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Jørgen Haugen Sørensen A Dark Story in White

30 September – 24 October 2020
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28 October – 29 November
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"There is an integrity, total immersion and clarity in the direction of Jørgen's vision. His work questions our understanding of 'normal' which is more pertinent today than ever. 'A Dark Story in White,' like all great art, lends itself to many levels of interpretation and appreciation.

The aesthetic concern is never far away, but above all, Jørgen wants to remind us that his visual statements are part of his expressive response as a witness to a 'crazy world'."

Peter Murray CBE, founder and executive director of Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Jørgen Haugen Sørensen is one of Denmark's most distinguished sculptors and we are delighted to now represent his work in the UK. Sorensen exhibited his work at the Venice Biennale in 1958 and throughout his artistic career has focused on humanity in all its frailty, ferocity and beauty. He has been making sculptures since the age of eight when, left to his

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own devices by his mother, a freedom and resistance fighter, he modelled dynamite he discovered hidden in his family's apartment.

Sorensen's works are defined by a dynamic and compelling style of modelling denoting the anguish and turbulence of the second world war - but also of today. At a time of seismic change affecting our relationships with each other, our places of work and our home life Sorensen's sculptures have renewed and profound resonance.

Whilst Sorensen works in materials including bronze and marble, this exhibition – his first in the UK since exhibiting at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 1993 – will focus on his white clay works, one of the most basic and malleable of materials that allows full expression to the artist's nuance of feeling.

A new powerful body of works show single figures, holding up their hands to cover their faces in sorrow and those in couples clutching each other for comfort.

'In front of Jørgen's work, we lose our sense of position and we experience uncertainty for a moment as we determine if we are looking at sculptures or if we are looking at ourselves' says the artist Armen Agop. 'With the positions he chooses, the situation of the human and the clay. When we look at his figures, we don't know what to see: the humanity of the clay or the muddiness of humanity. Is he presenting to us a humanity we don't know or what we don't want to know about our humanity?'

Notes to editors:

Jørgen Haugen Sørensen, born in Copenhagen in 1934, is one of Denmark's most eminent sculptors. Since the age of nineteen, he has lived and worked in various European metropolises such as Paris, Verona, and Barcelona and in 1958 represented Denmark at the Venice Biennale. In 1971 he moved to Pietrasanta in Tuscany, Italy, which has served as his primary residence ever since. Throughout his entire artistic career, he has focused his attention on the human condition in society. Since his debut in 1953 he has, without any formal training or schooling, shifted effortlessly between materials and modes of expression within the sculptural sphere, and mastered each transformation. For more than twenty five years Sørensen engaged with Portuguese granite and created some of his most significant and monumental public sculptures for cities and landscapes throughout Europe and the US, before he, in the late 1990s, returned to a more direct sculpturing in clay, and in recent years towards expressive bronze sculpture that has been modelled up in clay.

Through his extensive oeuvre, which spans sculpture, relief, ceramic tablets, drawings, lithography and film, the artist has participated in several international group exhibitions and biennials and has been awarded many distinctions, including the lifetime grant of the Danish Arts Foundation. He has done countless commissions, redefined city spaces, squares and parks, erected enormous sculptures in capitals such as Seoul, Ankara and Rome, and has been decorated by numerous official institutions – notably the Copenhagen Courthouse in 2013. Notable solo exhibitions include: Galleria del Naviglio, Milan, Italy (1961); Galleria Ariel, Paris, France (1963); Louisiana, Humlebæk (1964); Foundation of Sonja Henie and Niels Onstads, Høvikodden, Norway (1976); The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek of Copenhagen

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(1980); Charles Cowles Gallery, New York, USA(1983); City of Prato, Italy (1983); San José Museum of Art, California, USA (1983); Halkbank Sanart Galerisi, Ankara, and Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul, Turkey (1991); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, England (1993); Silent Witness, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (1999); While We Wait, National Gallery of Denmark (2007); Justitio and the Witnesses, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen (2014); The Crowd, Pietrasanta, Italy (2017); Time meets Time at the Willumsens Museum, Denmark (2019). His work is represented in the collections of museums in Denmark and abroad, including, Louisiana, Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Aarhus; KUNSTEN Museum of Modern Art, Aalborg; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield. Jørgen Haugen Sørensen was awarded the Eckersberg Medal in 1969 and the Thorvaldsen Medal in 1979; the highest national honour a Danish artist can achieve.

M E S S U M S W I L T S H I R E is a leading multi-purpose gallery and arts centre set inside a restored thirteenth-century tithe barn and surrounding buildings with exhibition space, sculpture garden and restaurant.

M E S S U M S L O N D O N is a modernist gallery space on Cork Street where the family have had a presence since 1992.

M E S S U M S Y O R K S H I R E opened in early July 2020. The third Messums gallery to open in England, it hosts a rolling programme of exhibitions with a focus on clients and artists in the North of England.

A comprehensive list of past and future exhibitions can be found on our websites.