



ENGLISH HERITAGE  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **NORTH EAST STUDENT GETS EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITY**

**A Newcastle University student has won the opportunity to exhibit alongside a number of prestigious artists at English Heritage's contemporary art exhibition 'Extraordinary Measures', taking place from May 1 to September 26 at Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens in Northumberland.**

Ciarán Treanor, 25, from Monaghan in Ireland, competed with his fellow final year students from Newcastle University's Department of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, to win the Belsay Fellowship. The award enables a younger, emerging artist to participate in the highly-regarded Belsay programme.

Ciarán's winning artwork, '*Wild Horses*', has emerged from the close collaboration between English Heritage and Newcastle University which offered all final year students on the course the opportunity to compete for the Fellowship as part of their degree.

Judith King, curator of the English Heritage contemporary programme and of the Extraordinary Measures exhibition, said: "Extraordinary Measures is the sixth major exhibition that I have curated at Belsay and it is exciting for us to be able to help nurture the talent of the younger generation, so they can see their work exhibited on equal terms with some of the established stars of the contemporary art scene. The Belsay Fellowship was a

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three week project where the judging panel saw some wonderful work from 17 projects in total.

“Ciarán’s background in architecture is an excellent fit for Belsay. The Hall itself is an architectural gem in the Greek revival style and, over the years, we have presented a range of artistic responses there from very well-known artists, designers, film makers and architects - Ciarán’s work will be seen alongside a number of acclaimed artists, including Ron Mueck, Tessa Farmer and Mat Collishaw. All of the students put a huge effort into their fantastic ideas and it was incredibly difficult to choose a winner.”

Before designing their projects, the final year students visited Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens and were given a number of locations to consider as a base for their exhibits.

Ciarán was attracted to and inspired by the lawn area near the stable block and Castle. He said: “This site was interesting to me as I felt a sense of loss there and a sense of forgotten history. My research revealed that this was where the carriages would have arrived at the old Castle, but there was no archaeological evidence as to where the horses were kept so Wild Horses came to symbolise how I felt about the site. Because Belsay is a historic site, I adapted my project so it worked within the necessary constraints and related to the real context of the area”.

“I wasn’t expecting to win and it’s absolutely fantastic that I did – working from an art perspective, rather than architecture has helped me look at the way I design. It was an extremely unique challenge and I’m very excited about what doors it’s going to open for me – to show my work in the same exhibition as such prestigious artists is a fantastic opportunity.”

Judith continued: “Ciarán’s design stood out as it showed great imagination and his thinking, post research, and the way he translated it for Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, was extremely feasible. For visitors, the visualisation of this will be both inspirational and wonderful.”

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English Heritage is grateful to its funding partners, Arts Council England, Northern Rock Foundation and One North East, whose support for Extraordinary Measures has made the exhibition possible. A number of other supporters, including Fenwick Ltd and the Barbour Charitable Trust, have contributed to what promises to be a wonderful addition to the region's cultural calendar.

Newcastle based Gradon Architecture provided Ciarán with support and guidance throughout his proposal in a mentoring role to help him develop his design concept. Gradon also liaised with Ciarán and steel fabrication contractors to bring his design ideas to fruition.

Visit [www.extraordinarymeasures.co.uk](http://www.extraordinarymeasures.co.uk) for more information.

**ENDS**

**Photo caption: Ciarán Treanor with his Wild Horses artwork which will be on display at the Extraordinary Measures exhibition from 1 May.**

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**Visitor Information**

*Extraordinary Measures* will be held at Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, Northumberland NE20 0DX from 1 May to 26 September 2010. During the exhibition Belsay will be open daily, 10am to 6pm.

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## Directions

Belsay is 14 miles NW of Newcastle, on the A696.

For more information visit [www.extraordinarymeasures.co.uk](http://www.extraordinarymeasures.co.uk) or call 01661 881636.

## About Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens

The Belsay that visitors enjoy today includes a medieval castle, a Greek Revival mansion that replaced the castle as a family residence at the beginning of the 19th century and an outstanding garden linking the two buildings, much of which was created out of the quarries that supplied the stone for the new house.

Belsay is the creation of the Middleton family, over a period of more than seven centuries. The great fortified tower that still dominates the castle was built both as a statement of family pride and as a response to the conflict and unrest in this border region between England and Scotland. It was then extended into a rambling country house after the union of the two kingdoms under King James I in 1603 brought relative peace. The Middletons lived in the castle until the completion in 1817 of the new mansion, which was designed by the then owner Sir Charles Monck (1779-1867).

Belsay Hall was inspired by what Sir Charles had seen on his extended honeymoon in Greece and is an imposing villa. Yet despite its austere façade, it had a comfortable interior, arranged round its amazing central 'Pillar Hall'. Under the terms of the guardianship agreement by which it passed to the care of the government in 1980, the hall is displayed without furnishings, revealing to visitors the fine craftsmanship that went into its construction.

Contrasting with the strict geometry of the hall, and linking it with the castle, the vast gardens are also largely Sir Charles' work. His romantic Quarry Garden, created where stone was cut for his hall, has ravines and sheer rock faces inspired by Sicilian quarries. His grandson, likewise a pioneering plantsman, further embellished the Quarry with exotic species, adding the Winter Garden, Yew Garden and Magnolia Terrace.

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The fact that Belsay Hall came to English Heritage unfurnished has provided the opportunity to interpret Belsay in a different way – through a series of contemporary art exhibitions. The first, *Living at Belsay* in 1996, brought together more than 200 examples of modern design. This was followed in 2000 by *Sitooteries*, a display of contemporary interpretations of traditional summerhouses, and *Sitting Pretty* in 2002. *Fashion at Belsay* in 2004 spread beyond the rooms of the hall to the grounds and the castle, with installations by fashion designers such as Alexander McQueen, Stella McCartney and Zandra Rhodes. And three years later, *Picture House* saw film directors and producers, actors and artists transform Belsay filling the spaces with sound, scents and animation.

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