



PULLENS YARDS OPEN 2016 STUDIOS

CENTRE OF LONDON'S HAND CRAFTS
UNIQUE GIFTS

TORRENCE
CONRAN
TIMEOUT

ILIFFE YARD SE17 3QA
CLEMENTS YARD SE17 3LJ
PEACOCK YARD SE17 3LH

10 JUNE 6:30-9:30pm
11 & 12 JUNE 11am-6pm

COME TOGETHER

PULLENS YARDS

It is that special moment again, when the Pullens Yards fling open their iron gates, and invite the world in – the Summer Open Studios. What is special about it?

Pullens Yards were purpose-built for designer-makers in the late 1880s. The studios have housed craftspeople, working with their hands, for a hundred and twenty years. Unsurprisingly, over this length of time, what most of the craftspeople produce has evolved: at one time the Yards boasted lace makers, fan makers and cabinet makers; who have been replaced by today's filmmakers, jewellers and artist potters. A few crafts have stayed, furniture designers and letterpress printers are here now, just as in the days of Queen Victoria.

Hannah Arendt wrote of "homo faber", humans fully engaged in shaping the world around them, by actually producing that world with their hands. Making

involves thinking about what you make, which amounts to careful thinking about everything that surrounds you. Thinking carefully about making, naturally results in made things that exhibit sensitivity, practicality and beauty.

Richard Sennett in his recent book "The Craftsman" puts it even more succinctly: "making is thinking". Making anything necessarily involves "an intimate connection between hand and head". By making repeatedly you learn from materials and effects, and strive to find better ways of working. This striving unifies everyone in the Yards, no matter whether they make photographs, paintings, silver dogs, wooden chairs or musical instruments.

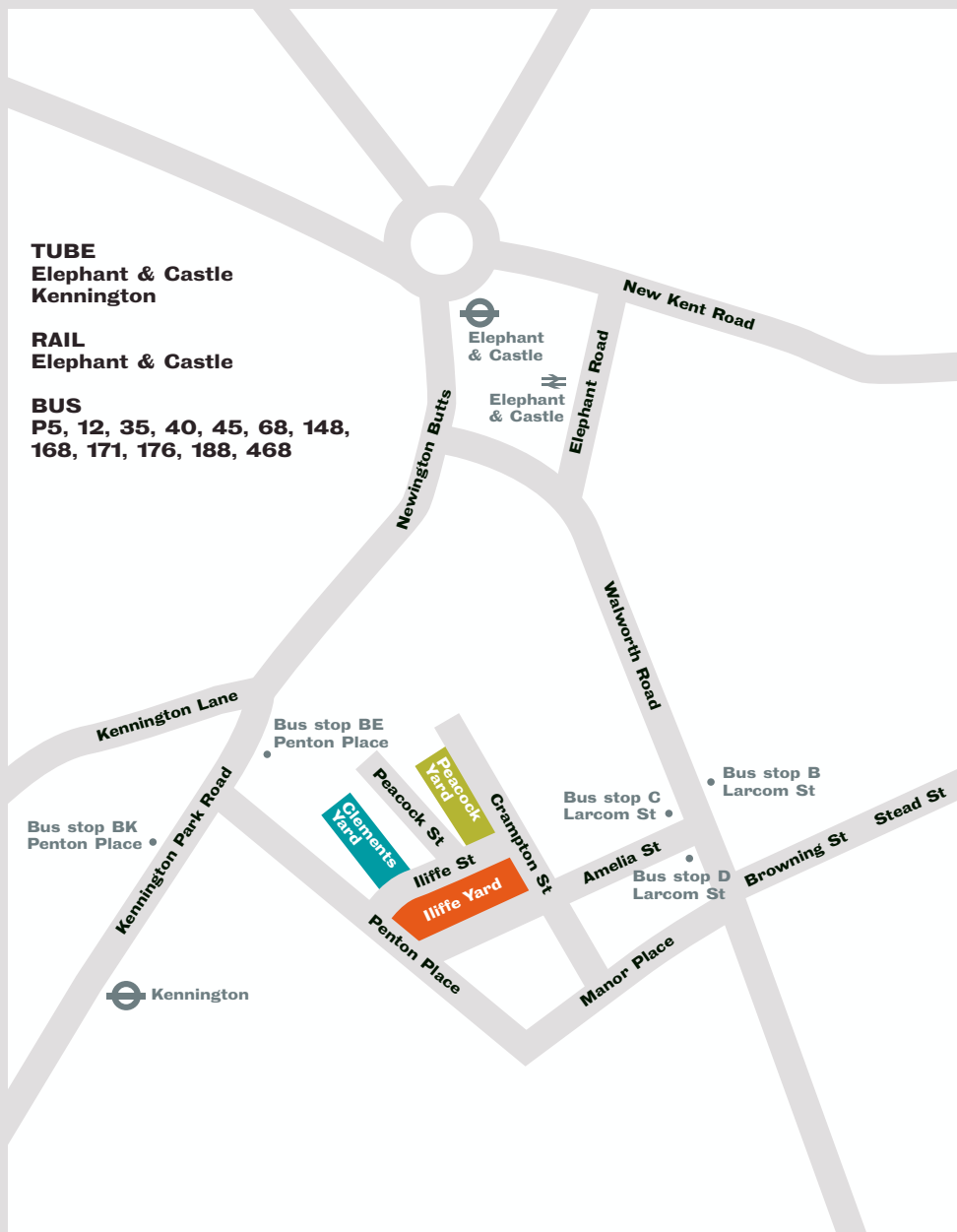
Sennett again: "craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake". This is a rare thing in our increasingly robot-made, genericised, that-will-do, cold-calling world. The Yards are a special place, a home to thoughtful making, and on this special weekend we welcome you to participate.

