



Proud to support
The Furniture Makers' Company
the furnishing industry's charity

INSTALLATION SPEECH – DIDS MACDONALD 2019

Wardens, My Lord Mayor, Sherriff, distinguished guests, Liverymen, ladies and gentlemen. A very warm welcome to the 56th annual Installation Dinner of the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers

Lord Mayor, may I add my thanks to those of the Senior Warden's for allowing us to celebrate once again in Mansion House, which has stood proudly as the epicentre of the square mile for centuries.

As one of the grandest surviving Georgian town palaces in London, it's a privilege.

Tonight, we have dined magnificently in this elegant Egyptian Room as we have done on 54 occasions.

It is a fitting place to be united in support of your Lord Mayor's charity theme for this year to make. **London - A better city for all.**

An inclusive city - breaking down exclusive barriers

A healthy city - campaigning to end the stigma around mental health

A skilled city - a future ready workforce

and a fair city – celebrating giving and making a difference.

I am delighted to present a donation to support the delivery of these ground-breaking programmes which chime very much with our own.

Our close links with 2 Rifles demonstrates our admiration and thanks for the work of our Armed Forces and we are honoured by the presence of Major Jules Kilpatrick and Major Matt Helsby.

At this evening's installation, seamlessly officiated by my chaplain, the erudite and witty George Bush; your thoughtful and elegantly delivered homily was moving.

Reminding us that welfare and charity should be at the centre of our *raison d'être* as human beings, **is timely**.

To be surrounded tonight by my special friends who have supported, encouraged and cajoled me through the thick and thins of life is special.

It is your sense of fun, irony and often irreverent humour that reinforces a deep sense of belonging to a loving and very funny family of friends. Thank you for being here.

There is a lovely New Zealand Maori word, **whanau**, which means Family. Sadly, my NZ family could not be with me tonight, but I know they are with me in spirit.

Our immediate past Master Hayden Davies is a high achiever, whether tackling many gruelling cycling marathons or meeting, with diligence, the demands of his role.

This requires not only physical stamina but also mental fortitude.

In both you have excelled. Your sage leadership will be a sound basis for me as the incumbent custodian of this trusted role.

I do hope that you and Alison will now enjoy some precious time in your gorgeous Provence home which you so generously shared with us on your fantastic Master's Outing.

Hayden, we've had great fun and chuckles. You set a high bar. Thank you.

Having been immersed in our sector, whether in the interior design world or as CEO and co-founder of Anti Copying in Design (ACID), there is no doubt that the intellectual capital underpinning this industry's impressive brands is significant.

And, its intellectual property protection is even more paramount in the context of today's political and economic challenges.

As 'new kids on the block' in livery terms The Furniture Makers' Company has forged ahead as a modern and revered livery company. We are a Company (despite looking around at an abundance of posh frocks and white ties) that rolls up its sleeves.

Actions speak louder than words for us, demonstrated by the exemplars in all we do. Take design, manufacturing, sustainability and export Guild Marks as a starting point.

None of our achievements would be possible without our corporate members and we are enriched by your generous commitment and support. Your active engagement is a source of pride and it's great to see so many of you here tonight.

Education is the cornerstone of our future but, realistically, nationally we are facing a significant skills gap crisis. I will do everything I can to support our educational and training objectives to achieve a future ready workforce.

My strategy will be to 'influence the influencers' about our work within the City of London. I would like every Footsie 100 company to think about proudly displaying a Design or Bespoke Guild Mark awarded piece in its board room.

I do hope that you, my Lord Mayor, in your global travels, will champion and encourage inward investment and help broker long lasting trading relationships with the furniture and furnishings sector.

And also, to encourage every embassy to champion the excellence of the UK furnishings industry with tangible examples.

For many who have served our industry, traditional methods of engagement have disappeared, and digital exclusion can lead to loneliness and illness.

But, it's not all about retired people, quite the opposite. It's about grass roots welfare.

I want to ensure that all that the 327,000 people who make up the collective workforce in our amazing industry know about our welfare work through the launch of my Master's Challenge.

I can't career up mountains on a bike and I'm pretty sure I couldn't cycle to Bordeaux, but I can take **'One step at a time'** and this is the name for my master's Challenge to support our own.

I want to spread the word about our charity. And I need your help to achieve this as One Step Champions.

None of us know when life is going to throw us a curveball. Who knows when fate will place us one day away from needing support?

This campaign isn't a one-year wonder but something that I hope will gather momentum through the years ahead to connect with the people who make up this talented sector.

On each table place, there is a small gift, a talisman, from me to you, to remind you of my challenge and our connection with grass roots.

Our feted and much admired first lady Master, Margaret Miller, is also our Almoner and is present this evening. Margaret, 10 years ago, you extended the hand of friendship and fellowship by not only introducing me to this Company, but you have encouraged me and many others in an impressive career spanning 60 years as a role model and exemplar. Thank you, Margaret!

The hand of friendship and kindness should never be underestimated, and we want the industry to know that they have a friend in us.

Thank you for putting your faith in me as Master. Together, with my trusted Senior and Junior Wardens David Woodward and Tony Attard and the consistent unfailing support from our CEO and Clerk, Jonny Westbrooke, I can promise you that I will champion, with enormous pride, the work of our impressive Furniture Makers Company wherever I go.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

And now, the highlight of our evening – our Lifetime Achievement award, our highest honour. It is the recognition of one's peers for an outstanding contribution to the furnishing industry in the United Kingdom.

The name Conran slips off our tongues as the 1960's forerunner and game changer that made stylish housewares and home décor available to all.

Following the creation of the Conran Design Group, Habitat emerged, becoming a global brand. Later, many of us will have dined at the Blue Bird and other Conran restaurants. For him, another ground breaking venture as a restaurateur.

And he and his son Sebastian were the major driving forces creating the Design Museum, now metamorphosed into its new prestigious home in Kensington, a world beacon which champions British design and the impact it has on the world.

Design and design thinking, especially in British design and engineering, should never be underestimated.

It is about innovation, technology, creativity and craftsmanship. It influences our lives in more ways than we can imagine.

Sir Terence Conran– thank you for influencing ours.

It is an honour Sir Terence Conran, to invite the Lord Mayor to present you with the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award.

May I now invite all Liverymen, Freemen and Corporate Liverymen to rise and join me in a toast;

OUR GUESTS