

PRESS RELEASE



Adrian Houston 'The Spirit of Nature'

Exhibition Dates: 9th July until 5th August

Henley-on-Thames' River & Rowing Museum and the Informality gallery, in conjunction with the initiative Action Oak, are delighted to announce a new exhibition of works by renowned British photographer, Adrian Houston.

Entitled The Spirit of Nature, the retrospective will be held at Informality and will focus on Adrian's most recent landscape photography which saw him capture the ethereal beauty of Henley's bluebell woods. A percentage of each sale will be donated to the River & Rowing Museum and Action Oak, which is seeking to develop a coordinated plan to identify and tackle issues threatening our native oak trees.

Houston has a long-standing passion for trees, as witnessed by his on-going project, A Portrait of a Tree which seeks to both raise awareness about the need to preserve and protect trees from disease and human impact and illustrate how trees connect us all on a universal level. Four years in the making, the initiative has seen Adrian shoot the favourite trees of a diverse array of people, among them Sir Richard Branson, actress Goldie Hawn, Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason and Kew Gardens Head of Arboretum Tony Kirkham. Not only is the magnificence and atmosphere of each specimen captured for posterity, the personal story that accompanies each tree makes the final result even more impactful.

As Adrian reveals, his understanding of trees has been deepened still further through The Spirit of Nature. "By the middle of May, England's woodlands are a joy to behold. The contrast of their fresh green leaves against carpets of vibrant bluebells gives us a sense of wonder.

“Walking through a wood at any time of the day gives us a sense of peace. Having time to reconnect with nature is, after all, something every one of us needs. Quite simply it’s part of our soul. The way trees use a network of fungi beneath our feet to communicate with one another is part of a complex world we have only recently begun to discover. How to help our fellow species through times of challenge, risk, stress and illness is a lesson from which we can all learn.”

Throughout this series of photographs, we witness Adrian’s engagement with nature and his reaction to the environment around him. “Capturing the tranquil atmosphere of the woods as dawn broke and rays of golden sunlight filtering through the early morning mist, was a spiritual moment for me,” he says. “This connection we have with our natural world inspires the creative forces that lie in us all.”

Dr Sarah Posey, Director of The River and Rowing Museum, explains how Adrian’s dedication to tree conservation makes this the perfect partnership. “With the importance we place on promoting the protection of our natural environment, Adrian’s project couldn’t be closer to our heart. We’re therefore thrilled and very grateful that Adrian and Informality have so generously agreed to donate a portion of the proceeds of each sale to our cause. So many of us have found solace in nature during the lockdown. Adrian’s beautiful images of the bluebell woods near Henley will resonate with many residents.”

### About the Artist

Adrian Houston is a British photographer who lives and works in London. His passion for conservation has seen him travel to some of the world’s most unexplored and inhospitable terrains. Adrian’s work has been exhibited both at The National Gallery and The Royal Academy of Arts. Other acclaimed exhibitions include a fundraising initiative for Guide Dogs for the Blind at The Haunch of Venison at The Royal Academy of Arts showcasing his customarily innovative portraiture, on this occasion celebrity figures with their canine companions. He has earned several high-profile portrait commissions, among them the late Luciano Pavarotti, the Dalai Lama and Jim Carrey.

### About the River & Rowing Museum

The River & Rowing Museum is one of the UK’s leading independent museums. Situated in picturesque Henley on Thames and housed in an award-winning building on the banks of the river, the museum explores the River Thames, the international sport of rowing and the town of Henley. The galleries include interactive displays as well as internationally significant collections, including a permanent display of the work of John Piper, one of the most prolific and versatile modern British artists of the 20th century who lived near Henley. In addition, the Museum hosts a lively programme of temporary and touring exhibitions, collaborating with partners such as the National Portrait Gallery, the Ashmolean, the V&A and the Hayward Gallery in London. Working closely with organisations in our area, the Museum also has a Community Gallery which showcases a wide variety of local projects.

### About Informality

Informality is a contemporary art gallery established in 2019 in the centre of Henley-on-Thames by arts advisor Frederick McDonald and a collector of Australian contemporary art. The space was founded to support artists who are dedicated to themes of the environment and co-existence. It holds a nomadic programme and also fosters the awareness of Australasian contemporary art through site-specific collaborations. Informality’s first group show, Symbiosis, which ran from October 2019 to January 2020 embodied the gallery’s core ethos and brought together several artists on its roster and beyond to explore the relationship between art and the environment. Informality enhances its exhibition programme with accompanying talks and lectures. In February 2020 Frederick inaugurated the Informality Lecture Series, which involves talks tailored to aid emerging collectors in researching artists and understanding the art market.