we wanted this piece to have scale and impact but it's only when you come here and see a small section of it and feel the excitement and pride from the guys working on it, when it starts to really dawn just want a big undertaking the project is and how many people are involved in bringing it into reality. It's a bit mind blowing really."*

Notes to Editors

Stats about Messenger

Weight 9.5 tonnes

Height: 7 metres

Width: 8.7 metres

Depth 5.5 metres

Volume in Cubic Metres 25.6 metres cubed

Made from **200 individual bronze panels**

Will take **352 days** to cast and fettle at the Castle Fine Arts Foundry in Wales

Each individual panel weighs **35 kilos**

In total **30** craftsmen have worked on the construction

Sculpture creation:

Artist: Joseph Hillier

Foundry for casting of the sculpture: Castle Fine Arts Foundry: 30 craftsmen and women working directly on piece.

Pattern Cutters: Bakers Patterns: 6 employees

Scale Model Making: EUROPAC: 3 people

Total 3 businesses subcontracted, 40 people directly involved in creation of artwork

About Joseph Hillier

Born in Cornwall in 1974, Hillier studied at Falmouth College of Art, then at Newcastle University where he held a research post for several years. In 2000 Hillier received the 'Year of the Artist Award', from the Arts Council of England whilst also completing his earliest publicly sited projects. Elected associate member of the Royal British Society of Sculptors in 2004, Hillier has been widely exhibited in galleries and sculpture parks. He has seventeen large-scale permanent installations nationally and internationally. The tallest of these, In Our Image (2009), stands at 16.7m tall. In 2013 Hillier's work was selected as a finalist in the national sculpture prize, at Broomhill, and for the summer exhibition at the Royal Academy. Hillier who grew up in Cornwall, lives in a rural village near Newcastle in the UK, where he has purpose built a studio to enable the creation of large-scale works for exhibitions and commissions.

About Adrian Vinken

Adrian Vinken, Chief Executive of the Theatre Royal Plymouth has been awarded an OBE in this year's New Years Honours list in recognition of his record in innovation and successful leadership in the Arts and Urban Regeneration. In the early 1980s Adrian led the development of the pioneering Leadmill music venue and arts centre in a derelict flour mill in Sheffield. The success of the project catalysed the creation of Sheffield's 'Cultural Industries Quarter' and the regeneration of a large area of its city centre. The Leadmill also won BBC television's national 'It's My City' award for the best arts project in the UK. After more projects developing derelict historic buildings for new community uses, Adrian moved to Plymouth in 1991 to manage the Theatre Royal at a time of acute financial crisis. His new management approach soon reversed the Theatre's fortunes leading it to become the best attended and most productive producing theatre in the UK with the lowest subsidy per visit and an enviable national reputation. He has also overseen Plymouth Pavilions progress from strength to strength as the South West's premiere concert venue which now attracts top flight acts from around the globe. In recent years Adrian helped to mastermind the construction of TR2, the Theatre Royal's 8 million Production and Education Centre on Plymouth's waterfront. In picking up a raft of international architectural awards, TR2 was recognised as the UK's 2003 'Building of the Year'.

About Theatre Royal Plymouth

Theatre Royal Plymouth is the largest and best attended regional producing theatre in the UK with an extensive list of work presented across three performance spaces. TRP specialises in the production of new plays alongside the presentation of a broad range of theatre – including classic and contemporary drama, musicals, opera, ballet and dance. Theatre Royal Plymouth also collaborates with some of the best artists and theatre-makers in the UK and internationally. TRP regularly co-produces with Frantic Assembly, Ontroerend Goed, Paines Plough and Told By An Idiot. South West theatre company The Wrong Crowd are TRP's resident company. Alongside TRP's own productions it regularly launches national touring productions including Swan Lake (Matthew Bourne) and War Horse (National Theatre). TRP is a registered charity, deeply committed to its community and providing creative opportunities for people of all ages. Through its Engagement and

Learning programme, it reaches out to people from every walk of life, bringing the magic of theatre into schools and community venues.

About Frantic Assembly

An award-winning theatre company led by Artistic Director Scott Graham. Launched in 1994 by Scott and former co-founders Steven Hoggett and Vicki Middleton. Theatre Royal Plymouth has a long-standing partnership with Frantic Assembly having supported for more than 20 years, co-producing eight shows with them, all of which have toured or performed in London. Frantic Assembly has worked in 40 countries collaborating with some of today's most inspiring artists. Productions include Othello, Beautiful Burnout, Lovesong and The Believers. The company has also provided movement direction for the seven times Olivier award-winning Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by the National Theatre. The company is studied as a leading contemporary theatre practitioner on five British and international academic syllabuses. More on Frantic Assembly here:

<https://www.franticassembly.co.uk>

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