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PRESS RELEASE

Public art trail launched to revive Herne Hill after devastating floods

- Herne Hill's burst water main caused damage of over £6.7m and blighted local shops for years
- Art trail inspired by local community including tales involving world celebrities and actors connected to the area, writers and musicians such as Michael Crawford, Dylan Thomas, Judith Kerr and U2

Herne Hill, South London - Local businesses and the community have come together to launch "**Flying Boots and Eyes on Fire**", a new public artwork celebrating the Herne Hill community's resilience and revival after devastating floods in 2013, which left 58 businesses with losses in excess of £6.7m.

Trade has never fully recovered, so a new public artwork "**Flying Boots and Eyes on Fire**", created by artist Caroline McCarthy, alongside the Contemporary Art Society, seeks to give the community a further reason to visit, explore and shop in their own neighbourhood.

The new art trail is a set of 15 steel-cut drawings connecting Herne Hill Station, Railton and Milkwood Roads and Half Moon Lane, the areas most flood-affected. From flying boots to fiery eyes, a stopped clock to Bono's bad haircut, the drawings are inspired by local events, stories of determination and protest, threat and survival: all collected from local archives or stories told to the artist by members of the community. Collectively, they celebrate the strength, resilience and 'can-do' community spirit of Herne Hill.

'Flying Boots' were thrown to drive away jewel thieves in Half Moon Lane whereas; the glint of battle in the 'Eyes on Fire' recalls the protest by local matrons to gain afternoon access to the walled garden in Brockwell Park. The images also reference world famous poets, writers and actors with a connection to Herne Hill such as Dylan Thomas, Michael Crawford, Judith Kerr, and U2 who performed in the local Half Moon pub.

Caroline McCarthy, Artist, commenting: *"Early on in my research I realised that there was a long-standing history in the area of determination, empathy and passion; of local people willing to stand up to authority and expressing their love for their community. Whether saving a pub or a squirrel, resurrecting a cinema, demanding rights, planting trees, "Flying Boots" is in recognition of this spirit and the art trail is a representation of the local community's sense of history."*

George Hornby, Chair, Herne Hill Forum: *"We hope the art trail will intrigue locals and attract curious visitors. It is an additional reason to explore the large number of independent stores that trade on and around Herne Hill. An annual local schools storytelling competition based around the art works will bring the art trail and the tales it tells to our next generation of neighbours."*

Barrie Westwell, The Illusioneer, Herne Hill: *"The devastating flood was a huge set back, it took over 2.5 years to fully recover and re-build the business, with some businesses permanently destroyed. The art trail is a permanent way to really bring together all of the extraordinary and ordinary stories about Herne Hill and its fantastic community. We hope everyone will enjoy it from children to visitors,*



young and old, and encourage visitors to explore everything Herne Hill has to offer, and learn more about its past and future.”

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, Deputy Chair of the Environment Committee at the GLA: *“It’s great to see such a positive response from local people to the devastating 2013 flood.”*

Fabienne Nicholas, Head of Consultancy at the Contemporary Art Society, said: *“Out of adversity has been born a fantastic art trail for Herne Hill. Caroline McCarthy has cleverly unearthed the secrets and folklore of the area and its trading history to create something very special for local residents and visitors, vividly demonstrating how art can respond to heritage and contribute to cultural placemaking.”*

The art trail is the start of a wider ongoing project to make Herne Hill a thriving centre for area’s independent retailers, makers, doers and menders. Following the launch, local schools will be invited to enter a story telling competition. The challenge is to invent and illustrate a short story which includes and gives new life and meaning to the art works

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Notes to Editors:

Photography is available including: *Flying Boots and Eyes on Fire* with Caroline the artist and retailers, Elaine with *Cyril the Squirrel*, Mum and Dads with the *Light of Battle*, Peter Blair local campaigner and resident with *Bono’s Bad Haircut* in the Half Moon pub.

Background information on Flying Boots: www.flyingboots.info. This includes images of the artwork alongside the stories that inspired them.

1. ABOUT HERNE HILL FORUM

Herne Hill Forum is a volunteer-led, community association that works together with local stakeholders to promote the wellbeing of Herne Hill’s residents and businesses. The Forum has helped coordinate major local regeneration projects, led campaigns to improve the public realm and attracted significant investment to make Herne Hill a better place to live, work and visit.

www.hernehill.org.uk/groups/herne-hill-forum

2. ABOUT CAROLINE MCCARTHY

Caroline McCarthy was born in Dublin and has lived in London since completing an MA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College in 1998. Exhibiting widely in the UK and internationally, her work examines mundane events and objects, even the detritus of our lives, to see what they reveal about the human condition, as well as our perception and ideas of value. Recent exhibitions include *“Nature Morte”*, an international touring exhibition in association with Thames & Hudson; *“Group Coordination”*, co-curated by McCarthy for The Irish Museum of Modern Art; *“To Be Continued”*, curated by The British Council, Helsinki Kunsthalle; *“Dismaland”*, curated by Banksy, Weston-super-Mare. She has also



undertaken numerous site-specific public art projects such as *"Light for Cicely"*, in association with Contemporary Art Society for Kings College London; *"From One End to the Other"*, a city-wide interventionist project for The Norfolk and Norwich Festival; *"Happiness"*, commissioned for the re-opening exhibition at the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill.

3. ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY CONSULTANCY

The Contemporary Art Society Consultancy provides art advisory services to develop contemporary art collections, public art commissions and visionary arts and cultural strategies. The Art Consultancy supports the Contemporary Art Society, a charity that purchases important new works of art to place in public collections across the UK. Identifying the great artists of today is at the heart of our approach, bringing the best in contemporary art to our clients. Current and recent projects include the development of a national public art strategy for Qatar Public Realm, a 12 year public art programme for the University of Cambridge's North West Cambridge urban expansion, major public art commissions for the Olympic Park in 2012, London School of Economics in 2010 and 2014, and developments including Television Centre, One Blackfriars and Angel Court in London.

www.contemporaryartsociety.org/consultancy