

## PRESS RELEASE – 13 November 2019

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SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES:

Instagram, John Abell - [www.instagram.com/john.abell/](http://www.instagram.com/john.abell/)

Instagram, Arusha Gallery - [www.instagram.com/arushagallery](http://www.instagram.com/arushagallery)

Instagram, National Trust - @ntwales @ntcarmarthenshire

Website - [www.arushagallery.com/](http://www.arushagallery.com/)

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### **On the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rebecca Riots, Welsh artist John Abell creates new exhibition in West Wales**

**A brand new exhibition by Cardiff based artist John Abell will open at National Trust, Newton House, Dinefwr, Carmarthenshire in January 2020 marking the anniversary of the Rebecca Riots and commissioned as a response to the 2019 National Trust ‘People’s Landscape’ theme**

The exhibition, titled *Becca and her Children*, by John Abell represents the riots which took place in Mid and West Wales between 1839 - 1843. Running from 17 January to 26 April 2020, the exhibition, which will be held at Newton House, presents a series of new paintings, linocuts and etchings made by Abell during his three-week residency at Dinefwr during September 2019 - the first Artist in Residency programme that the National Trust have undertaken at Dinefwr.

‘History is an essential part of the present, and I immediately wanted the opportunity to respond to such an inspiring place through my artwork’. – John Abell

Responding directly to the rich and tumultuous history of Newton House, Dinefwr and in particular the Rebecca Riots, Abell’s body of work examines the daily life, beliefs and camaraderie of the Rioters as they rose up in protest against the Turnpike Trusts and the introduction of road tolls in rural Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire. During the Riots in 1839-1843, men disguised themselves as women to attack the tolls. They called themselves ‘Rebecca and her daughters’, likely inspired by a passage in the Bible where Rebecca talks of the need to ‘possess the gates of those who hate them’ (Genesis XXIV, verse 60). One of the linocuts sees the biblical Jesse Tree transported into rural Wales, rich with symbolism it further merges past and present, tale and history with its moving imagery.

Artist John Abell said “This will be my most ambitious show to date - a large and diverse body of work in an amazing historic location, which means a lot to me. I made the work in Newton House and Home Farm, where I stayed during my residency in September. The rioters burnt stacks of wheat from Home Farm, and that event was used as subject matter for the Fire In the Night paintings. Visitors to the exhibition can expect an ambitious show of contemporary painting and print in the amazing Newton House, in the stunning grounds of Dinefwr.”

Born in 1986, John Abell studied at Camberwell College of Art; he currently lives and works in Cardiff. John is particularly known for his large-scale wood block prints and highly coloured watercolour paintings which explore life, love, lust, the embodied experience. The work is charged with a sense of fear and death, pessimism or even nihilism along with a large pinch of gallows humour. His aim is to represent human feeling, the world and himself as honestly as he can with no intellectual mediation.

John is represented by Arusha Gallery, a contemporary gallery with its main premises in Edinburgh's historic New Town. Opening in 2013, Arusha runs an annual programme of exhibitions, events and fairs, both nationally and internationally, with regular collaborations with guest artists, curators, festivals and institutions.

Agnieszka Prendota, Creative Director at Arusha Gallery said "John's works expand the take on the narrative of Rebecca Riots, similarly inclusive and almost a continuation of the focus on telling a story of the Other taken by the amazing Amy Dillwyn in 'The Rebecca Rioter'. He takes it a step further by looking at people on the edges of the riots-the psychological implications and motivations that led to organised uproar, the sense of community and camaraderie that intensifies in crisis. His works have the multi-layered nature of visions-religious epiphanies and psychedelic clarity at once. "

John's prints and publications are held in private and public collections worldwide, including the V&A; the National Museum of Wales; the British Museum, the National Library of Australia, Canberra; the National Library of Canada, Ottawa and Columbia University Library, New York.

