



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Use

'Murderer' or 'Freedom Fighter'? What does *your* mother mean to *you* this Mother's Day?

VISUAL ART at Rochester Cathedral

Vaughan Grylls

MOTHER

Open: Friday 5th March to Friday 26th March 2010

8-18:00 Monday to Friday

9 – 17:30 Weekends

Entry: FREE

An engaging new work by Kent-based artist Vaughan Grylls comes to the Lady Chapel directly from London's West End this spring. The haunting images represent historical female figures that inspired the artist's mother, Muriel Grylls as a pioneer for women's rights throughout the early 20th Century.

The confrontational life-size images, resonant of a reflective dressing mirror, strip away the distance between observer and the depicted figure. With a sense of cinematic drama and posed by actors, the figures include **Ruth Ellis**, the last woman to be hanged in the UK, **Mary Prince**, the first woman to escape slavery and have her story published, and **Marie Stopes**, well known for her leading role in advocating birth Control.

Grylls himself is not a stranger to Medway – having been the brains behind the creation of the University for the Creative Arts, he then became its founding Chief Executive. He is passionate about England's second oldest Cathedral (sitting on Cathedral Chapter) and the unique space of the Lady Chapel provides the perfect setting in which to explore and reflect upon the work and its meaning.

Of his work Grylls says this –

'The women portrayed here were role models for my mother, Muriel. Like her they each had

charisma and chutzpah.

A war-widow's daughter, she left school at 12 to bring some money into a very poor family. Hardly able to read and write, she sold programmes and did odd-jobs at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham. When she was 14 she was talent-spotted. Beginning as a hooper in a chorus line, she became the lead dancer with the stage-name Muriel Melford in a long-forgotten musical at the Prince of Wales called 'Bonjour Paris.'

When she was in that show she met her future husband, my father. He was an Oxford-educated schoolmaster over twice her age. He introduced her to a middle-class world of unfamiliar concepts such as politics, ethics and causes. Muriel took notice. This was to be a Pygmalion marriage. Back in the Midlands she took up what were embarrassing issues in the provincial England of the 1930s, 40s and 50s - anti-war views, the death penalty and the sexual liberation of women.

Vaughan Grylls

Entry to both Cathedral *and* the exhibition, which is generously supported by the arts team at Medway Council, is **FREE** so why not treat your mum to a special day out this Spring?

Photos: Attached

For additional / alternative images please contact Annie Harvey, Interpretation Manager on 01634 84 33 66 or email interpretationmanager@rochestercathedral.org

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