



## Dovecot Tapestry Studio

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### Press Release

#### CLOTHWORKERS' OFILI TAPESTRY AT LONDON CRAFT WEEK

**\*PRESS PASSES AVAILABLE\*** Friday 11 May, Clothworkers' Hall, Mincing Lane, EC3R 7AH

Press passes/photography/film: Please contact [ReneeLadue@clothworkers.co.uk](mailto:ReneeLadue@clothworkers.co.uk)



The Clothworkers' Company of London, are generously supporting a series of ticketed events in association with Dovecot Studios, as part of London Craft Week which runs 9 to 13 May 2018.

The public will attend a series of unique weaving masterclasses and talk with Dovecot's weavers on Friday 11 May, beneath the epic Chris Ofili tapestry triptych, woven between 2014 and 2017. The masterclasses and lunchtime talk about the making of the tapestry, will allow members of the public a unique opportunity to hear about the process of traditional tapestry weaving in this contemporary context.

Commissioned by The Clothworkers' Company, a Livery Company established in 1528 to oversee the cloth finishing trade in the City of London, the tapestry titled *The Caged Bird's Song* is now on permanent display in Clothworkers' Hall following the National Gallery's unveiling of the work in the *Weaving Magic* exhibition in summer 2017. The textile masterpiece took five weavers nearly three years to weave, and was a collaboration with Turner Prize winning artist Chris Ofili.

Naomi Robertson, Dovecot's Studio Manager and Master Weaver comments; "Often artists have no previous experience of their work being woven in tapestry before working with Dovecot. Chris came to the studio before designing his piece and spent time understanding our process, what we do, how we achieve it, what works in tapestry and our skills in colour blending."

The weavers at Dovecot interpreted a watercolour by Ofili. He claimed that he wanted to see if they could 'weave water'. The imagery in the tapestry reflects Ofili's interest in classical mythology and contemporary 'demigods', together with the stories, magic and colour of the Trinidadian landscape he inhabits.

Peter Langley, Chairman of The Clothworkers' Company's Collections and Archives Committee comments; "We wanted to commission a work designed by a major artist which will be hung in our Hall for hundreds of years. Our roots are in the textile trade. We have been keen to support the craft of tapestry weaving and are delighted that this commission allowed Dovecot's weavers to create a truly stunning work of art."

Following on from this appearance, in Edinburgh, Dovecot will be running a weaving workshop from 10 to 12 July 2018 which will look at the concept of 'weaving water', taking inspiration from tapestries like *The Caged Bird's Song*. This three day tapestry masterclass focuses on the theme of water and is aimed at those who have a basic knowledge of tapestry weaving and who want to explore different approaches. Tickets can be booked via Dovecot's website.

**-ENDS-**

## Notes to Editors:

- The tapestry was woven by Jonathan Cleaver, Emma Jo Webster, Freya Sewell, Naomi Robertson and Louise Trotter at Dovecot Tapestry Studio in Edinburgh.
- The tapestry was woven in collaboration with artist Chris Ofili, commissioned by The Clothworkers' Company, London. The weaving project began in October 2014 and continued until 2017.
- The watercolour and charcoal triptych design for the tapestry is exemplary of Ofili's incorporation of the symbolic, the imagined and the real in his paintings, unified in a singular, vibrant and sensuous visual narrative.
- The tapestry took five members of the weaving team nearly three years to weave.
- Winner of the Turner Prize in 1998 and Britain's representative at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003, Ofili is one of the most acclaimed artists of his generation.
- Originally established as a specialist craft guild in the 1500s, The Clothworkers' Company now supports the development of textiles in innovative ways.

### Press release image credit:

Chris Ofili, *The Caged Bird's Song* tapestry (detail), 2017, wool, cotton, and viscose  
Courtesy Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh.

### For Dovecot press information and images:

**Lizzie Cowan, Marketing & Communications Manager**

[lizziecowan@dovecotstudios.com](mailto:lizziecowan@dovecotstudios.com) T: 0131 550 3660 W: [www.dovecotstudios.com](http://www.dovecotstudios.com)

Dovecot Studios 10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LT.

**Events tickets:** <http://ow.ly/3Sep30jj3aN>

### About The Clothworkers' Company:

The Clothworkers' Company is a City of London Livery Company created by Royal Charter in 1528 to oversee the trade of cloth finishing in London. Today, it is a philanthropic membership organisation which supports a broad range of charitable causes, distributing over £5m each year through its sister Clothworkers' Foundation. Reflecting its roots, the Company is keen to continue its support of the UK textile industry and its heritage. Over the past few years it has given, through the Clothworkers' Foundation, over £9m in grants to textile projects in the UK. In addition to education and research, the Clothworkers are significant supporters of textile conservation, and have been major funders of the Centre for Textile Conservation at the University of Glasgow.

### About Chris Ofili CBE:

Born in 1968 and educated at the Royal College of Art, Chris Ofili lives and works in Trinidad. He achieved recognition for his vibrant, technically complex, and meticulously executed paintings and works on paper in the mid-1990s. While his early work was predominantly abstract, intricately fusing pattern with colour, he has since developed a signature figurative style, which often bridges the gap between the sacred and the profane, drawing upon a myriad of cultural references. From jazz to hip hop, blaxploitation movies to the Bible and Zimbabwean cave paintings to the works of William Blake, Ofili has appropriated sexual, cultural, historical and religious references to create richly layered works. The artist's early paintings combined paint, glitter, collaged images and elephant dung. More recent works adopt simple, pared-down forms while continuing to be just as expansive, dramatic and romantic; full of references to sensuality, sexuality and his ongoing exploration of biblical themes. His tribute to the late South London teenager Stephen Lawrence, entitled *No Woman, No Cry* formed part of his entry to the Turner Prize in 1998, when he became

the first painter since Howard Hodgkin in 1985 to win this prestigious award. He represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2003. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions worldwide, including a mid-career retrospective at Tate Britain, London (2010).

### **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* exhibited at the National Gallery and commissioned by The Clothworker's Company, 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.