



## **The Only Way is Wessex / I'D RATHER BE IN BENIDORM**

Sunday 22 August - Thursday 24 September 2021

Friars Entry, Oxford

Curated by Wessex Projects

Organised in collaboration with [Fusion Arts](#) and [The Randolph Hotel by Graduate Hotels®](#)

**The Only Way Is Wessex:** [Wessex Projects](#) / ["i like the way she..."](#) / [Jackdaw](#) / [Jonnie Bayes](#) / [Kate Kessling](#) / [Mark Mindel](#)

**I'D RATHER BE IN BENIDORM:** [Charlotte Grocutt](#)

*The Only Way is Wessex* and *I'D RATHER BE IN BENIDORM* are a pair of intriguing new exhibitions on display in the #WindowGalleries at The Randolph Hotel by Graduate Hotels® along Friars Entry, Oxford. Both exhibitions are running between Sunday 22 August and Thursday 24 September.

*The Only Way is Wessex* features pieces that respond to the ancient earthworks of the North Wessex Downs and its sites of continual ritual. The North Wessex Downs is an ancient area of chalk downs located across Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. Its ridge, known as the Ridgeway, has been walked continuously since prehistoric times. Sites of ritual in the downs include stone circles, chalk drawings, standing stones and tumuli.

*I'D RATHER BE IN BENIDORM* is an exhibition of work by artist Charlotte Grocutt, who humorously responds to the not so great British summer holiday with a new series of historical plates. These two shows are linked by their mutual celebration of staycationing within the UK.

The exhibitions have been curated by artists and sisters Agnes and Mirren Kessling with support from community organisation Fusion Arts and The Randolph Hotel by Graduate Hotels®. During the pandemic, Mirren and Agnes formed Wessex Projects, a collaborative practice in which they create contemporary artefacts based on the local mythology and folklore of the North Wessex Downs. These artefacts include limited edition runs of clothes, artworks, food and wearable objects, with the items often being produced in collaboration with other artists and makers.

*The Only Way is Wessex* features a range of work by local creatives, including pieces by sustainable jewellery maker "i like the way she...", artist and stone circle maker



Jonnie Bayes, artist Kate Kessling, artist Mark Mindel and film production company Jackdaw.

Of the exhibitions, Agnes and Mirren Kessling of Wessex Projects comment:

*“The Ridgeway has always been a place of gathering, from the druids, to the ravers and the sunday walkers. There’s a bit of magic there for everyone. We started Wessex Projects thinking up ideas of slogans for t-shirts to wear walking, reimagining street wear as path wear. Collaboration feels like a natural extension of Wessex Projects and over the past year family, friends, artists and makers have been working with us to create artworks, wearables and products and we’re thrilled to be sharing the first ever group exhibition of our works.*

*Over the pandemic we’ve been forced into our local landscapes, people have found and formed new connections to local environments, folklore and heritage sites. We invited the artist Charlotte Grocutt to situate her work alongside ours, she uses ephemera and historical objects to poke fun at the notion of the Great British Summer Holiday. Together these exhibitions are a staycation celebration”*

## **#WindowGalleries Background**

The #WindowGalleries, which are located along Friars Entry in Oxford, are an innovative collaboration between community organisation Fusion Arts and the Randolph Hotel by Graduate Hotels.

The project connects and supports Oxford’s communities, creating a lively space for the public to experience inspiring work by local artists. Rejuvenating the area in this manner helps bring vibrance and intrigue to the otherwise empty windows that so many people pass by each day.

[#WindowGalleries kicked off last October with an exhibition showcasing the work of six local creatives](#), whose pieces ranged from drawings and paintings to ceramics and sculpture. So far this year, the windows have housed African art by artist Nadine Williams, with *The Only Way is Wessex / I’D RATHER BE IN BENIDORM* shows being the next of a number of exhibitions planned for the rest of this year and into 2022.

