

A breath of *fresh air*

A thousand silicone jelly shoes and scores of cup cakes hanging from a tree – just part of the famous sculpture exhibition in Quenington this month

The new wooden bench outside the front door of the Old Rectory is sinking sideways. The gravel drive has already engulfed a third of it. Two of its legs have disappeared and the rest look set to follow. And why should it be otherwise? In fact it would be odd if the seat was level and could be sat on – for this is Fresh Air.

The quirky, the daft, the funny and the beautiful will once again be on display at the biennale sculpture exhibition in Quenington (June 16 - July7). This year there will be a thousand silicone jelly shoes forming a circular floor, scores of cup cakes hanging from a tree, floating glass bottles, fabric stags, bronzes, castings and carvings and of course the sinking bench.

Fresh Air, set in the five-acre garden in the Coln Valley, is now one of the country's leading open-air sculpture exhibitions. Twenty-one years after its inception it has become a must-see summer pilgrimage for anyone interested in garden art.

It is not and never has been for the traditionalists. There are no staddle stones or cast cupids here, in fact it is a safe bet that nothing here can be found in the local garden centre (except perhaps a working garden bench). Fresh Air is at the cutting edge and almost a hundred artists, from the established to the new, will be displaying and selling their work at prices ranging from £50 to £50,000. There will be, among the scores of exhibits, Natalia Dias's ceramic porcelain thorns assembled over the



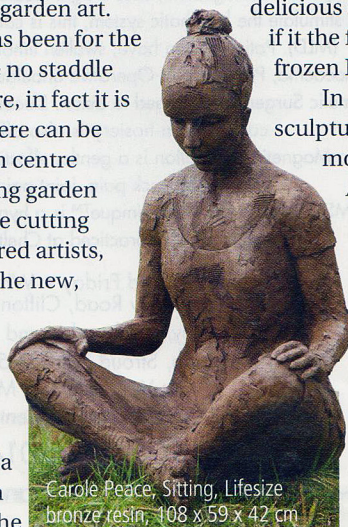
Hannah Davies, A Bench, 140 x 82 x 55cm

trunk and branches of a tree, a life-size driftwood bronze foal by Heather Jansch, Louisa Forbes' lead Spartan horse and a swing seat made entirely from oak by Andrew Trotman.

And this year there will be an additional attraction – a pop up restaurant. Alium, Fairford's renowned restaurant for Modern British Food, will run an evening of 'extraordinary food in an extraordinary setting'. Chef James Graham, who has been described as 'a food crusader championing high quality local produce' will offer dishes that compliment the art. (I was lucky enough to have a foretaste of the food and one delicious dish, skate on ice, looked as if it the fish was emerging from a frozen River Coln).

In addition to the spectacle of sculpture and the art of Alium is a more serious purpose. Fresh Air runs an education programme for over 850 children including

workshops for the disabled and special needs schools while children from local primary and secondary schools are invited to visit the show. And I bet you a pound to a penny that every one of them tries to sit on that sinking bench. ■



Carole Peace, Sitting, Lifesize bronze resin, 108 x 59 x 42 cm



Taz Lovejoy, Metamorphosis, an installation of silicone cupcake moulds

FRESH AIR is open from 10am – 5pm including weekends. Admission is £2.50 for adults, children free. Catalogues are £5 each. Light lunches and snacks available in the refreshment tent. Visit www.freshair2013.com for further information
For reservations for the pop up Alium (June 22) call 01285 712200