



Unveiling of Rosemary's sculpture at the Minster



PICTURES: Artist Rosemary Goodenough with her sculpture 'A Woman in Motion', now in permanent residence at the Minster (left). The sculpture's subject Margery Kempe, an inspirational medieval woman (above).

A woman in motion

She's hailed as a devoted pilgrim, author of the first autobiography in the English language, a Christian mystic and an inspirational early feminist, The Minster celebrates 650 years since the birth of King's Lynn's famous daughter, Margery Kempe

Unveiled at The Minster on Saturday 4th February was a new sculpture honouring this extraordinary medieval Englishwoman. The striking artwork cast in aluminium was created by artist Rosemary Goodenough and commissioned by Canon Mark Dimond. It depicts Margery as a 'Woman in Motion', full of the movement and vitality that characterised her life. At times, colours from The Minster's stained-glass play across her clothing and add an ethereal element of beauty.

"We felt that on the 650th anniversary of her birth, it was time to commemorate this key figure and create a focal point in King's Lynn to remember her," explains Canon Mark. "We hope to reinforce Margery's prominence in her hometown as a figure to be proud of. She is an

advocate for the benefits of walking and represents a freedom of spirit."

Margery Kempe lived across the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, a time when women experienced extremely limited freedoms, but her life broke the mould. Margery undertook many lengthy and arduous pilgrimages across Europe and to the Holy Land, and was the first woman to complete The Camino Inglés in Spain. A highly religious mystic, Margery believed that Jesus had commanded her to wear white which she continued to do despite facing threats of being burned at the stake because only nuns and virgins were permitted to do so during that era.

Despite being illiterate, Margery published the first autobiography in the English language in 1483, 'The Book of Margery Kempe', which she wrote

through a scribe, or 'amanuensis'. This ground-breaking book, as recorded in the manuscript itself, shares Margery's 'feelings and revelations and the form of her living' and gives a valuable first-hand account into the life of a townswoman of the merchant class living in medieval England.

"I have a huge admiration and respect for Margery, an extraordinary example of a life well lived," describes Rosemary. "Nowadays I believe she would be regarded as a feminist, but that concept would have been completely at odds with her understanding of how a woman should live."

Margery started two businesses, frequently questioned authority, faced mental health challenges and was recognised for her extensive travelling in a time when to do so was not easy. She survived childbirth 14 times, an



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PICTURES: In the first stage of creation the sculpture was formed in terracotta clay (above left). Later in the process, Rosemary worked on the wax before the aluminium pouring (above right).

achievement in itself given the high maternal mortality rates in medieval times.

"We know a lot about the men and so little about the women of her era," Rosemary says. "I think it's important to remember Margery Kempe as a woman who used, to a remarkable extent, what freedoms were available to her."

Rosemary is a Contemporary Impressionist producing exceptional works in oil painting, charcoal drawing and fashion as well as sculpture. She conducted extensive research to really understand Margery Kempe before beginning the sculpture. "I see Margery as a 'Woman in Motion' in many senses. There was nothing passive about her," Rosemary explains. "I decided to have this sculpture cast in aluminium

because I believe it has a more spiritual and feminine sensibility than bronze."

The process involved in the sculpture's construction was long and complicated. Rosemary began by making a wire armature thereby forming the shape of what would become the finished piece before covering it with terracotta clay.

Foundryman and mould maker Des Stanley came to Rosemary's studio to construct a silicon rubber mould for the complex sculpture before casting a wax model. Rosemary then worked on the wax at the foundry at Sculpture Services Manningtree. "Every mark on the wax shows in the final metal piece, so it's very painstaking," she explains.

An exciting moment for any sculptor, the aluminium was then poured by Eddie Triplow who, together with Sue Triplow, managed the many further technical stages involved before Rosemary made final decisions about the application of colour and patination. "The lost wax process is extremely ancient and would have been used during Margery's lifetime. The skills shown by Des, Eddie and Sue are incredible and it's always an absolute joy working with them," Rosemary says.

A Woman in Motion can now be viewed in The Minster. "We receive over one thousand visitors every week in the summer months and provide a stop-off point for pilgrims too," says Canon



Mark, "and we hope that Margery's sculpture will add to the historic story we offer in King's Lynn. The unveiling of Margery's sculpture also begins a year of commemoration led by The Minster, including talks, a school project, accompanied walks and work with a mental health café.

"Margery offers us a new way of looking at the Christian message and shows us the value of walking with God. Born 650 years ago, she navigated the difficult times she was in, paving the way for others to follow," says Canon Mark.

"Margery Kempe was a complex, spiritual, brave and determined woman" Rosemary says. "A thoughtful woman, a pilgrim and author. As a feminist this sculpture, A Woman in Motion, is my homage to her".

Discover more at www.rosemarygoodenough.co.uk and www.kingslynnminster.org