Funded by the Arts Council of Wales and The National Trust the residency is part of the National Trust 'People's Landscape' programme for 2019.

Meg Anthony, General Manager National Trust Carmarthenshire said "We're thrilled that John Abell has undertaken Dinefwr's first artist residency, and can't wait to see the outcome of the project when it will be displayed in the Newton House in the New Year. John's been sharing some tantalising images online and the new work looks wonderful. We're also really grateful to Arusha Gallery for their active support".

The full catalogue of works for purchase is available from Arusha Gallery please enquire by emailing [info@arushagallery.com](mailto:info@arushagallery.com) or on 0131 557 1412 <https://www.arushagallery.com/>

**John Abell's *Becca and her Children* exhibition runs from 17 January to 26 April 2020 at National Trust Newton House Dinefwr, Llandeilo.**

Press view will take place on the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> January. Invitations and further details to follow.

**-ENDS-**

**For further information please contact Nia Llewelyn Jones at The Corner Shop  
PR on 0797 451 9360 [nia@thecornershoppr.com](mailto:nia@thecornershoppr.com)**

### **LISTINGS**

Becca and her Children Exhibition by artist John Abell  
National Trust, Newton House, Dinefwr Park, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 6RT  
17 January to 26 April 2020  
11am – 3pm  
Exhibition admission is free. Normal admission fee of £8.50 to Newton House applies.

### **Instagram:**

John Abell, Artist: [www.instagram.com/john.abell](http://www.instagram.com/john.abell)  
Instagram, National Trust - @ntwales @ntcarmarthenshire  
Instagram, Arusha Gallery - [www.instagram.com/arushagallery](http://www.instagram.com/arushagallery)

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

## **Biography**

### **John Abell**

Born in 1986, John Abell studied at Camberwell College of Art; he is currently based in Cardiff. John is particularly known for his large-scale wood block prints and highly coloured watercolour paintings which explore life, love, lust and the human condition. The work is charged with a sense of fear and death, pessimism or even nihilism along with a large pinch of gallows humour. His aim is to represent human feeling, the world and himself as honestly as he can with no intellectual mediation.

John's prints and publications are held in private and public collections worldwide, including the V&A; the National Museum of Wales; the British Museum, the National Library of Australia, Canberra; the National Library of Canada, Ottawa and Columbia University Library, New York.

His newest body of work is responding directly to the rich and tumultuous history of Newton House, Dinefwr and in particular the Rebecca Riots (1839 – 43), Abell's body of work examines the daily life, beliefs and camaraderie of the Rioters.

### **Arusha Gallery**

Arusha Gallery is a contemporary art gallery with its main premises in Edinburgh's historic New Town. Opening in 2013, Arusha runs an annual programme of exhibitions, events and fairs, both nationally and internationally, with regular collaborations with guest artists, curators, festivals and institutions.

### **The National Trust**

The National Trust is a conservation charity founded in 1895 by three people who saw the importance of our nation's heritage and open spaces, and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. More than 120 years later, these values are still at the heart of everything the charity does. Entirely independent of Government, the National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 780 miles of coastline and hundreds of special places across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. More than 26 million people visit every year, and together with 5.2 million members and over 61,000 volunteers, they help to support the charity in its work to care for special places for ever, for everyone.

For more information and ideas for great seasonal days out go to: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

### **Arts Council of Wales**

Arts Council of Wales (ACW) is responsible for funding and developing the arts in Wales. ACW is an independent charity, established by Royal Charter in 1994. Its members are appointed by the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure. ACW's principal sponsor is the Welsh Government but they also distribute funding from the National Lottery and raise additional money from a variety of public and private sector sources.

Working together with the Welsh Government, they are able to show how the arts are helping to meet the Government's policy ambitions. Arts Council of Wales' vision is of a creative Wales where the arts are central to the life and well-being of the nation.

**ARUSHA**  
GALLERY

  
Ymddiriedolaeth  
Genedlaethol  
National Trust

  
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