The Randolph Hotel has been shut for the past eight months whilst undergoing an exciting refurbishment and will be relaunching in late August with a redesign inspired by the unique heritage and history of Oxford as part of Graduate Hotels. Graduate Hotels is a collection of handcrafted hotels located in dynamic university anchored markets



across the U.S. and U.K. Each property uniquely celebrates and commemorates the destination it is positioned within through distinct design, inspired food and beverage offerings and locally-rooted programming and events.

## Artists Information

### Wessex Projects

Instagram: [@wessexprojects](https://www.instagram.com/wessexprojects)

Website: [www.wessexprojects.com](http://www.wessexprojects.com)

Wessex Projects is a collaborative practice between sisters and artists Agnes Kessling and Mirren Kessling, who collectively create contemporary artefacts based on the local mythology and folklore of the North Wessex Downs. An ancient area of chalk downs located across Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire; its ridge, known as the Ridgeway, has been walked continuously since prehistoric times. Founded in 2020, Wessex Projects creates limited edition runs of clothes, artworks, food, wearable objects alongside inviting collaborations with artists and makers.

### “i like the way she...”

Instagram: [@ilikethewayshe](https://www.instagram.com/ilikethewayshe)

Website: [www.ilikethewayshe.co.uk](http://www.ilikethewayshe.co.uk)

“From a very young age, like most 90’s and 2000’s kids, I was obsessed with jewellery. I would wear necklace upon necklace, rings of all different shapes and colours and bracelets half-way up my arm – to me, they were very much essential when going anywhere. When I reached sixth form and started to focus on the things I really enjoyed doing, I started thinking more and more about fashion, in particular, accessories. I picked up styles from other people at school, people walking around big cities when we’d go home for the weekend and looking at things my mum and godmother were wearing or had worn whilst they were growing up. Styles would always change but the jewellery of each individual seemed to say something about them.

The name *i like the way she...* came from this love of picking up new styles. I like the way she...wears those rings, I like the way she...wears that necklace, I like the way she...styled those accessories – there is no better compliment than one about the small details of your outfit.

Every piece is shaped, filed, soldered and sized by hand, so each one will be unique. All the pieces are made from recycled metal, often vintage, which means that most of the time, you’re even carrying a little bit of history around with you.”

**Jackdaw**Instagram: [@jackdawfilms](https://www.instagram.com/jackdawfilms)Website: [www.jackdawfilms.com](http://www.jackdawfilms.com)

Jackdaw is an award-winning production company composed of director and animator Joseph Brett and writer Bec Boey. They share a love of folklore, megaliths, and cha siu bao. Flat, bleak comedy with plenty of squirm, sci-fi, and a fear of the creeping darkness turns up in all of their work. They work together from their Tottenham studio, with collaborators and alone.

STONES a new short film by Jackdaw. A brother and sister's reunion picnic at a stone circle in the English countryside is disrupted by the arrival of an uninvited guest... A folk horror stop motion animation about nostalgia for home and connection to landscape.

**Jonnie Bayes**Instagram: [@skhe\\_ez](https://www.instagram.com/skhe_ez)

Jonnie Bayes is an artist who explores geometrical potentials in the natural environment, using found materials in remote spaces. His current work employs miniature modelling techniques to highlight the spatial division and enclosure of Neolithic sites in the UK.

**Mark Mindel**Instagram: [@mindelmark](https://www.instagram.com/mindelmark)

Mark Mindel, is an artist based in London. He studied at the Ruskin School of Art in Oxford and has exhibited works at the Crypt Gallery, London; Mori & Stein Gallery, London; Red Gate Gallery Studios, Beijing; Baltic 39, Newcastle and Modern Art Oxford.

**Kate Kessling**Website: [www.katekessling.co.uk](http://www.katekessling.co.uk)

Kate Kessling, is an artist based in Oxfordshire. She studied at Goldsmiths in the late 1980s, followed by an MA through the British Council at Poznan Academy of Art. Her work is concept led, and uses a wide range of found objects as a route into mark making and to create rhythm and repetition.

