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Press Release

Lyndie Wright The Curious Art of Puppetry

Make Hauser & Wirth Somerset
18 August – 13 October 2024
Opening Day: Saturday 17 August, 11 am – 6 pm



This exhibition celebrates an extraordinary collection of puppets that spans 65 years of Lyndie Wright's work —a lifelong dedication to the art of puppetry. Her artistic vision continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of British puppetry and this exhibition serves as a testament to her enduring impact on the craft. Each puppet tells a unique story, weaving together the magic, creativity and craftsmanship that has made Wright a luminary in the world of puppetry. Lyndie Wright is still making full-time and teaching, passing on her skills to the next generation of artists, and inspiring audiences young and old with her creations.

About the exhibition

The exhibition brings together an extraordinary collection of original puppet creations crafted at Lyndie Wright's workshop in Islington in London, UK. The works on view encapsulate Wright's relentless commitment and creativity, focusing on her own style of world renowned table-top, rod and glove puppets and carved marionettes.

Designing and making for theatre and film, Wright's puppets have performed for companies such as the Little Angel Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, Kneehigh, Wise Children and National Theatre, and have been an influential presence in the films of her son, director Joe Wright. A fearsome Oskar from 'The Tin Drum' will occupy centre stage, a beguiling Roxanne from the film 'Cyrano,' characters from 'Tzar Sultan,' 'Macbeth' and 'Wild Night of the Witches' will be among the very many curious scenarios that will greet visitors.

The exhibition also features the recreation of a corner of her workshop, comprising of puppets in the making, inspirational imagery, tools and materials, photographs, pamphlets and posters. This ephemera not only brings to life Lyndie Wright's story, but also offers a rare chance to experience the magical world of puppet theatre.

About Lyndie Wright

Lyndie Wright has been designing and bringing remarkable puppets to life since her youth. She and her sister grew up in a house where there was no art, yet their passion for painting was undeniable from a young age, resourcefully employing any materials at their disposal. Her creativity evolved into a fascination with string

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puppets, leading her to craft miniature heads from papier-mâché at home; this artistry became her refuge throughout childhood. As her art school training in South Africa came to an end, she happened across the work of puppeteer John Wright, who was touring in South Africa. In true 'Lyndie' style, she immediately asked for a job and, one month later, was a member of the touring company.

After moving from South Africa to England in 1958, she attended Central School of Art in London as a painter. In 1961, Lyndie and her now husband, John Wright, founded the renowned Little Angel Theatre. Living in the little cottage next door to the theatre, with the workshop between, Lyndie and John together defined the landscape of British puppetry at the time. Puppeteers and craftspeople trained with them, joined the company, brought materials to life in the workshop, ran the box office, poured the coffee, toured in the van and watched the shows in their countless iterations and locations. Having been inspired by John and Lyndie's work, those puppeteers have in turn created and grown theatres and companies across the world from Scotland to South Africa, across Europe and the USA.

Lyndie Wright recalls how it was touring across Europe annually, seeing the use of puppets across the continent, East and West, that deeply influenced her own puppetry style. Marionettes, carved wooden string puppets, had been the Little Angel's staple form but exploration in scale, materials and staging during the 1960 and 70s produced some of her most celebrated work and informs her designs to this day.

At home, puppetry was not just a work activity; it was an essential part of everyday family life. Lyndie Wright's children, nurtured in an environment saturated with art, have pursued successful creative careers of their own; Sarah Wright is a puppeteer, puppet director and the founder of the Curious School of Puppetry, and Joe Wright a renowned film director (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Atonement*, *Anna Karenina*, *Darkest Hour*).

Lyndie Wright's workshop remains a home for puppetry, a crucible and catalyst for creativity. It is a hive of daily activity, as her profound love for her craft makes the thought of stopping unthinkable. 'What would I do if I stopped?' she says 'I love what I do.'

'Lyndie is an amazing designer who puts a spirit into everything she creates. Her creations are extraordinary beings. People feel it as soon as they see or touch her puppets, the puppets have a life of their own. The challenge of the puppeteer is to find out how to bring that life to the forefront to tell the right story.'

—Sarah Wright, Founder of the Curious School of Puppetry



Lyndie Wright's work includes making for: *Kneehigh: The Tin Drum*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*, *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, *Brief Encounter*. Little Angel Theatre: *Angelo*, *Singing Mermaid*, *Petrushka*, *Pixie and the Pudding*. The Puppet Barge: *The Selfish Giant*. Shakespeare's Globe: *The Little Matchgirl*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (dir. Emma Rice), *Macbeth* (dir. Iqbal Khan). *Young Vic: A Season in the Congo*. Royal Shakespeare

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Company: Venus and Adonis (with Little Angel), A Midsummer Night's Dream (dir Greg Doran). National Theatre: Coram Boy. Silent Tide: The Adventures of Curious Ganz. For film: Cyrano, Anna Karenina, Hanna, Atonement.

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Make opening hours:

Thursday – Saturday, 11 am – 6 pm
Sunday, 11 am – 5 pm

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Lyndie Wright. Photo: Sarah Ainslie

Lyndie Wright puppet workshop. Photo: Jemima Yong

Lyndie Wright's Very Old Man. Photo: Lynette Shanbury

Lyndie Wright's Oskar from Tin Drum. Photo: Steve Tanner