



### **Press release**

#### **Vessel: an art trail in remote rural churches**

**Exhibition dates: 8 August – 31 October 2024**

Curated by Jacqueline Creswell for Art and Christianity

Vessel is a curated art trail in remote rural churches near the Black Mountains between Usk and Hay-on-Wye. Seven artworks by seven artists will be shown in seven churches, six of which are maintained by the Friends of Friendless Churches who keep them open all year round. The theme of 'vessel' references bodies, boats, secretions and receptacles; each of the artworks will be sited in a particular relationship to the church and its material culture.

The exhibition will be open from early August 2024 to late October, ensuring the optimum season for visitors to the churches. It will create a memorable and unique placement of art within a conjunction of landscape and architecture that is often overlooked. It will bring artists of international reputation to an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The participating artists are:

Lou Baker, Barbara Beyer, Andrew Bick, Robert George, Lucy Glendinning, Jane Sheppard, Steinunn Thórarinsdóttir. (see table below for more details)

An essay by Jacqueline Creswell, curator of 'Vessel' is available on our website at [artandchristianity.org/vessel](http://artandchristianity.org/vessel).

#### **Quote from Jacqueline Creswell, Curator**

*"Curating contemporary art in these extraordinarily intimate churches, presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities. It requires careful consideration of the historical, spiritual and architectural dimensions of each place. By selecting a narrative that resonates across the shared character of the churches and by placing a single work of art that represents a vessel within each of these exceptional ancient sites, we endeavour to create a spiritual environment that allows reflection, dialogue and connection."*

Installation images and video clips of the works in situ will be available from 8 August.

For images before that date please download from [this link](#).

More details from: [mail@artandchristianity.org](mailto:mail@artandchristianity.org) or call 07966 599247.

#### **Quote from Paula Gooder, Chair of Art and Christianity**

*"This rich and fascinating exhibition offers an opportunity for reflection not just on what a vessel is but on what a vessel might contain. Six stunning pieces of art in six beautiful church buildings will provide an art trail and pilgrimage against the backdrop of the Black Mountains. This is an experience not to be missed."*

**Dates to remember:****8 August–31 October:** Exhibition open (not including Lou Baker at Dore Abbey)**NB 21 August–31 October:** Lou Baker's installation at Dore Abbey opens**13–15 September:** a weekend event based in Abergavenny will include a guided tour to all of the churches and a performance work by Holly Slingsby.Visit our [Events page](#) to find out more.

Venues	Artwork name, date and media	Artists
<a href="#">St Michael and All Angels', Gwernesney</a>	<i>Grace Vessel</i> 2023 Handbuilt and smoke-fired ceramic	<a href="#">Jane Sheppard</a>
<a href="#">St Cadoc, Llangattock Vibon Avel, Monmouthshire</a>	<i>Wiela</i> 2023 Wood, adobe, slate and <i>Possibilities</i> 2021 Stoneware	<a href="#">Barbara Beyer</a>
<a href="#">St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin, Monmouthshire</a>	<i>Centre</i> 2013 Cast iron and glass	<a href="#">Steinunn Thórarinsdóttir</a>
<a href="#">St Jerome, Llangwm Uchaf, Monmouthshire</a>	<i>White Hart</i> 2018 Wax, jesmonite, timber, duck feathers	<a href="#">Lucy Glendinning</a>
<a href="#">St David, Llangeview, Monmouthshire</a>	<i>Compendium (tree)</i> 2023 Tapestry	<a href="#">Andrew Bick</a>
<a href="#">Dore Abbey</a>	<i>Life/ Blood</i> 2019-2023 Hand knitted wool	<a href="#">Lou Baker</a>
<a href="#">Castle Chapel, Urishay, Herefordshire</a>	<i>Simmer down I</i> 2021 <i>Burnt oak and sycamore</i>	<a href="#">Robert George</a>
<a href="#">St Mary's Abergavenny</a>	<i>Felled, yet unfurling</i> 14 September 2024 Performance/liturgly only	<a href="#">Holly Slingsby</a>

**NOTES FOR EDITORS****Art and Christianity****[artandchristianity.org](http://artandchristianity.org)**

Art and Christianity seeks to foster and explore the dialogue between art, Christianity and other religious faiths. Through events, publications and consultation, we offer:

- education, enquiry, and exchange with regard to the relationship between art and faith
- collaboration and partnership with galleries, art institutions, and places of worship
- advocacy for and advice on commissioning works of art
- awareness-raising of the diversity of historical and contemporary art in churches

### **The Friends of Friendless Churches**

**[friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk](http://friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk)**

The Friends of Friendless Churches was established by a group of friends in 1957 to save redundant but beautiful places of worship from demolition, decay and unsympathetic conversion.

