

The Trail of Belvoir

The surroundings of Belvoir Castle and Estate are now providing the setting for artistic creativity with the help of their first appointed artist in residence, sculptor Laury Dizengremel.

After creating large scale public pieces in Ireland, China, Vietnam, Honduras, the USA and France, as well as smaller sculptures for both corporate and private clients, Laury has returned to England to her new home and studio at the Old Hunt Stables in Woolsthorpe-by-Belvoir. We were invited to meet Laury as she settles in to her new surroundings.

Born in Paris, Laury moved between America and France whilst growing up to be what she describes as a 'world citizen', through her ventures to many worldwide destinations. During these years she completed sculpture and foundry studies in clay modelling and wood and stone carving as well as plaster and bronze casting, under the teaching of Martine Vaugel. During her twenties Laury then

settled in England for twenty-two years on the Kent and Sussex border, where she brought up a family of two daughters and a son. She continued to develop her fundamentally self-taught skills in graphic design and sculpture, whilst regularly exhibiting in galleries and museums across England and France.

In 2001 Laury was invited by the Chinese government to exhibit at an International Sculpture Symposium. Describing the moment the invitation arrived by special delivery Laury admits: "For the first and only time in my career I was both laughing and sobbing in relief and happiness at being invited to participate in creating a monumental outdoor sculpture! I actually had tears spraying out of my eyes, I was so happy!" As one of only eight women to the forty-five men who were also participating

LAURY TAKING THE MEASUREMENTS OF LADY ELIZA



in the international event Laury says she was particularly proud to have been invited. Throughout our time with her at Belvoir it became more apparent how passionate she is about being a strong woman. Growing up around influential female figures and taking particular inspiration from Pearl Buck's 'A Proud Heart', Laury was very determined to pursue her love for sculpting and aspired to be successful from that very passion. Living by the philosophy that in order to fulfil a career as an artist you have to focus, focus, focus and be willing to create opportunities for yourself, Laury has definitely deserved her recognition. Laury explains: "Art epitomises an entrepreneurial spirit, if you want to enjoy successes in any business you have to work hard".

In 2004 Laury explained she wanted to 'put her head in an academic space' so enrolled upon a two year Master of Fine Art at the University College for the Creative Arts, in Canterbury. Even before that time, Laury had worked on an impressive portfolio of large public sculpture pieces, whilst continuing to produce smaller commissioned works for corporate and private clients. Amongst her works are a number located in Vietnam and China as well as public art spaces within the UK, such as the Broomhill Sculpture Park in Devon. During a Human Rights Awards dinner in 2004, for which she sculpted the awards, Laury was approached by an excited member of the Olympic Jubilee Committee of Drogheda, Ireland, and asked to undertake the commission of a commemorative bronze statue of boxer Tony 'Socks' Byrne. Following the success of this she was commissioned two years later to sculpt a lifesize sculpture of Joey Maher, the World Handball Champion, also from Drogheda.

In 2007 Laury worked with the assistance of husband and wife team Zhang Yaxi and Shen Xiaonan to produce the 'Tennis Terracotta Warriors' for the Tennis Masters Cup in Shanghai at the behest of the Association of

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New Sculpture Trail:

Belvoir 3Rs – Reclaimed, Recycled, Raw

The sculpture trail challenge issues an invitation to art students across the UK to submit concepts for large-scale outdoor sculptures. Forming a two mile loop just outside Woolsthorpe by Belvoir the trail will unfold from the Rutland Arms pub, around the Grantham Canal and back over a bridge through the existing footpaths with glorious views across to Belvoir Castle.

The sculpture challenge presents a means of further sensitising local residents and art students to issues of sustainability as well as allowing sculptors to come up with innovative ways of using reclaimed, recycled and raw materials from the local area. The sculptures created must last a minimum of one year in the lovely yet sometimes harsh East Midlands

weather so durability will have to be an important consideration.

