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HISTORY REVISITED

Jessica Doyle looks at an exhibition combining history and conceptual craft at *The Vyne* in Hampshire, and gives a round-up of other news and events



FROM LEFT Charlie Whinney's bent-wood sculpture for the Music Room was inspired by Tudor music and dance. For the Library, Maria Rivans created an installation using books decorated with paper figures and scenes inspired by John Chute's experiences of the Grand Tour. The hand-carved oak pomegranates by Alec Stevens in the Oak Gallery are a reference to Catherine of Aragon

Visitors to *The Vyne* in Hampshire this summer may be surprised to find themselves stumbling upon a pile of carved wooden pomegranates, a flock of fabric pigeons and a troupe of tiny cut-paper eighteenth-century dandies. The National Trust property is the latest to be involved in *Unravelled*, a project set up to give artists working in fine and conceptual craft a platform for their work, and 10 artists have created installations in response to its history.

Built in the sixteenth century for Henry VIII's lord chamberlain, Lord Sandys, the house has connections with several historical and cultural figures: Henry himself visited on several occasions, with two of his wives, and Elizabeth I is thought to have signed Mary Queen of Scots' death warrant while staying there. Later it was owned by John Chute, who formed the 'Committee on Taste' with Horace Walpole and Richard Bentley; Jane Austen attended dances at the house; and J.R.R. Tolkien is reputed to have been inspired by a gold ring that is displayed there.

'The different people who have owned the house all brought their

characters to it and that is still apparent when you visit it today,' says Polly Harknett, one of the exhibition's curators. 'There are so many different stories.' Hence the wooden pomegranates, carved by Alec Stevens, were inspired by the panelling in the Oak Gallery, created to celebrate Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, whose symbol was the pomegranate. The fact that they are displayed as if brushed under a carpet is a reference to Henry's later visit with Anne Boleyn.

Caitlin Heffernan, another of the curators and an artist herself, has created a textile tree installed in the Tapestry Room, the roots of which emerge from the fireplace in the room below. 'The Tapestry Room is a wonderful, imaginative place with lots of references to trees and exotic birds,' she explains. 'I wanted to explore the idea that one of these trees had sprung out of the tapestry and taken root.'

Meanwhile in the Music Room, Charlie Whinney has created a piece comprising two bent-wood structures, to represent a couple dancing, for which he researched Tudor music and dances. 'The house has been in constant use since it was built; it's never been closed up, so in a way it's a living entity,' he says. 'I wanted to encapsulate one moment in time.' *'Unravelling The Vyne'* is at *The Vyne, Basingstoke, Hampshire*, until December 22. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/vyne | www.unravelled.org.uk >