

## **Giant praying mantis at the Horniman – first public display of David Shrigley sculpture**

A three-meter-tall praying mantis is moving into the Horniman Museum and Gardens' iconic Victorian Conservatory in Forest Hill, south London.

*The Mantis Muse*, a giant praying mantis sculpture made from fibreglass and steel with an animatronic head, is by renowned British artist David Shrigley and is on public display for the first time.

Visitors can see it at the Horniman from Tuesday 8 to Monday 21 April. The installation will be complemented by a programme of public events with a focus on engaging young audiences with art and creativity, including crafts, storytelling, screen printing and family yoga linked to animal movement.

*The Mantis Muse* was created in 2024 to emphasize the importance of art in education and advocate for increased funding for arts programs in British schools. It was originally installed for two weeks at David Shrigley's former school, Beauchamp College in Oadby, Leicestershire.

Its installation at the Horniman complements the current family-friendly and educational exhibition *The Robot Zoo*, which features larger-than-life animals innovatively recreated using familiar machine parts and gadgets to reveal how their real-life counterparts see, eat, hunt and hide.

David Shrigley says: 'Art has the power to surprise, to challenge, and to inspire curiosity — much like nature itself. With *The Mantis Muse* now being on show at the Horniman, I hope to encourage young minds to explore creativity fearlessly and remind us all that art deserves a place at the heart of education.'

**More**

Annie Duffield, Director of Audiences and Income at the Horniman Museum and Gardens, says: 'We are excited to welcome David Shrigley's *The Mantis Muse* to the Horniman and can't wait to see it take up residence in our historic Conservatory. David's vision for the sculpture to inspire creative responses from young people is at the heart of the programme of activities our audiences can take part in over two weeks in the Easter holidays. *The Mantis Muse* and its message, paired with the iconic setting of our Victorian Conservatory, will offer a striking and inspiring space for everyone to enjoy.'

***The Mantis Muse* can be seen in the Horniman Conservatory from Tuesday 8 to Monday 21 April.**

*The Mantis Muse* is free to visit. There is a charge for some events. Please see [horniman.ac.uk](http://horniman.ac.uk) for booking information.

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### **Mantis Muse: Drawing and Colouring**

**Tuesday 8, Friday 11 to Sunday 13, and Thursday 17 to Monday 21 April, 11am-3pm**

Get up close to *The Mantis Muse* and take part in free, drop-in colouring activities or take inspiration and sketch your own still life drawings. All materials will be provided.

**Free**

### **Mantis Muse: Stories and Crafts**

**Wednesday 9 April and Tuesday 15 April, 10am, 11.15, 1.15pm**

Join us for a special tale about a music-loving praying mantis from the book *Manuelo the Playing Mantis* by Don Freeman. Then create your very own colourful mantis mask.

**Tickets: Child £7 – includes one adult. Sessions last 45 minutes.**

### **Mantis Muse: Family Yoga**

**Thursday 10 and Wednesday 16 April, 10.30am, 11.45am, 1.30pm**

Explore what it might be like to be a Praying Mantis through yoga! Inspired by David Shrigley's giant praying mantis sculpture and along with yoga poses, we will investigate the life cycle and movement of this fascinating animal.

**Tickets: Child £15 – includes one adult. Sessions last 45 minutes.**

### **Mantis Muse: Screen Printing**

**Monday 14 April, 11am, 1pm, 3pm**

Learn about screen printing and make your very own artwork inspired by *The Mantis Muse*. The Private Press will talk you through the art of screen printing and teach you how to use a squeegee, frame and non-toxic ink to make your own paper print.

**Tickets: £10 for one paper print. Sessions last 60 minutes.**

[The Robot Zoo](#) is open until daily until Sunday 2 November 2025. See the website for more information and ticket details.

**Ends**

Horniman Press Office - Tel: 020 8291 8166 - [press@horniman.ac.uk](mailto:press@horniman.ac.uk)

**Pictured:** *The Mantis Muse*, and David Shrigley with *The Mantis Muse* – please credit both photos to Alun Callender 2024 - <https://we.tl/t-dX0dbpUc5z>

### Notes to Editors:

- **David Shrigley OBE** was nominated for the 2013 Turner Prize and famously designed the 'thumbs up' for the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square in London in 2016. He was awarded an OBE for Services for Visual Arts in 2020 and has works in collections including Museum of Modern Art in New York, Tate Britain in London, and the National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include a World Gallery of anthropology, music, an acclaimed aquarium, The Studio – a flexible arts and exhibition space, and a natural history gallery (closed until 2026 for redevelopment as part of [Nature + Love](#)). Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. [horniman.ac.uk](http://horniman.ac.uk)
- The Natural History Gallery closed for redevelopment from Monday 4 March 2024 as part of our [Nature + Love](#) project. The gallery will reopen in 2026.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** was [Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022](#), the world's largest museum prize.
- The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** relies on income from ticket sales, memberships, the shop and the Café to help care for the Gardens, animals and Aquarium residents, to run events and to look after the collections. The support of our visitors and donors is hugely appreciated. [horniman.ac.uk/support-us](http://horniman.ac.uk/support-us)
- The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** is core-funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725.
- On 29 July 2019 the **Horniman Museum and Gardens declared an ecological and climate emergency**, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work. The declaration – and the subsequent **Climate and Ecological Manifesto**, published in January 2020 – is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce the Horniman's environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so. Find out more about the Horniman's manifesto commitments and progress so far at [horniman.ac.uk/climate](http://horniman.ac.uk/climate).