

Celebrating Jonah Jones' centenary

A centennial celebration of Jonah Jones' work opens the new season of exhibitions at Plas Glyn-y-Weddu, writes Jenny White...

A SPECIAL exhibition paying homage to the artist, educator, author and pacifist Jonah Jones opens at Plas Glyn-y-Weddu this month.

Alongside the centennial celebration will be Connection, an exhibition by a selection of artists with links to Jones' life and work.

A remarkable man, Jonah Jones (1919-2004) became well-known for his many talents.

Born and bred in north-east England, he had Welsh roots and decided to settle down and live in Wales at the end of the 1940s.

He came to Llanystumdwy to work at Caseg Press with the artist John Petts, followed soon after by a short, intensive stay at the workshop of the late Eric Gill, where he learned the techniques of lettering and carving in stone.

He established a studio in Eifionydd and started to make a living solely from his art.

He was also an author and during this period published two novels, a series of essays, an illustrated book about the lakes of north Wales, and a biography of Clough Williams-Ellis.

"He made a substantial contribution to art education and was a generous mentor of many emerging artists and was an external assessor for several art colleges in England," says gallery director Gwyn Jones.

The wide-ranging show at the gallery in Llanbedrog on the Llyn Peninsula will include examples of Jones' sculptures, paintings, lettering and glass from both public and private collections.

His stained-glass work includes two windows recently removed from the Catholic Church at Morfa Nefyn, which has recently closed.

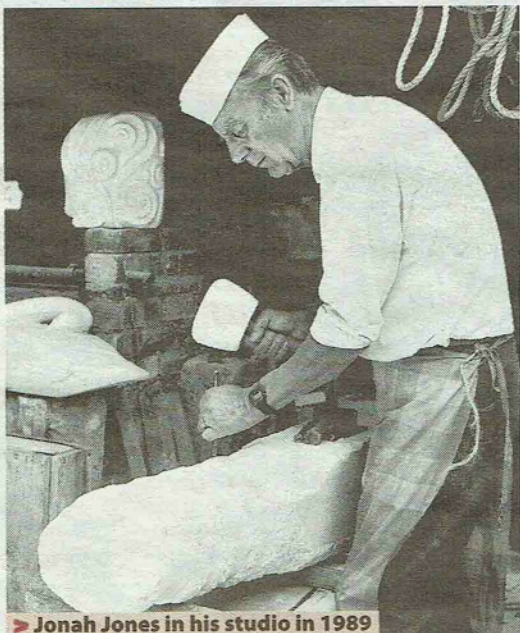
Many of his calligraphy works combine poetry and legends and were produced during the last 15 years of his life after he moved to live in Cardiff, his health not being good enough to carve sculptures.

"It has been a pleasure and honour for Plas Glyn-y-Weddu to work alongside Jonah's family, his two sons David Townsend Jones, Peter Jones and daughter Naomi Trodden, to bring this exhibition together," says Mr Jones.

"Examples of his work have been borrowed from establishments and individuals from all over England and Wales, creating a unique opportunity for the public to enjoy and appreciate a special collection under one roof.

"A publication will be launched to accompany the exhibition and will be available to buy from the gallery.

"A limited edition soft-back version of his book *Gwynnog Diaries* will be on sale at the gallery, along with some prints."



➤ Jonah Jones in his studio in 1989

The accompanying exhibition, Connection, includes works by a selection of artists working in a variety of media.

Some were friends, such as Claire Langdown and David Nash, while Meic Watts shared a studio with Jonah and received inspiration from him as he was embarking on a career as a sculptor working with stone.

Howard Bowcott was another young sculptor who appreciated Jonah's support, and the three – Jonah, Meic and Howard – exhibited together as the Moelwyn Group.

"Other media Jonah worked with are represented by glass, lettering and watercolour, while homage is paid to his book on the lakes of north Wales by Vivienne Rickman Poole and Aled Prichard-Jones," says Mr Jones.

"Richard Higlett, who works with different media, has responded directly to Jonah's work while Simon Callery's input is from a recent scholarship at the British School in Rome, where Jonah was a board member."

Meanwhile, the exhibitions on the gallery's first floor pay homage to the Llyn Peninsula. Brother and sister Owain and Lea Sautin, originally from Llanbedrog, will be exhibiting together for the first time in Sautin+Sautin, while Mapio Llyn will be the first solo exhibition from Shrewsbury-based artist Ruth Gibson.

"Owain and Lea both live in Cardiff, but their work is deeply rooted in the soil of Llyn. Owain's inspiration comes from the landscape and the scenery, especially the peninsula's beaches and magical coves," says Mr Jones.

