

New Sculptures plus £1m creative spaces set to be unveiled at Marchmont House

Due to be unveiled next month at the spectacular 18th-century Marchmont House in the Borders, will be new studios and workshops plus two specially commissioned sculptures.

More than £1 million of private money has been invested in the Creative Spaces project which aims to provide high quality, affordable work spaces for artists and craft makers.

A special event marking the launch of the studios and workshops with talks, tours, films and catering by celebrity chef Valentine Warner will take place on 19 September.

Marchmont House has one of the finest collections of UK sculpture and the event will also include the unveiling of two newly commissioned pieces called Sky Boat and Dancing Tree by Charlie Poulsen.



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Hugo Burge, Marchmont's director, said: "Artists and craft makers are facing incredibly tough times at the moment, but we believe it's essential for our culture, society and economy to support them so they can rebuild and flourish.

"The Creative Spaces launch represents a huge step forward in our aim to make Marchmont a home for artists, makers and creatives of many kinds. By having a new centre where the highest quality arts and craft are created and celebrated we hope to help promote some of the finest talent from across Scotland and the rest of the UK."

Some Creative Spaces tenants will live as well as work at Marchmont. The first of eight studios (more are planned) is being taken by fresco painter Julia Alexandra Mee, who was previously based in Edinburgh, who will also live in one of the estate cottages.

The studios and workshops have been created by the conversion of a series of 19th-century outbuildings round a courtyard near the house and its spectacular walled garden.

Visitors at the launch will also meet Marchmont's first artist in residence Valentine Warner (who is also a well-known chef) who will be creating a 3D collage inspired by the estate and the 1750 Grade 'A' Palladian mansion, which has one of the finest Georgian and Arts & Crafts interiors in Scotland.

Many will be familiar with Valentine from his books and his TV programmes. He has a deep love of provincial cooking and an attraction of the event is that he will be doing the catering.

Valentine, who is also taking on the role of Marchmont's gastronomic partner – creating menus and providing catering for future events – said: "The artwork and the cooking will be inspired by the house, the estate and the region. I love creating food that reflects the culinary traditions of an area and what is available in the countryside and the markets, rather than imposing things from the outside. So I'll probably never serve up a mango at Marchmont."



Artist Julia Alexandra Mee at work on the murals. © *Colin Hattersley Photography*

Similarly he will spend time exploring the estate and house for objects and features to include in the collage, but already plans to reference the William Morris interior decorations and the owl towers in the grounds.

Located near Greenlaw in the Scottish Borders, Marchmont House

is only open to the public for a limited number of days each year, for tours and special events. It was awarded the 2018 Historic Houses/Sotheby's Award for the recently completed seven-year restoration, which was described by the jury as "stunning".

The Creative Spaces project is entirely privately funded by Marchmont Farms Limited and has not called on grants from the public sector or charities – which are facing immense demands for their limited resources.

The project's value has already been demonstrated by the establishing of The Marchmont Workshop, which has saved the great 19th-century tradition of Arts & Crafts rush seated ladder back chairs for a new chapter in the Scottish Borders.