

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Bridget McCrum** **A Life in the Making**

**17 June – 31 July 2023**

venue: Messums Wiltshire



This exhibition offers a retrospective view of the past three decades of Bridget McCrum's practice with sculpture and drawing on display dating from 1995 through to new work, shown for the first time. It offers the opportunity to see early works which have not previously been exhibited while tracing the progression in her approach towards increased lyrical abstraction – a reduction of means to the essence of her subject.

McCrum's practice is a potent fusion of the ancient with the modern. She works primarily in stone, from which plaster versions are made offering a start point to create new work, which is then cast in bronze. Initially influenced by archaeological finds and by the work of Brancusi, Hepworth and Moore, her sculpture also contains oblique references to the landscape and fauna around her homes in both Devon and Gozo. The basis of her work is

a lyrical abstraction of living forms, a process after which only the primary elements of her animals and birds remain identifiable.



McCrum was a childhood friend and associate of Elisabeth Frink, one of the most notable sculptors of the last century and whose Woodland Studio is now housed with Messums Wiltshire. Frink and McCrum share in their preoccupation with animal form and particularly, the bird form which similarly dominated Frink's practice for two decades. In McCrum's work, the rhythmic sweeping arcs and curves of the bird form whether depicted motionless or in flight, are reflected in both two-dimensional works on paper and in her three-dimensional bronze and marble forms.

*"There is the simplified form that allows the eye to comprehend the piece as a single coherent whole, like a passage in a Bach Cello Suite. Less is more, no fuss. Balance is all. A sweeping line fades and then reappears as you move around the piece, invoking the optical effects the artist experienced among the dunes of the Arabian deserts. And with this comes a sense of rhythm and dynamism, of an object in motion, as light and shadow and perspective generate a kinetic energy. Such things are in the DNA of a Bridget McCrum sculpture or painting or drawing."*

Will Gompertz – Bridget McCrum, 2021



**Bridget McCrum** was born in 1934 and went on to train as a painter with Lesjek Musjynski at Farnham School of Art in the 1950s. From 1980 she began to work primarily in stone, having learned her craft from John Joeekes and Andrea Schulewitz on the South Downs. McCrum also works with bronze, a metal she uses to cast many of her stone pieces.

*“Bridget’s figures, animal and bird sculptures were economically carved, capturing the essential characteristics of their nature or habit, a subject may appear to be soft, although the profile would be sharp as her sense of curve and rhythm – still her hallmarks – tell of form as well as the incongruity to be found in birds or beasts.”*

Ann Elliott, author of ‘Touch and Time: The Sculpture and Drawings of Bridget McCrum’

Find out more about [Bridget Finding the Essence: The Sculpture & Drawing of Bridget McCrum](#). Filmed, directed and produced by the acclaimed film maker Mark Kidel, the documentary takes an inside view of one of our greatest living sculptors. Visiting her Dittisham home and studio, Mark films and interviews Bridget as she embarks on her latest projects including a return to two-dimensional work.



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MESSUMS WILTSHIRE 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.

MESSUMS LONDON is a 2,000 sq ft exhibition space on Cork Street behind the Royal Academy. It hosts a rolling programme of exhibitions for our contemporary artists.