It believes that an ancient and beautiful church fulfils its primary function merely by existing. It is, in itself, and irrespective of the members using it, an act of worship. These buildings are our greatest architectural and cultural legacy, shaping landscapes and lives for hundreds of years. They are the spiritual and artistic investment of generations, and they should survive for the benefit of future generations.

The Friends of Friendless Churches is an independent, non-denominational charity which receives no government funding in England, and a modest grant in Wales.

### **Jacquiline Creswell, curator of Vessel**

Since 2009-2022 Jacquiline has been central to the development of visual arts programmes at Salisbury and Chichester among other Cathedrals. Now she is a freelance Visual Art Advisor and is engaged as the Consultant Curator for the Association of English Cathedrals. She is also a Trustee and Project Curator of A+C and Director and Curator for WAC.

Over the past 16 years Jacquiline has delivered over 58 exhibitions, working with a diverse group of artists, galleries, foundations and estates. These include Antony Gormley, Lemn Sissay, Mark Wallinger, David Mach and Ana Maria Pacheco, galleries such as The Lisson, Osborne Samuel, Hauser&Wirth and the estates of Henry Moore, Lynn Chadwick, Barbara Hepworth and others. She has developed lasting relationships with many of the leading figures in the contemporary art world whose dedication and support has been crucial to the success of the many projects delivered. [www.visualartsadvisor.org](http://www.visualartsadvisor.org)

### **Julia Porter Pryce, Community Coordinator for Vessel**

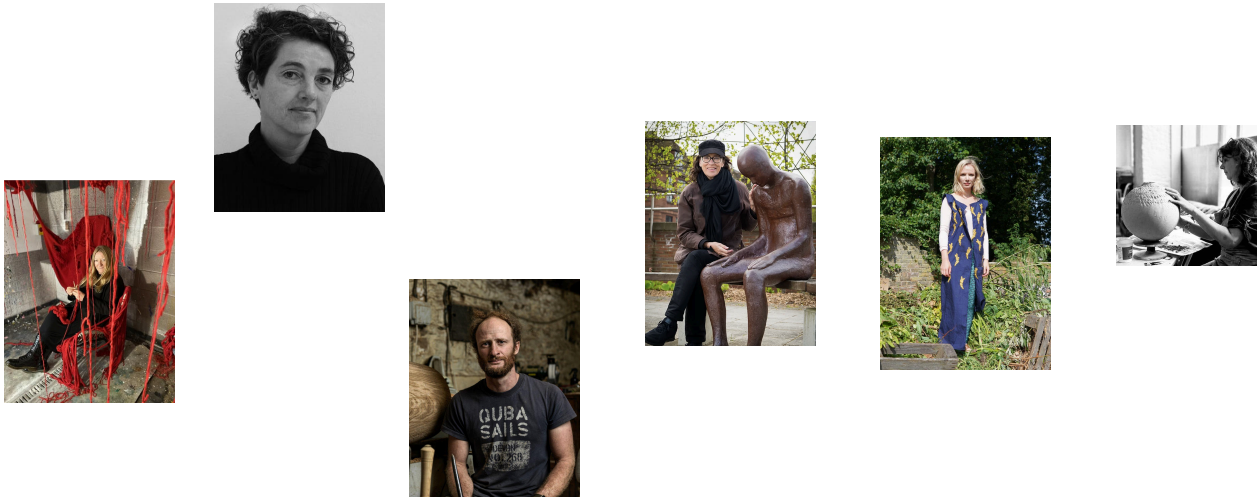
Julia is a freelance curator based in Hay-on-Wye with 25 years' experience of working with art in sacred spaces. After 15 years in museum management, she worked as an Anglican priest in Hackney where she ran a programme of residencies and community arts projects. For 10 years she co-ordinated creative arts engagement in the Diocese of London. She has been a member of the St Paul's Cathedral Visual Arts Committee and an Advisor to Art and Christianity. Julia has been based in the Black Mountains for three years.

Julia is passionate about connecting artists with places of worship as a means of interpreting faith traditions and at the same time making art accessible to new audiences.

Wherever possible A+C has engaged local suppliers, photographers, technicians and contractors for this project.

*Vessel is kindly supported by the Gibbs Trust, the Morel Trust and the Cottam Will Trust. The performance by Holly Slingsby and lecture by Jarel Robinson-Brown are supported by The Lady Peel Trust.*

## THE ARTISTS



### **Lou Baker**

Dore Abbey

[loubakerartist.co.uk](http://loubakerartist.co.uk)

Lou Baker has recently completed an MA in Fine Art at Bath Spa University, combining her lifelong love of knitting and stitch with newly acquired skills in casting and metalwork. Some aspects of her practice investigate the transformation of materials through meditative processes and 'sloppy craft', some focus on facilitating participation through social engagement and, increasingly, some are performative.

