



SITTING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC: an installation by KEI ITO **The Geffrye Museum (front garden), 16 September 2010 - Autumn 2012**

part of museummaker: unlocking the creative potential of museum collections

Kei Ito's *Sitting the Light Fantastic* will form the centre-piece of the newly refurbished front garden at the Geffrye Museum. **Ito** has designed an installation of lighting that is extraordinary and beautiful, and will be located on either side of the main path. It will be an ethereal parade of larger than life-size chairs and lamps, reflecting the museum's themes and drawing on the global cultural influences that have shaped furniture, ornaments and textiles in English homes. The steel framework of each chair will be covered with a unique 'fibre-optic textile', devised specially for this installation. The 'textile' will feature patterns inspired by the Geffrye collection and, from dusk, the chairs will glow, creating a sense of magic. Highly visible, they will intrigue travellers passing by on Kingsland Road, a major route into London.

Kei Ito has been fascinated by a number of items in the collection, including magnificent storks on a 19th century gasolier. She is using a stork as the leitmotif in her installation. The bird will travel through a 'parallel world', which reflects **Ito's** interpretation of the Geffrye's collections. Each part of the work will be based on a different theme or pattern from the museum, and the stork will feature on each item. For example, one will be a 'housing estate' of birds' houses, another will take the form of a cherry blossom tree, with glowing fibre-optic flowers. One of the chairs will be 'upholstered' with fibre-optic fabric depicting a maze, based on an Islamic pattern, in which the stork will be hiding.

Kei Ito is a fashion designer who is internationally acclaimed for her adventurous creations. Her London practice includes costume design for dance and theatre, fashion design for individual clients, and the accessories label 'Always Sky Above'. She also creates innovative items of textile and costume, specifically for gallery exhibitions. Her work is distinguished by an interest in new possibilities of pattern cutting through explorations in geometry, and in different costume and textile traditions. **Ito's** costume design work has been seen in a number of productions staged at the London Coliseum, Sadler's Wells Theatre and the Edinburgh Festival. Throughout her career, **Kei Ito** has worked to push forward the boundaries of her experience and her craft – always challenging herself with new possibilities. The **museummaker** commission represents both a new departure in her work – and a natural progression. She has learnt the art of forging metal, in order to design and fabricate the structure for her installation. Her experiments with techniques for creating the fibre-optic fabric are an extension of her already formidable skills as a textile artist.

The **Geffrye Museum** explores the homes of the English urban middle classes from 1600 to the present day. It celebrates domesticity through its series of 'period' living rooms, which display its collections of furniture, textiles, paintings and decorative arts. The museum is set in elegant Grade I listed 18th century almshouses, with a contemporary wing, surrounded by attractive gardens, which include an award-winning walled herb garden and a series of period gardens. The museum has a strong track record of working with contemporary designer-makers.

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***museummaker** is a prestigious national project involving sixteen museums across the country. It is unlocking the creative potential of collections through imaginative interchanges between the heritage and contemporary craft sectors. It is supported by Arts Council England (ACE), Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and its Renaissance Programme. As well as offering new experiences for existing museum visitors, **museummaker** is establishing innovative ways of developing audiences, including young people. Each museum has commissioned one or more outstanding makers to create intriguing new work in response to the venue, its associations and collections. For further information on **museummaker**, see www.museummaker.com*

museummaker at the London Design Festival

Seminar: WONDERLAND (23 Sept, 1.15–4.30pm) hosted by the Geffrye Museum, organised by **museummaker**. A networking seminar to consider how historic gardens and outdoor settings can be animated by the work of contemporary practitioners.

Chair: Christine Lalumia, Deputy Director, the Geffrye Museum

Speakers:

Judith King, producer of Extraordinary Measures, on show at Belsay Hall

Subhas Kandasamy, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, producer, with Sotheby's, of this summer's intervention at Sudeley Castle

Danielle Arnaud/Jordan Kaplan, Parabola Trust, producers of the Tatton Park Biennale for the National Trust

Tickets free, booking essential. Further details from Susie O'Reilly: info@museummaker.com 07711 502 334

Seven of **museummaker's** museum partners have commissioned installations for their gardens: **Alford Manor House**, Lincolnshire (*Susan Bradley*); **The Bowes Museum**, Castle Barnard (*Laura Baxter*); **Killhope Lead Mining Museum**, County Durham (*Sue Lawty*), **The Lightbox**, Woking (*Richard Jackson*); **Valentines Mansion**, Ilford (*Timorous Beasties*) and the **Geffrye Museum** (*Kei Ito*).

CONTEMPORARY SOUVENIRS (21 Sept – 21 Nov). Displays at the Geffrye Museum, showcasing retail products developed by **museummaker's** partner museums and makers, curated by retail expert *Kit Grover*. This strand of **museummaker** is enabling personnel, in charge of shops in partner museums, to work with practitioners to create high calibre, bespoke product 'lines'.

Exhibits include **Sootstorm**, by *Jessamy Kelly* and **Miner's Bowl**, **Blue Plaque Plate** and **Coaster**, commemorating the Ashington Group, by *Rebecca Chitty* for **Woodhorn, Northumberland Museum and Archive**; a **butterfly cup** by *Clare Twomey/ Anthony Quinn* for the **Royal Pavilion, Brighton**; **mugs and cushions** by *Timorous Beasties* for **Valentine's Mansion**; **tealight holder** by *Richard Jackson* for **The Lightbox**; **seed packets** designed by young people for **Alford Manor**; **silver-plated jewellery** designed by *Susie McMurray* for **Kedleston Hall**; and packaging designed by *Sam Aloff* for the **Harley Museum and Gallery shop**. For further details, see: www.museummaker.com

The Geffrye Museum at London Design Festival

CERAMICS IN THE CITY (17 – 19 Sept), returns to the contemporary gallery at the Geffrye Museum as part of London Design Festival. It will showcase stunning new work by 50 selected ceramicists, a mix of well-established names and rising talents. Visitors will have the opportunity to browse, buy and meet the makers.

For further details, see <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/whatson/future/>

