



Dovecot Tapestry Studio

Press Release | 20 November 2017

HRH watercolour woven by the Apprentice

- Dovecot's Apprentice Weaver Ben Hymers weaves wool tapestry from HRH watercolour
- HRH tapestry marks completion of Ben Hymers' three year apprenticeship
- The tapestry is cut from the loom as the next new Dovecot apprentice takes up post
- HRH tapestry on display at Dovecot before finding its permanent home at Dumfries House
- The continuation of the apprenticeship is supported by The Dovecot Foundation

Tapestry can be viewed: Dovecot Tapestry Studio Viewing Balcony, from Friday 24 November

Photography/film: Please contact lizziecowan@dovecotstudios.com to make an appointment

Media/photo call: Monday 20 November 2017, 3pm

Dovecot Tapestry Studio open to public (free entry): Mon-Fri 12-3pm, Saturday 10.30am-5.30pm

Project web link: <http://ow.ly/PEZn30gxTgC> | **Social media:** #HRH #watertowool

Dovecot will be cut from the loom, on Monday 20 November, a new tapestry by His Royal Highness, The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay woven by Apprentice Weaver Ben Hymers as the final project in his three-year Dovecot apprenticeship. The tapestry *Abandoned Cottage on the Isle of Stroma, Caithness* will then be displayed on Dovecot's Tapestry Studio Viewing Balcony from Friday 24 November as part of an exhibition to highlight Ben's apprenticeship.

The completed tapestry, which took Ben Hymers eight months to weave, depicts a watercolour by His Royal Highness painted in Scotland. HRH supported the project by generously giving permission for his watercolour to be translated by the apprentice. Undertaken as part of the Dovecot apprenticeship scheme, it represents growing UK support to teach and preserve fine art and craft skills in one of Western civilisation's oldest and richest art forms.

In addition to the support shown for the sustainability of traditional weaving skills, the project has seen the work of a member of the British Royal Family translated into tapestry. Prince Charles now joins a long list of esteemed artists who have worked with the Studio, including Edward Bawden, Graham Sutherland, Elizabeth Blackadder and Victoria Crowe, and, most recently, Chris Ofili.

With the disappearance of higher education tapestry courses this century, British skills were in danger in 2010 when Dovecot intervened to establish the first tapestry apprenticeship for over 25 years. The HRH tapestry project highlights the necessity to maintain the quality and funding of the Dovecot apprenticeship scheme. Traditionally an apprenticeship includes weaving a tapestry from a work of art in another medium that is created as a training piece. Yet the creation of this new artwork has enabled the Dovecot apprentice to work on a tapestry that will also go on public display.

The skills involved in the translation of a work of art into tapestry are discussed and communicated by different generations of weavers in the Studio. This continues a legacy established by the founding of Dovecot in 1912. With the HRH tapestry, Dovecot Master Weaver Naomi Robertson has supervised how Ben Hymers has interpreted the watercolour. His main challenge was how to ensure the colour palette in the tapestry would be a true depiction. In translating watercolour, the weaver has to create an element of translucence in wool colour, where the colour bleeds from one to another. Fine graduation of the blends featured in the sky above the cottage, was an area where Hymers was able to explore and advance the skills in weaving that he has developed over his past three years' training. During the sampling stage, Hymers developed a catalogue of over 50 colour blends, depicting every tonal area of the watercolour scene – some of these pieces will be illustrated as part of the display.

As Ben Hymers' tapestry weaving three-year apprenticeship reached its conclusion, and he became a Dovecot Junior Weaver, another apprentice began. Recruited from a pool of over 90 applicants, reflecting high current demand for opportunities to learn tapestry skills, Elaine Wilson has begun her Dovecot apprenticeship this autumn. The three-year scheme offers a unique opportunity to study at this level in the UK. As an international centre of excellence in tapestry weaving, Dovecot is dedicated to nurturing the continued development of its weavers and providing training in the skills required by the medium, ensuring that tapestry continues to thrive as a dynamic and evolving art form for future generations.