**Charlotte Grocutt*****I'D RATHER BE IN BENIDORM***Instagram: [@chargrows](https://www.instagram.com/chargrows)Website: <https://charlottegrocutt.myportfolio.com/>



Shop: <https://charlottegrocutt.myportfolio.com/shop-1>

Charlotte Grocutt responds to the not so great British summer holiday with a new series of historical plates.

Charlotte is an Oxfordshire based artist who graduated from Chelsea College of Art in 2020. She has exhibited her works at ICA, Modern Art Oxford, Lots Road Auctions and Filet Space.

### **Acknowledgments**

This project has been made possible with the support of The Randolph Hotel by Graduate Hotels and through the [Culture Recovery Fund](#) grants awarded to Fusion Arts from Arts Council England on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. #HereForCulture

The Randolph Hotel by Graduate Hotels® is located at Beaumont St, Oxford OX1 2LN, United Kingdom. For more information on Graduate Hotels, please visit: <https://www.graduatehotels.com/oxford-uk/>.

### **ENDS**

### **About Fusion Arts**

Fusion Arts facilitates meaningful creative experiences by connecting diverse communities and artists from across Oxford and beyond. They foster a safe, accessible, and inclusive artistic space that seeks to drive social change by empowering communities to express themselves creatively. Since 1977, they have developed hundreds of bespoke creative projects working with a wide variety of groups and individuals.

Fusion often works in partnership with other creative and non-creative organisations as well as artists and people from all walks of life. Formerly known as Bloomin' Arts, Fusion has been operating from their base on the corner of Princes St and the Cowley Road in the heart of the artistic East Oxford community since March 1977. Fusion's work reaches across Oxfordshire and beyond, including high-profile public events such as Oxford's Winter Light Festival, Cowley Road Carnival and Oxford Windrush Festival. Fusion also facilitates public artworks such as Oxford's Covid-19 Stay Safe Murals.



THE  
RANDOLPH HOTEL  
by GRADUATE HOTELS



Fusion Arts is proudly supported by Oxford City Council, BBC Children in Need, public National Lottery funding from Arts Council England, the Culture Recovery Fund grant from DCMS and a number of other local funders.

Website: [www.fusion-arts.org](http://www.fusion-arts.org)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FusionArtsOx>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/fusionartsox/>

### **About Graduate Hotels®**

Graduate Hotels® is a hand-crafted collection of hotels that reside in dynamic university-anchored towns across the U.S. and U.K. Each hotel pays homage to the heritage of its unique town through cultural nods to the local community. Launched in 2014, there are currently 30 hotels across the U.S. and two U.K. properties launching this summer, with five hotels set to open by the end of 2022. Graduate Hotels is owned by Adventurous Journeys (AJ) Capital Partners, a vertically integrated global real estate developer, owner and operator, founded by Ben Weprin in 2008 and based in Nashville. For more information on Graduate Hotels®, please visit [www.graduatehotels.com](http://www.graduatehotels.com).

The Randolph Hotel, by Graduate Hotels, is located in Oxford's cultural epicentre, nestled blocks from the University of Oxford and its iconic colleges, including Trinity and St. John's. The 151-room hotel will take inspiration from the university's history, paying homage to its storied innovators and alumni. The hotel will offer unique food and beverage concepts including The Alice, a bold, all-day British restaurant and bar; The Snug; The Morse Bar and informal lounge and dining spaces The Drawing Room and The Lancaster Room. The Morse Bar will remain, preserving the building's heritage, paying homage to the filming of *Inspector Morse* at the hotel, with original design elements such as oak wooden panelling. Design throughout the property weaves the narratives of centuries of Oxford history into everything from common spaces to residential inspired guest room decor.

Website: <https://www.graduatehotels.com/oxford-uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RandolphHotelbyGraduateHotels>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/graduatehotels/>