

Join Greyfriars Kirk to make your own “Lockdown Bobby” with help from sculptor Mark Coreth

An historic Edinburgh church known around the world for the story of Greyfriars Bobby, is inviting budding artists to take part in a community art project in partnership with a renowned sculptor.

Artist Mark Coreth will work alongside Greyfriars Kirk to encourage people of all ages and abilities to produce their own 3D designs by following three weekly online tutorials starting on Monday 6 July.

Using materials such as garden wire and plasticine, the aim will be to make sculptures of Bobby, the Skye Terrier who guarded his master’s grave for 14 years in the Kirkyard.

Mark, who is based in Wiltshire and is particularly known for his impressive life-size statues of animals, said: “The Greyfriars Bobby story is remarkable. It is a story that talks of loyalty, courage, dedication, respect, selflessness and kindness.

“It is a story not just of a small dog but also of a community of people who came together around those lessons through compassion and sympathy for the animal who had elected to lockdown for his human companion and to guard his grave.

“It seems to me that today there is huge relevance in the lessons that can be gleaned from the story of Greyfriars Bobby and indeed, with lockdown in place, the story could be given a further chapter.

“Art, including sculpture, can be a wonderfully fulfilling way not just to occupy and amuse yourself but to communicate with others and to bring together a community with an idea, a common theme.”

Taking inspiration from the famous statue of Greyfriars Bobby, which has stood outside the church since 1873, Mr Coreth’s short tutorials will demonstrate how to make three sculptures.

Each week will introduce a new technique using affordable and accessible materials available online. Those taking part can upload photos of their creations for the ‘Lockdown Bobby Project’ onto the Greyfriars Kirk website.

It is hoped that some of the finished pieces will form a special exhibition at Greyfriars later in the year.

People will be encouraged to take inspiration from their own dog, local dog sculptures or favourite photos to create their own versions of Bobby.

Mark, will be using his own dog Scrumpy, who is a Cairn terrier, as his model.

Rev Richard Frazer, who minister at Greyfriars, said: ‘I have still to meet Mark in person, but over the last few months of Lockdown we have become good friends online. One of his daughters and our son are good friends and we have been captivated by his online sculpture tutorials on Instagram. He is such an engaging character and the animals he sculpts come to

life in his creative hands. It is wonderful to see and be inspired. Mark insists that sculpture is accessible and can be tried by almost anyone, so, I am certainly going to give this a try, even though I don't have much confidence in my artistic skills.

So many people are captivated by the story of Greyfriars Bobby and, in a normal year, tens of thousands of people pay homage to the little dog by visiting his beautiful sculpture outside the gates of the Kirkyard. Bobby's story of loyalty, friendship and concern for the animals with whom we share our lives (and who offer many of us deep companionship) brings people together at a time when we remain isolated from one another and restricted in what we can do. What better way of spending some of that restricted time learning to sculpt your own Lockdown Bobby with Mark?

Through the Lockdown Bobby Project we are seeking to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive communities for us all and how we can help to tackle social injustice, poverty and inequality in small or large ways, through engaging in communities like the Grassmarket Community Project."

Members of the Grassmarket Community Project (GCP), which was founded by Richard a decade ago and supports some of Edinburgh's most vulnerable citizens through education, mentoring and other opportunities, will also take part.

The award-winning social enterprise, which continues to work with Greyfriars Kirk, runs 'art for all' and hopes the Lockdown Bobby project will help to raise awareness of the work it does to tackle poverty and social inequality in the heart of Edinburgh.

Gillian Couper, who is coordinating the initiative for Greyfriars, said: "Now, thanks to the inspiration of the sculptor Mark Coreth, we are launching the 'Lockdown Bobby Project', giving people a chance to come together at this time, when many of our normal, day to day activities are curtailed, to craft our very own Bobby."

"We hope that this will be a fun project for people of all ages and that it will bring people together in celebration of one of Edinburgh's favourite characters, whose story of loyalty and devotion is such an inspiration.

"Through this time, we all need to be inspired and brought together.

"Wherever you are in the world, we warmly invite you to join in the fun!"