After its display at Dovecot, the tapestry will be hung at Dumfries House. A decade ago, The Prince used £20million of his charitable foundation's money to secure the future of Dumfries House and use it to help people engage in learning experiences that promote confidence and personal development as well as offer training in real-life skills to open up future employment opportunities.

Kenneth Dunsmuir, Executive Director of Dumfries House, comments: "As an expert weaver, Ben represents the personification of The Prince's vision to sustain and revive traditional skills, and it will give everyone at Dumfries House great pleasure to have one of The Prince's own tapestries, woven by Ben, on display. We commend Ben on his excellent work and look forward to welcoming him, as well as staff from Dovecot Studios, to our estate to see his masterpiece exhibited."

-ENDS-

Notes to editor:

- *The present Dovecot apprentice Ben Hymers joined the Studio in 2015. Originally from Leeds, Hymers has an MA (Hons) History of Art from The University of Edinburgh, starred in the BAFTA nominated *The 1940s House* and is a part-time Close-up Magician and amateur footballer.*
- *The Dovecot Apprenticeship has evolved from seven-year instruction to a modern day equivalent three year programme of hands-on learning – technique, design practice and artistic collaboration.*
- *The current new Apprentice learns the craft of traditional tapestry weaving from Master Weavers at Dovecot Tapestry Studio now housed in converted Victorian Baths on Infirmary Street, in Edinburgh's Old Town.*
- *Saved by the intervention of His Royal Highness, The Prince Charles, The Duke of Rothesay in 2007, Dumfries House combines the neo-classical architecture of Robert Adam with the furniture of Thomas Chippendale and leading 18th century Scottish cabinet makers.*

Interviews and comments:

Celia Joicey (Director), Naomi Robertson (Studio Manager and Master Weaver) and Ben Hymers (Apprentice Weaver) are available for further comment.

Further information and images:

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About Dovecot Studios:

Dovecot Tapestry Studio

Dovecot Tapestry Studio is a world-renowned producer of hand-woven tapestry and gun-tufted rugs. Continuing a century-long heritage of making and collaboration with leading international contemporary artists, the Studio weavers are dedicated to producing extraordinary and engaging works of art by commission from private and public collectors from across the globe.

Dovecot Gallery

Dovecot Gallery is a landmark centre for contemporary art, craft and design built around a leading international tapestry studio. Occupying an extraordinary building in the heart of Edinburgh, the Gallery works to programme, commission and produce exhibitions and events for audiences and clients who share Dovecot's passion for making and the creative arts.

Dovecot Foundation

Dovecot Foundation exists to champion Dovecot Tapestry Studio and its place in the world of contemporary art, design and making. The Foundation puts the Studio at the heart of this mission in supporting the Dovecot Apprenticeship Programme, collaborations with leading artists from around the world and development of cultural and educational partnerships. Ultimately, the Foundation seeks to bring the innovative work of contemporary artists and makers to a wider audience.

History

Dovecot Studios was founded in 1912 by the Marquess of Bute, a patron of the arts. The first weavers at Dovecot, Gordon Berry and John Glassbrook, came from the renowned William Morris Studios at Merton Abbey in Wimbledon. Dovecot's first commission was for a series of monumental tapestries for the Marquess' own home at Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute.

In 1946, the Studios were incorporated as The Edinburgh Tapestry Company. Dovecot soon became established as a leading contemporary fine art tapestry studio, with works commissioned for major public, corporate and academic institutions worldwide. As a key player in the renaissance of tapestry in the 20th century, Dovecot's Master Weavers worked with many leading contemporary artists including David Hockney, Henry Moore, Frank Stella and RB Kitaj.

Dovecot's Master Weavers continue to work to commission, producing tapestry and tufted rugs for private and public collectors. Major tapestry projects include Chris Ofili's *The Caged Bird's Song*, Alison Watt's *Butterfly* for Scottish Opera's new Theatre Royal, Peter Saville's *Monarch of the Glen* and Magne Furuholmen's *Glass Onion*. Working with artists such as Linder, Than Clark and Garry Fabian Miller on recent rug commissions have further tested the boundaries of creativity and play with what the process allows.



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