Quentin Newark



SAVE THE DATE FOR THE NEXT WINTER OPEN STUDIOS

02/03/04 DECEMBER 2016



DAMN FINE COFFEE!

Electric Elephant Café
BBQ & Bar, Cakes, Teas & Coffees,
13a Iliffe Yard
electricelephantcafe.co.uk



PICCALILLI CAFF

Delicious home cooked food
Peacock Yard
www.piccalillicaff.com



CRÊPE SHOP

Locally sourced handmade crêpes
23a Iliffe Yard
www.iliffe-creps.ml



MAKING AND PLAYING

Ben Elliott, lutenist, will be
performing on instruments made by
Stephen Barber & Sandi Harris
11a Peacock Yard throughout the
Open Studio weekend.



WALWORTH OLD AND NEW

Saturday 11th June Walworth Old and New a
guided walk starting outside Kennington tube
station at 10.45, and finishing opposite the
entrance to Iliffe Yard. Cost: £10, £8 for over
65s and full-time students.

Isobel, Tourist Guide
@guidedbyisobel
londonbyguide.wordpress.com

@thisiswalworth

"just when u think u know all there is to know
about Walworth, along comes @guidedbyisobel"





IN THE CONTINUUM

STEPHEN BARBER & SANDI HARRIS

The studio is a wooden Aladdin's Cave. The stairway up is lined with bulbous lute moulds and bodies. Barely an inch is not used, either for tools, bubbling glue pots, books, lamps, or materials, sheets of translucent parchment and strips and blocks of woods in every imaginable hue. Goodness knows where the two cats and the rabbit find to sit. For Stephen and Sandi are two of the world's most respected lute and guitar makers. Although as Stephen points out, they also make vihuelas, archlutes, charroní, theorbos, orpharions, bandoras and citterns.

Their process begins with scrupulous study of instruments, masterpieces of the past, in museums and private collections. Stephen makes drawings, so accurate in their revealing of the instrument's form, the drawings themselves become part of museum collections. They source materials that match (as far as possible) the original woods, from the growers of arcane species like the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. This is important because the woods were originally used because of their acoustic properties, there is nothing on these instruments that doesn't contribute to their sound, no decoration that might detract from it. Although they also divert from the original model too, changing the size, or eschewing metallic-sounding rosewood for walnut.