"He has photographed his subjects and has worked on the images using computer programmes, giving them a magical effect. While they are still recognisable, the viewer is drawn to guess and marvel at familiar scenery.

"Lea's work is also magical – she concentrates



➤ Jonah Jones, *The Bridge*, 1967, Hornton stone Robert Greetham

on fairy tales and local folklore. A printmaker, she has adopted a unique way of creating striking images through a diligent process of drawing on paper before cutting and shaping to create scenes and characters to record in print."

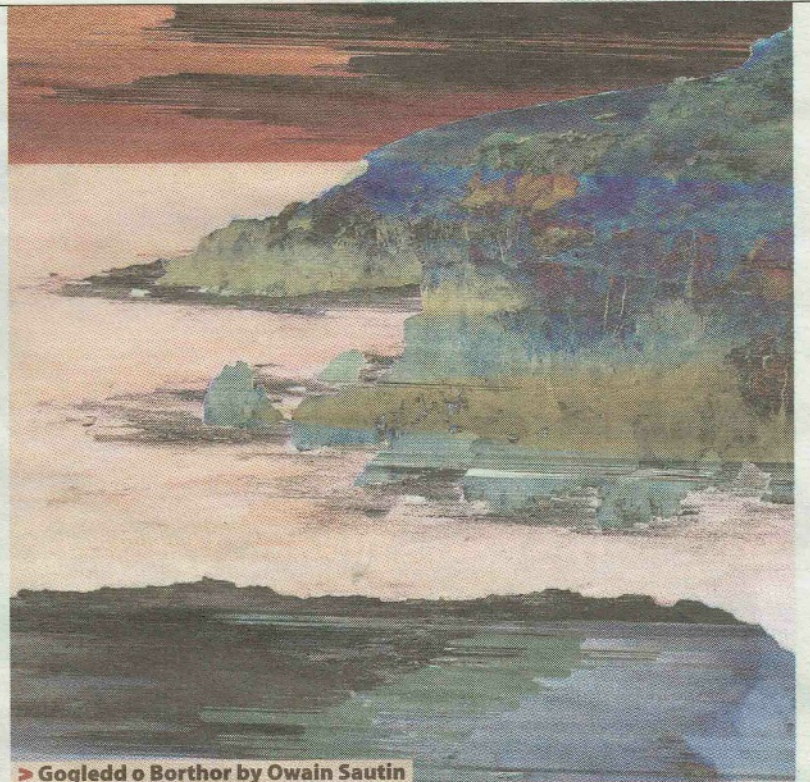
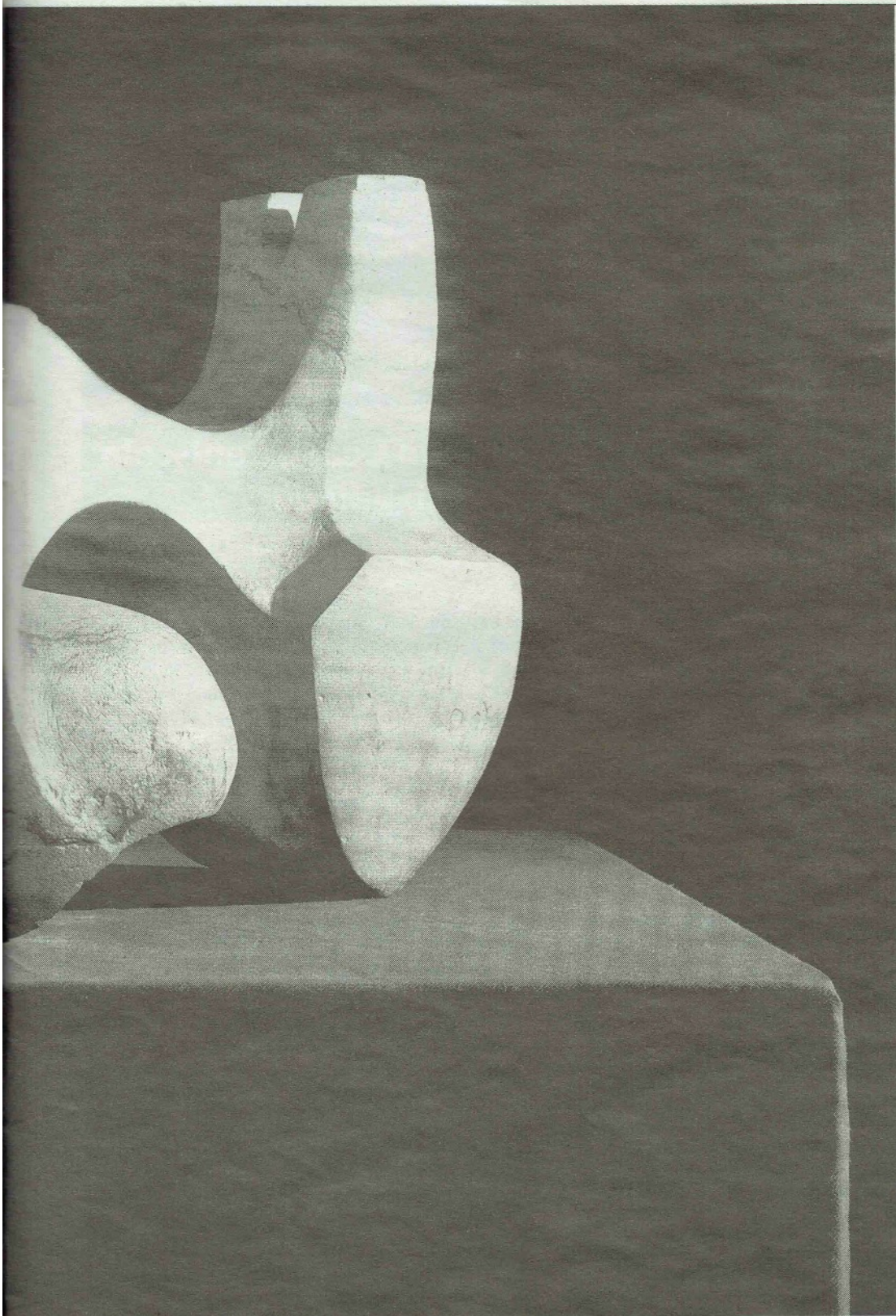
The Llyn landscape is also the subject of Ruth Gibson's exhibition Mapping Llyn.

