

Kathryn M Holford (1962 – 2023)

Celebrating the life of leading glass designer and artist

Exhibition dates: 9th March – 1st April 2024

Fen Ditton Gallery, Cambridge

This exhibition has been organised in collaboration with Kathryn's husband Mark Rowden



Kathryn M Holford designing and project managing the glass and precision metals production for ['Tamdhu 50'](#), a rare 50-year old malt whisky. Image: August 2016, Mark Rowden

Fen Ditton Gallery, Cambridge, stages a major exhibition to celebrate the life of one of the UK's leading glass designers, who stepped away from the hustle of commercial design at the height of her career to find peace in her own creative practice. The exhibition, which opens at the gallery in March 2024, will showcase some of Kathryn's most significant works in glass and paint, including a rare re-issue of a limited-edition vase in collaboration with master-glassmaker Bob Crooks, with whom Kathryn worked with on many of her designs.

Kathryn Margaret Holford led a remarkable life as an accomplished artist, sculptor, and award-winning international designer. Born on 7th June 1962, in Fen Ditton, Cambridge, Kathryn's artistic journey began under the alias Katy Holford. Accepted to the Royal College of Art, she demonstrated exceptional talent, earning recognition early in her career and was awarded the Rosenthal Young Designer of the Year Award in 1988.

Kathryn etched her name among renowned brands, contributing her skills to household names and luxury brands like Wedgwood, Atlantis Crystal, and Perrier Jouet. Her bespoke pieces and sculptures grace the rooms of The Savoy, Claridge's and Malmaison Hotels, as well as in Royal Palaces and private residences globally. They also appear in numerous television shows and movies, including Cumbria Crystal designs in James Bond and Downton Abbey.

In 2004, Kathryn embraced a new challenge by winning the Eureka initiative sponsored by Laurent-Perrier. Subsequently, she took on the role of CEO and Creative Director at Cumbria Crystal, where she oversaw a bustling studio and continued to create beautiful designs in glass. Her dedication and innovative approach earned her accolades and awards, solidifying her legacy in the design world.

During Kathryn's years of glass design, she worked with one of the UK's most established glassmakers, Bob Crooks. Bob has remaining in his studio a cast designed by Kathryn and enough of her materials to make a limited-edition of 10 vases which will be exclusively available at the exhibition.



Sculptural vases, designed by Katy Holford. A limited edition re-issue of these vases have been commissioned for the exhibition by master-glassmaker Bob Crooks, in Katy's memory.

Kathryn's artistic journey reached a turning point in 2016 when, upon moving to Normandy with Mark, she decided to step away from the pressures of the commercial design world and in her own words taken from a diary entry;

"I discovered the latent desire to paint... The desire had been pushed down so deep when I was very young that it took some 50-odd years of life, therapy, and a need for a life change to surface... Being a beginner again was hard. I had been at the top of my profession just a few months before. My ego was in outrage. However, what I loved the intimacy of painting. It is just me and the canvas. No clients, marketeers, factories, and workshops to get in between me and my creative process."



Kathryn experimenting with body paint, 'as a means of losing all inhibitions', La Cressonnière, Tanques, France. Image: Mark Rowden. August 2018.



Kathryn M Holford: Towards Hay Wood, 60 x 60cm, oil on board

In Mark's words, "Kathryn was the most creative force I have known in my life, and I say this not as her husband and friend but as a fellow creative. She was courageous in both her work and her life. We supported each other's creativity with an unrivalled commitment. Together, we chose creativity over all other concerns and values during what became her last few years. The time we devoted to each other in Normandy and East Anglia produced some of her finest work. Her passion to continually start again, as though with a beginner's mind, was irrepressible. She was drawn to the light, in glass, in paint, in life itself. Her mission was to create heaven on earth. No small ambition. But nothing drawn from the ego. She never pretended art or design. She *was* art and design – she embodied pure creativity."

Fen Ditton Gallery manager, Hannah Munby comments; "It feels very poignant to be celebrating Kathryn's life with this exhibition here at Fen Ditton Gallery, not only because it is remarkably in the village where Kathryn was born and spent her first years, but also because she and Mark were regular visitors and supporters of the gallery before she passed away. Kathryn was always enthusiastic about the work we did here, so it feels right to honour her with this show, back in the village where it all began for her."

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KEY NOTES

About the exhibition:

Special preview: 7th March 2024

Opening dates: 9th March – 1st April 2024

Fen Ditton Gallery, 23 High Street, Fen Ditton, Cambridge CB5 8ST

Mark Rowden and Hannah Munby are available for interview.

For media enquiries and interviews, please contact Hannah on info@fendittongallery.com

About Fen Ditton Gallery:



Interior of Fen Ditton Gallery, during 'Plantlife' exhibition



Exterior of Fen Ditton Gallery

Fen Ditton Gallery (est. 2018) is a contemporary art gallery on the outskirts of Cambridge, run by mother and daughter duo, Lotte Attwood and Hannah Munby, with curatorial and programme advice from independent curator Amanda Game.

Housed in a beautiful converted Victorian National School building, the gallery is also Lotte's home and provides a welcoming environment in which to view and collect works of art from world-renowned artists and makers, as well as supporting the next generation of emerging talent.

For more information about the gallery, visit fendittongallery.com