



**Press release - June 10 2013**

### **The Company of Cranes in Slimbridge**

From June 16 - August 05 2013 acclaimed illustrator and metal-worker Melanie Tomlinson will present an exhibition of artworks commissioned by Somerset Art Works, in partnership with The Great Crane Project, to chronicle the re-introduction of the common crane to the Somerset Levels after an absence of 400 years.

'The Company of Cranes Part One' exhibition of artworks at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, is the first of two exhibitions showcasing Melanie's work. The second will be presented during the Somerset Art Weeks festival, Sept 21-October 06 2013.

Melanie's vibrant and emotional response to the commission includes beautifully crafted hand-printed steel zoetropes, which animate her journey with the Great Crane Project team as they collected eggs in Germany ahead of their hatching and rearing in Slimbridge. Melanie's narrative artworks also include finely detailed and colourful gouache illustrations that tell the story of her experiences spent in forest, swamps and flower meadows in Somerset and the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve, Brandenburg.

A screen will show images and short films of wildlife from the environments of both Somerset and Brandenburg and the creation of the artworks themselves. In addition Melanie will exhibit a series of dioramas inspired by bird species from around the world.

Alongside her own work there will also be a small display of crane-inspired zoetropes created by pupils at Ash School in Somerset during workshops run by Melanie in May 2013. Together with Somerset Film, Melanie is working to widen the project's reach by developing online resources for schools.

"Working on the Crane project has been a very moving and emotional experience," comments Melanie. "To see Cranes in the wild in Germany and to observe the collection of eggs has put the project into a new context for me. It has also inspired exciting new artworks that I hope reflect the beauty of the project and the landscapes in Somerset and Brandenburg.

"I have made two steel zoetropes for the exhibition at Slimbridge, which I have hand-printed with my own illustrations. The illustrations are very finely detailed, highly colourful and reference my trip to Germany and also cranes in the wild. They were very challenging to make but I thoroughly enjoyed the process of constructing them. I will also be showing a

series of photos and short films of the trip to Germany and my research in Somerset on a small screen.”

**The exhibition will also include works by David Brayne RWS.** Somerset Art Works member artist David Brayne has lived for many years within walking distance of the Somerset Levels. This flat, watery land, which echoes the wide sky and liminal expanses of his south Lincolnshire childhood, touches much of his recent work. Exhibiting a selection of prints, David exhibits regularly at the Royal Academy’s Summer Exhibition, and his work is held in the Royal Collection. See [davidbrayne.wordpress.com](http://davidbrayne.wordpress.com)

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**For press enquiries**, images, interviews or to arrange a visit please contact:

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Notes to editors:

**Somerset Art Works (SAW)** and The Great Crane Project have been working in partnership since 2010. SAW has developed a creative programme of community engagement projects, inspired by cranes, to offer creative opportunities to local schools, groups and individuals and to help raise awareness of this fascinating conservation project.

**The Great Crane Project’s** central aim is to re- establish cranes as a sustainable breeding species in the UK so they can be enjoyed by future generations. In order to achieve this, the project needs to build support for landscape-scale wetland biodiversity conservation amongst the local and rural communities of the Somerset Levels and Moors. By working in partnership with Somerset Art Works, the story of the crane - and its return - is creatively brought to life in the community.

**Somerset Art Works** is an artist-led organisation, we are Somerset's only countywide agency dedicated to developing visual arts, weaving together communities and supporting the artists who enrich our lives. We create projects to encourage an atmosphere of adventure and experimentation in Somerset, inspiring artists and encouraging audiences to experience art at first hand.

SAW offers an integrated membership service, professional development programme and curatorial services to support practicing artists and organisations in Somerset: providing bursaries, developing commissions, supporting collaborative working, providing networking and showcase opportunities, including our diverse annual Art Weeks event.

**Somerset Art Weeks** was launched in 1994 and has developed into one of the biggest arts festivals in the UK. Originally biennial, it is now firmly established as an annual event. The focus of Somerset Art Weeks alternates yearly between an open studio event and an exhibition-based event. The 2012 Open Studios was a great success attracting well over 50,000 visitors to 221 venues.

**For further information** about The Great Crane Art Project visit:

Project blog [thecompanyofcranes.blogspot.co.uk](http://thecompanyofcranes.blogspot.co.uk)

Somerset Art Works [www.somersetartworks.org.uk](http://www.somersetartworks.org.uk)

The Great Crane Project [www.thegreatcraneproject.org.uk](http://www.thegreatcraneproject.org.uk)