Her work makes public things that are normally private, provoking a range of conflicting responses – attraction, repulsion, horror and hilarity. She explores the ambiguous spaces between a number of binaries – self/other, embodiment/disembodiment, presence/absence, comfort/discomfort, and, ultimately, life and death. [seamcollective.org/lou-baker](http://seamcollective.org/lou-baker)

### **Barbara Beyer**

St Cadoc, Llangattock Vibon Avel, inside and in the churchyard

[barbarabeyer.uk](http://barbarabeyer.uk)

Barbara Beyer's work reflects on the markers and traces we leave through interventions with our environment, social and material world. In her sculptural practice she re-enacts and plays out formative actions, echoing observations she makes outside the studio often questioning our perception of forming and deforming. Her forms have ambivalent qualities, workshop explorations reveal a frantic urge to shape, reshape, form and deform; dropped forms carry a sense of shapeshifting and change.

**Andrew Bick**

*Compendium* (tree), 2023

St David, Llangeview

[halesgallery.com/artists/9-andrew-bick/overview/](https://halesgallery.com/artists/9-andrew-bick/overview/)

Andrew Bick received an MA in painting from the Chelsea School of Art and has since shown extensively in Europe and the U.S. Bick's works are executed from a combination of oil paint, marker pen, wax, acrylic paint and Perspex. The works play with elements of flat colour, depth and surface, revealing the process of painting as a series of strategies or components within the visual puzzle of the whole. Bick's paintings call into question false opposites, and contrast hard geometric or blunt graphic forms with uncertain or dashed-out strokes or patches of scrubbed brushwork. Within the abstract geometry of his works, he combines matte and glossy surfaces, different textures, colour and 'non-colour'. His work has been described as 'gently disruptive and purposefully chaotic'.

**Lucy Glendinning**

St Jerome, Llangwm Ucha

[lucyglendinning.co.uk](https://lucyglendinning.co.uk)

Lucy Glendinning studied fine art sculpture at University of the West of England Bristol, after which she worked for Elizabeth Frink in a bronze foundry. Learning how to make molds and castings with wax still influences her work to this day. Lucy's point of departure is not an idiosyncratic impulse but a reflection, a thought fuelled by her interest in new philosophical questions, medical information or psychological studies. She says she does not start from an artistic compulsion, fantasy or pure imagination but develops a reflection – through research and exploration – in search of an experience to solicit the viewer/ spectator/ visitor/ art lover.

**Robert George**

Urishay Castle Chapel

[robertgeorge.co.uk](https://robertgeorge.co.uk)

What connects Robert to his material? Usually a piece of rope as thick as your index finger. Working at height as an arborist for over a decade, studying, climbing and being in contact with wood in its rawest form gives him a unique relationship with the work he creates. Provenance is at the heart of every piece, the journey from camaraderie and brilliant team work on site to the insular and meditative in the studio is encapsulated in his work and self-taught methods of working: following intuition and reflecting upon his own experience of how his material presents itself to him and how this may be perceived in the wider world.

**Jane Sheppard**

St Michael and All Angels, Gwernesey

[www.janesheppard.me](https://www.janesheppard.me)

Jane is a self-taught ceramicist and began coiling and smoke firing over 30 years ago. The meditative simplicity of coiling is a fundamental part of her practice. Jane is fascinated by the universality of clay and how it lies at the heart of the human experience. She travelled widely in Africa researching the spiritual use of clay and visiting remote pottery communities, running workshops in the Namibia and Kalahari deserts with funding from the British Council. After a 10-year absence from clay whilst a single parent, Jane is enjoying working from her home studio and engaging more deeply in the metaphorical language of clay. She aims for

forms and decoration which appeal to our shared human aesthetic and remind us of our physical connection with the earth.

### **Steinnun Thórarinsdóttir**

St Mary, Llanfair Kilgeddin

<https://www.steinunnth.com>

The most distinctive feature of Steinunn Thórarinsdóttir's works is the use of androgynous human figures. In her sculptures the shape of the human body arises from cold aluminium and steel and stands strong with welcoming arms, ready to give or receive whatever comes. The androgynous human sculptures lack facial expression yet they embody the human emotions, representing the general human psyche rather than a distinct sex or ethnic identity.

### **Holly Slingsby**

performance/liturgý at St Mary's Abergavenny on 14 September, 5pm (FREE TO ALL)

[hollyslingsby.com](http://hollyslingsby.com)

Holly Slingsby is a visual artist based in Swansea, Wales. She works in a number of media including performance, video and painting. Her practice explores belief in a variety of contexts, as well as examining representations of women and the implications of those. Her visual language reflects a fascination with iconographic traditions, drawing on Biblical imagery, mythologies, and contemporary culture. She uses historic material as a lens to look at the present, and to invite viewers to consider the transcendental. Much of Slingsby's recent work seeks to convey the often unspoken experience of infertility.