At least forty volunteers from around the Vale community will be asked to assist the sculptors in creating their work then at the close, the sculpture trail will be unveiled to visitors. Besides opening the challenge up nationally to art students from A level to practice-based PhD courses, Laury is involving students from the area's secondary school, Belvoir High School in Bottesford, as well as giving a chance to one of the twelve primary schools in the Vale to come up with an outdoor sculpture concept.

A full brief and entry forms for the challenge are available from www.laurydizengremel.com/Belvoir or can be requested from Laury via artist@belvoircastle.com.



AN EXAMPLE OF AN ARTWORK CREATED BY LAURY WITH SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS: "LOG HENGE - SPIRITS OF THE FOREST", 2010

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Tennis Professionals. The project was to sculpt the eight 'best of the best' tennis players in the world as over-life size warriors, including Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. As Laury flicked through a hefty presentation folder to find a particular image it was impressive to see the amount of press this project had received, and deservedly so!

Two years ago Laury was, as she puts it, 'hijacked' by her husband to go to Montana for a 'new beginning'. After setting up a new sculpture studio there, Laury joined a group of local artists and crafters. With a vision to create a Crown of the Continent Sculpture Trail, Laury then began working on a site-specific project in Seeley Lake in which ten 10 – 20 foot peeled and sealed logs were to form 'Log Henge – Spirits of the Forest', a modern-age creative interpretation of England's Stonehenge. But after visiting her sculptor friend, Lorna Green, in Manchester whilst undertaking yet another commission in the UK, Laury began to realise that Montana was not going to work out as she missed her daughters in college in the UK. Laury says: "Before I left Montana I wanted to make sure something of me would stay behind," so she ventured to complete the 'Log Henge' project. The artist hopes this will become the first of many sculptural installations in the area, forming the beginning of that larger sculpture trail in the Rockies.

Laury believes that the way forward is to develop her own niche and create a variety of sculpture trails within historical estates and venues in the UK. With a passion to combine nature and art as well as striving towards an involvement in creating public art Laury wishes to raise the awareness of an artist's role within the community. She is working towards developing site-specific programmes, in the form of new sculpture trails, parks or gardens which will offer artists locally, nationally and internationally options for creating and displaying their work whilst interacting with the public. Laury believes it is important to be sympathetic towards each site so her plan is to work closely with the community and owners of individual venues through an ongoing design to evolve suitable projects.

At the invitation of Her Grace the Duchess of Rutland Laury is the first artist in residence and will be working to foster the arts in and around the Belvoir Estate. Her focus will be on developing an arts programme to benefit the local rural community whilst creating a new sculpture trail to exhibit works of emerging artists willing to rise to her '3 Rs - Reclaimed, Recycled, Raw' challenge.

According to the Duchess of Rutland whom we interviewed for this article, asking her why she'd felt it important to appoint an artist in residence and what legacy the family wants to leave behind, "Bringing in great talent is part of our strategy to re-energise the community... What we have been able to do with Laury is to partner with one of the best sculptresses in the world."

Laury will be offering masterclasses, workshops and tuition to members of the community as well as reaching

out to institutions around Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. During her stay at the residence the sculptor will also be working on bronze bust sculptures of the Duke and Duchess' children, something the Duchess is delighted about. Laury is aware this places a great deal of responsibility on her shoulders since these busts will add another layer of contemporary art to the ancient place. She hopes to receive suggestions from members of the local community in order to discuss what design and tuition is needed in and around the area. In addition to this she has also begun to connect with schools to organise programmes and workshops aiming for the creation of a special outdoor sculpture for each institution.

For more information about Laury Dizengremel and her work please visit her website at www.laurydizengremel.com/Belvoir. If you wish to contact Laury you can email her at: artist@belvoircastle.com

Note from the Editor:

To accompany this feature we have a special video cast on our website to explain how the feature originated and the process of the interview taking place. You can also get an insight into how the magazine is put together in our Lincoln based offices and studio. Please visit www.lincolnshirelife.co.uk to view the video cast.



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