Nothing can be rushed, making this way. Each instrument is weeks, even months of handwork, and waiting for glue to bond or lacquer to dry. Apart from a few pieces of metal, all the materials are organic; obviously the wood, but also the rabbit-skin glue, beeswax, the gut strings, the skin of the parchment. It's hard to choose any one part of the finished instruments

to focus on, but I am most struck by the appearance of the fluted backs. These look amazing with the raised flutes arching over the pear-shaped lute, like the ribs of some kind of organic architecture. (Stephen and Sandi are planning to build a wooden house.) Fluting is a way of retaining strength whilst using less material and so less weight, practical but with an extraordinary aesthetic effect. Another breathtaking feature is the parchment decorated roses, set into soundboxes, like looking up at a ceiling in the Alhambra with its rhythms of domes and quarter domes and plethora of delicate decoration. Sandi cuts everything by hand, wearing enlarging glasses, but the result seems otherworldly, it is so perfect, like fairy architecture.

Their instruments are used by classical musicians like Julian Bream, but also Keith Richards, after all a guitar is a guitar. The instruments make a lot of sense as a purchase, unique, stunning to look at and touch, every millimetre handmade, with several musicians reporting theirs as the best they have ever played, and, given the longevity of instruments made the same way, likely to last half a millennium.

In their crepuscular studio time has a different meaning. They are working today in the era of iPhones, but making instruments using techniques perfected four hundred years ago, to play compositions three hundred years old. You can find no conflict, no separation between the now and the then, nothing seems either old or modern, just a continuum of painstaking artistry.



REMAKING THE WORLD

DANIEL REYNOLDS

It all began with a cabinet. Daniel has always loved making things, he studied a very eclectic course at university, Expressive Arts, that sort of permitted anything. I was actually at the same university at nearly the same time, and I remember the students from this course doing everything from drawings to happenings in locked rooms to dancing acrobatically with ribbons. But what course do you pursue when you are interested in all kinds of art, you want to keep your options open as long as you can. Daniel eventually narrowed down to sculpture, and enjoyed the physical properties of wood so much that he kind of ended up becoming a furniture designer, even then he managed to include a lot of metalwork too.

Anyway back to the cabinet, it was during his career path as a furniture maker, he used porcelain for the cabinet's feet and the handles, and having to fire porcelain again set off all kinds of sparks in him. It was so malleable and responsive, more than wood, and you can work it until it is papery thin, and it responds to light in such a varied and organic way.

So even though Daniel had not formally studied ceramics, he has chosen it as his main material because it can be made to do so many things. He can usually work out how to achieve an effect he wants, although he goes about it in a very unconventional way. You feel much about Daniel is about the energy he derives from swimming upstream. He works in a combination of ways not many other ceramicists would, he makes moulds for liquid porcelain, he throw large pots on a wheel, he use little sausages of clay, which is the most manual, the most intimate way

of building a sculpture, every little piece is put there by the interaction of his eye and his fingers. Ever the experimentalist, some of his latest pieces incorporate glass, he needs not feel at all bound by categories; he is craftsman, artist, maker, whatever-he-wishes.

One very striking line of objects in the studio right now is lamps that look like melons, or irons, or coffee pots. The objects he sources in charity shops, defunct and otherwise unavailable. He picks things for the inherent beauty of their shape, and then makes moulds, and casts them in porcelain, elevating them to something fragile and aesthetic. They look remarkable gathered en masse, glowing orange and yellow, like something from a temple to Roland Barthes.

He talks about the importance of the table as a locus for the things he plans to make. How we all gather and eat together, around the table, promoting communality and affection. A table full of food and vessels is a lovely thing, he says, talking about bowls encouraging interaction, being passed around. There seems to be something significant here, the passion and dextral skill he expends to fashion his work, his hands press and shape every tiny part of what he makes, he wants that profound personal investment to yield something, admiration maybe, but most importantly he wants it to be a catalyst for love.

As well as his studio, you can see Daniel's work at Rosebery's Auction Rooms (part of the Dulwich Festival). And there are lights and mobiles on display in numerous London locations. His website, listed on the inside of this broadsheet, has a full list.