Mr Jones added: "She combines an interest in photography and ceramics to create unique and beautiful pieces through a screen-print process where images of the landscape are transferred to the clay before it is shaped, glazed and fired. This method of working allows her to combine photo-realism with more abstract marks to build layers of images.

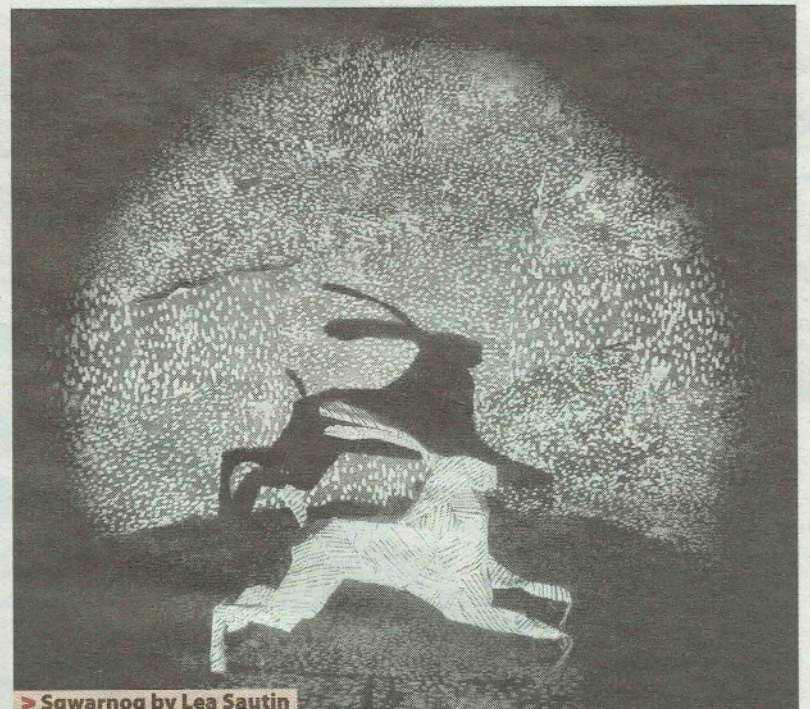
"It is possible to draw comparison in the way Lea and Ruth work – both developing their finished pieces by combining images and skilful craftwork, which was also prominent in Jonah's work."

■ The Jonah Jones and Connection exhibitions open at 1.30pm today and run until March 17. The opening of Sautin+Sautin and Mapping Llyn follows tomorrow. The events programme during the exhibitions will include drop-in workshops at the half term holidays, calligraphy workshops for adults and a trip to Portmeirion. More details can be found at www.oriel.org.uk

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➤ Gogledd o Borthor by Owain Sautin



➤ Sgwarnog by Lea Sautin



➤ Seascape Stones by Ruth Gibson and, right, the artist herself

