

For immediate release: 1 June 2007

ROYAL PARKS DECKCHAIRS GET A CELEBRITY MAKEOVER

London's Royal Parks will burst into colour in more ways than one this summer when the prosaic green and white striped deckchair is transformed into 23 specially commissioned designs. Damien Hirst, Antony Worrall Thompson, Sam Taylor-Wood, Sir Peter Blake, Will Young and Blek le Rat are amongst the talented artists and celebrities who have created breathtaking canvases for visitors to sit on as part of The Royal Parks Foundation's public art initiative, Deckchair Dreams, generously sponsored by Bloomberg.

The theme given to the artists was 'the trees of the Royal Parks and the wildlife they support' but as the artists reveal, inspiration came from many sources!

- TV presenter and adventurer, **Ben Fogle**, was born within crawling distance of Hyde Park and claims to have walked nearly 20,000 miles of it. *"I know every tree and each blade of grass. I have revised for exams and failed exams, walked puppies and mourned the loss of older dogs, courted and split up, trained for arctic expeditions and desert adventures, I even met the love of my life in Hyde Park. My deckchair, like my park represents my life so far. It is a story of adventure, dog walking and marriage."*
- *Daily Mail* cartoonist, Stanley McMurtry, **Mac** to his fans, depicts a park security man, undercover as a tree, mistaken for the real McCoy by a passing dog. *"This actually happened to me. I was sitting on the grass in one of the Parks and a Jack Russell terrier peed against my back. Maybe he had a grudge against cartoonists!"*
- Big Issue co-founder and Mayoral candidate for London, **John Bird** (Monsieur l'Oiseau to his French friends) surrounds himself with images of trees and slept in parks when he was homeless.

This is the second year that the Royal Parks Foundation has initiated Deckchair Dreams to raise vital funds for London's treasured green spaces. Sara Lom, Chief Executive of the Foundation explains: *"There are over 130,000 trees in the Royal Parks and it costs £300,000 a year to look after them. With hotter, drier summers and increasingly unpredictable winters, it is proving harder to establish young trees and to care for existing trees. It's important that we do so, because trees work hard to help clean up the city atmosphere, they provide homes for wildlife and just looking at them makes us all feel better! By buying a deckchair, you can help safeguard the trees' future for future generations to enjoy"*.

The deckchairs will be available for hire in the Parks from mid June to late September. Limited edition deckchairs will be available to buy online from The Royal Parks Foundation for £83 + p&p. (See www.deckchairdreams.org)

The new collection will also be on display in Selfridges, Whole Foods Market new store in Kensington, at the PROUD gallery/nightclub in Camden, at Henley Festival, the Tour de France, Taste of London and Frieze Art Fair.

For the first time this year, school children from three age groups across the country were invited to enter designs into a competition. A winner from each group has been chosen and will have their design displayed alongside all the others in The Royal Parks this summer.

Sponsors Bloomberg have said "We are proud to support the environment and education through a wide range of cultural initiatives worldwide, and are delighted to have extended our support of the Royal Parks Foundation and Deckchair Dreams to include a specially created schools' programme that will encourage a new generation of London's park users to appreciate their natural environment."

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Notes to Editors

- For further information please contact Almon Jones or Ella Sunyer on 020 7403 2230, or email almon@forster.co.uk, ella@forster.co.uk
- The Royal Parks Foundation is the charity for London's eight Royal Parks. Innovative and creative, it welcomes corporate partnerships, such as the one with Bloomberg

- **You can join The Royal Parks Foundation Tree Circle for as little as £45 per year. Alternatively, you can dedicate your very own tree in a Royal Park with a single gift of £145 upwards. More details at www.royalparksfoundation.org**
- **The Royal Parks are: Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Regent's Park, Bushy Park, Richmond Park, Greenwich Park, St James's Park and The Green Park**
- **It costs £2 to snooze in a deckchair for 4 hours in a Royal Park. The designer chairs will be available to enjoy in Hyde Park, Green Park, St James's Park and Regent's Park. Also in Finsbury Square.**