

Hew Locke

Gilt

Jul 5, 2025 — Jul 2027 | Sculpture in the Park, Compton Verney, Warwickshire, UK

In July, a new addition to Compton Verney's sculpture park will be unveiled with a series of sculptures by renowned Guyanese-British artist Hew Locke OBE (b.1959).

'Gilt' comprises four separate sculptures, and as the name suggests, each appears as a glistening golden trophy. Seeming like treasures of excess, they also leverage the fraught relationship between gold and guilt, presenting a complex story of materials and values through three-thousand years of art history.

They will be installed in *Sculpture in the Park* for two years, at the Robert Adam-designed entrance overlooking the landscape; the first new addition to the park since its opening in March 2024.

The critically-acclaimed work was originally commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, where it was installed on the façade of the building in 2022-2023.

Inspired by Locke's fascination with history, both complex and messy, the design of each urn-like sculpture includes references to objects in The Met's collection, as well as the political problems that can arise from discovered treasures, drawing out new and complex stories of institutions and their collections. They continue Locke's decades-long interest in public monuments, statues of storied individuals and an industry that celebrates and exploits heritage.

All four of the sculptures that constitute 'Gilt' present a collage of different histories, influences and memories. The two larger ones, *Trophy 2* and *Trophy 3*, are adorned with eyes, guns and swords, and both have scale-covered handles evoking sea monsters. *Trophy 1* and *Trophy 4* are deliberate fragments of broken masks, drawn from pre-Columbian and African designs.

Despite their lustrous golden appearance, the works are in fact made of fibreglass and propped up by steel bars, commenting on the misleading appearance of a "façade" itself. The front is designed to be beautiful and draw the viewer in, while the back is completely functional. In using these techniques to reference victory and competition, Locke examines the dual hollowness and beauty that is inherent in so-called emblems of power.

At the base of each sculpture is a fearsome leviathan, which appears to swallow up the trophies. Locke has spoken about the fact the monster represents us as a modern audience, avidly visiting museums and consuming the objects and versions of history they present. He views himself as the monster too, as an artist whose practice involves mining museum collections and adding layers of new meaning to historic objects.

The mix of cultures and histories in 'Gilt' reflects the artist's own journey; born in Edinburgh, he spent his childhood in Guyana and has lived and worked for most of his adult life in London. Locke's work can be found in the collections of storied institutions around the world, including The Met, The National Portrait Gallery, The Courtauld Gallery and The Victoria and Albert Museum.

Compton Verney's hugely popular *Sculpture in the Park* programme launched last year and aims to reflect the landscape, collections and exhibitions that makes the UK's leading art gallery in a park such a special place of nature, art and creativity. Now with this new addition, visitors will be able to see a celebrated recent work from one of the UK's most in-demand artists, that interrogates the role of the museum while also complimenting the brilliance of its own architectural design.

'Gilt' joins work by Sarah Lucas, Louise Bourgeois, Erika Verzutti, Perminder Kaur, Larry Achiampong, Nicolas Deshayes and Augustas Serapinas.

Abigail Viner, Director of Creative Programme at Compton Verney, said: *"It is hugely exciting for Compton Verney to be showing Hew Locke's Gilt as part of Sculpture in the Park, giving audiences in the UK a chance to see this monumental work for the first time. Locke is rightly one of the most celebrated artists working in the UK today, having recently staged a major exhibition at The British Museum. 'Gilt' reflects on his longstanding interest in the visual language of power and draws together a wide range of references with characteristic insight."*