

Chester launches bonanza of fun events to show off its natural assets

New arts programme opens with intriguing installation “The Nest”



Photos: Jonny Noakes

Chester, 26 October 2021: Visitors to Chester will be invited to explore an enchanted forest and cocoon themselves in creativity this autumn at The Nest (pictured), one of the highlights of a new arts programme titled Chester Designed By Nature.

Chester Designed By Nature will embrace and explore the natural world, which defines Chester’s beautiful cityscape, through events, activities and amazing large-scale sculptural installations that will pop up across the city during the next six months.

The Nest is the first of the art installations, a magical space where imaginations can run free, created in an empty shop in the city centre by the outdoor arts organisation Wild Rumpus and immersive design artist Rachel Shore. Visitors will step off the busy high street into the depths of a woodland, making their way along an avenue of trees and through a clearing – a performance and activity space – to a geodome made cosy with rugs and cushions, where more intimate artistic experiences, such as storytelling, will take place.

During winter, Wild Rumpus will turn everyone’s attention to the night sky with The Roving Moon, a light installation by the artist Jess Rost. It will be placed on top of different buildings from 25 November. More celebrations of light in deep winter will include torchlit midwinter parades the Winter Watch and Saturnalia (9, 16 Dec) and The Lanterns at Chester Zoo (12 Nov-23 Dec).

Other winter happenings will include the return of the annual Christmas Market (18 Nov-22 Dec), theatre performances, campfire stories, and workshops on songwriting and arts and textiles. Santa will make a special appearance in his Enchanted Grotto (<https://experiencechester.co.uk/event/santas-enchanted-grotto>). More events and activities will be announced in due course.

Refresh, a new programme bringing a range of arts and cultural activity to the heart of the city, will host two story-writing events. A Stitch in Time (21 Nov-22 Jan) will explore the city’s architecture and the stories its buildings hold. Front Row Stories (21 Dec-22 Mar) is a series of new writing and story creation inspired by the history and characters of the Rows – the medieval, first-floor open galleries that line Chester’s four main streets.

The Rows are also the focus of a new Chester Rows Medieval Meet and Greet Experience. For the next 12 months, guides dressed as medieval soldiers will patrol the city centre to share the incredible story of these unique structures. Meanwhile, a self-guided trail, Discover The Rows, will be launched on the Visit Cheshire website this winter, offering the chance for locals and visitors to leisurely dip into the history of these beautiful buildings at their own pace.

Chester Designed By Nature is the initiative of Destination Chester, a network of the city's tourism businesses, with support from Wild Rumpus and the city's cultural centre, Storyhouse.

For more details, go to www.visitchester.com.

****COMING SOON TO THE NEST...****

4 November: Guided Meditation

A cosy guided meditation will be held in the sanctuary of The Nest, where participants can press pause for a moment and, just like the leaves beginning to fall from the trees, learn to gracefully let go. Chloë Webster, from Girl Meditates, will gently guide the three 30-minute meditation sessions, which aim to decompress the body and relax the mind and soul.

6 November: Only Human

Four electronic musicians from Only Human will showcase their unique take on the themes of hibernation and shelter at this special event. Pieces specially written for the evening, featuring autumnal sequences and wintry arpeggios, will be performed live using both modular and hardware synthesizers.

10 & 11 November: Chester Songwriters

Chester Songwriters will reveal how the mysterious process of writing songs comes to life at a special workshop on 10 November. Budding and even accomplished songwriters, or those just interested in the arts, are welcome to join in and even bring along their own work for comment or advice. On the following evening, Chester Songwriters will perform a variety of original songs from a wide range of genres and influences and share with the audience the events and circumstances behind the songs.

17 November: Story Cafe

Lisa Rossetti, a local poet and Words for Wellbeing practitioner, will lead "Hearth Tales", A Story Café for adults. The aim is to create safety, self-care and community in these difficult times, reflecting on the natural and city environment and coping with change as winter approaches. Drawing on the rich heritage of seasonal folk tales, the event will bring people together to listen, connect and create new stories about Chester.

20 November: Autumn Headdress Workshop

Victorian millinery is the inspiration for this workshop with the artist Estelle Woolley, especially the use of flamboyant head pieces, which often incorporated natural materials such as feathers and birds. Participants will learn how to make an autumn-inspired headdress, using curiosities and natural objects that are ethically sourced or foraged locally, such as fresh flowers, feathers, leaves and shells.

To book, go to www.storyhouse.com/post/blog/step-inside-the-nest-this-autumn

Events are subject to government guidance and any local Covid-19 measures at the time.

Notes to editors:

For further information, images and press trips, contact Kate Simon on 07939 526109 or kate@traveltappers.co.uk.

About the Welcome Back Fund and Northern Powerhouse

Funding to provide the services in this project is provided by the **Welcome Back Fund** (WBF). WBF is managed by Her Majesty's Government and is supported by the European Regional Development Fund. The project is receiving more than £300,000 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Department for levelling up Housing and Communities (and in London the intermediate body Greater London Authority) is the Managing Authority for the European Regional Development Fund. Established by the European Union, the European Regional Development Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects that will support innovation, businesses, and create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>.

About Destination Chester is a new economic network led by the city's attractions to drive tourism in and around Chester. It has brought Chester Designed By Nature to the city with the help of partners Wild Rumpus (Just So Festival, The Lanterns at Chester Zoo) and Storyhouse.

About Storyhouse

Storyhouse (www.storyhouse.com) is one of the UK's foremost cultural centres, incorporating a library, theatres and a cinema. It is one of the country's most successful arts buildings, with more than one million customer visits each year. The pioneering new library within Storyhouse, where members of the community work alongside city librarians, features the longest opening hours of any UK public library, open every day until 11pm. It runs more than 2,000 sessions a year for marginalised communities. The company also runs a highly successful theatre company and the country's most successful regional open-air theatre, in the city's Grosvenor Park and Moonlight Flicks open-air cinema. Storyhouse currently holds the official title as the UK's Most Welcoming Theatre and was the overall national winner in the 2018 Guardian Public Service Awards.

About Wild Rumpus

Wild Rumpus (www.wildrumpus.org.uk) exists in a space where arts and culture meet the natural environment. Working from the Whirligig, four acres of woodland in Cheshire, it creates experiences that inspire curiosity and immerse audiences in incredible stories and moments of wonder. Wild Rumpus delivers other ambitious outdoor arts events, including The Lanterns at Chester Zoo (12 Nov-23 Dec 2021), Palace of Stardust at Hampton Court Palace (8 Dec 2021-3 Jan 2022), Hinterlands Film Festival in Skipton (13-15 May 2022), Just So Festival for families on the Rode Hall Estate in Cheshire (19-21 Aug 2022), and Timber Festival in the National Forest (1-3 July 2022). The outdoor arts organisation also run an extensive volunteer and talent-development programme, working with performers, producers and programmers to shape a cultural environment where excellent outdoor work thrives.

About Refresh, Chester Rows Medieval Meet and Greet Experience, and Discover The Rows

Refresh, Chester Rows Medieval Meet and Greet, and Discover The Rows are part of the Chester High Street Heritage Action Zone project, funded by Historic England.

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