

# Oliver Messel Workshops at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection



## **Oliver Messel - Exploring the Twentieth Century** **9 January 2019, 2-4pm**

*Oliver Messel - Exploring the Twentieth Century* focuses on the different ways that the Oliver Messel Personal Archive can be used to explore our social history across the twentieth century, looking at theatre, art and society. The workshop is open to researchers across disciplines and will include an introduction to the Archive and an opportunity to engage with original objects including photographs, correspondence, press cuttings, costume designs, architectural plans, sketchbooks and autobiographical notes.



## **Oliver Messel: A Life in Photography** **16 January 2019, 2-4pm**

*Oliver Messel – A Life in Photographs* focuses on the role of photography in the Oliver Messel Personal Archive exploring the variety of ways in which these records can be approached. The Archive contains over 3500 photographs and negatives including personal snapshots, press photography and professional portraiture and accounts for over a third of the material held. Subject matter includes family, friends, theatre, ballet, opera, film, artwork, interiors, architecture, travel (Europe, Africa and North America) and WW2. The workshop is open to researchers across disciplines and will

include an introduction to the Archive and an opportunity to engage with original objects including photograph albums, negatives and press cuttings.



## ***Oliver Messel* – Imagining Spaces (Architecture and Interiors)**

**23 January 2019, 2-4pm**

*Oliver Messel – Imagining Spaces (Architecture and Interiors)* focuses on architectural and interior design material within the Archive, exploring the relationship between real and imagined spaces throughout his work, which interweaved art and architectural history with physical practice. The workshop is open to researchers across disciplines and will include an introduction to the Archive and an opportunity to engage with original objects including architectural plans and blueprints, concept sketches,

correspondence, photography, set designs, interior designs, reference material and more looking at specific commissions including the Dorchester Hotel and Rayne shoe shop and architectural projects in Barbados and Mustique throughout the 60s and 70s.



## **Oliver Messel – Artist, Maker, Magician,**

**30 January 2019, 2-4pm**

*Oliver Messel – Artist, Maker, Magician* focuses on Oliver Messel's creative work across the fields of theatre, ballet, opera, film, portraiture, mask-making, interior design, architecture, illustration and textiles, exploring the physical act of 'making' that sits at the heart of all his practice.

Practitioners from across disciplines are invited to consider creative responses to material through creative writing, performance, film, music and art. The workshop is open to researchers across disciplines and will include an introduction to the Archive and an opportunity to engage with original objects including costumes, designs, props, artwork, photography and correspondence.

### **About the Workshops and How to Book**

Participants will be encouraged to explore interdisciplinary and collaborative research opportunities whilst learning how to access and engage with the Archive in the future. There will also be an opportunity to see the exhibition *Wake Up and Dream – Oliver Messel: Theatre, Art and Society*, with tea/coffee and cake to close.

Workshops are free to attend and open to all academic researchers including postgraduate students, museum and archive professionals and creative practitioners.

All workshops will take place at the Theatre Collection, 21 Park Row, Bristol, BS1 5LT.

To book a place please email [gemma.brace@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:gemma.brace@bristol.ac.uk) and to find out more about all our Messel Workshops (kindly supported by HLF) please visit [www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection)

### **About Oliver Messel**

Oliver Messel (1904-1978) led a fascinating life moving between backstage and high society with ease. Born into wealth he was one of London's Bright Young Things, later forging friendships with Hollywood stars and royalty, whilst through his professional work his life interweaved with all aspects of society. He is celebrated as one of the twentieth century's brightest theatrical stars, yet his practice expanded across a variety of artforms. In WW2 his artistic skills were turned to use as a Camouflage Officer stationed in North Somerset and Norwich. In the 1950s he campaigned against the colour bar and as a gay man he was keenly aware of the lack of equality throughout society. In the 1960s he moved to Barbados and from the world of theatre to architecture and interiors. The Archive's rich tapestry of material provides an intimate insight into a variety of pivotal societal, political and historical points throughout the twentieth century, explored through the life of one man.

**Images:** *Black and white photographs from Hollywood Photo Album OHM/3/1/5, trip to Buganda in 1955 to witness new treaty signing OHM/4/5/9/5, Oliver Messel with scaled model for Rayne shoe shop OHM/1/10/5/12 and Papier-mâché monkey used as an advertising prop OHM/1/8/2/20.*