

## JAMES DORAN-WEBB BIO

James spent his early childhood in Devon. He attended St. Andrews Prep School, near Reading in Berkshire, as a boarder, and passed his common entrance exam aged twelve. His education was as privileged as it was unconventional. His parents travelled extensively in the pursuit of art and antiques, and James spent his teenage years schooling in Basel, Switzerland, on the Adriatic coast of Italy, on the East coast of the States and central France before returning to London to take his 'A' levels at Davies Laing and Dick, Notting Hill Gate. Plans to study History of Art at The Courtold Institute in London were shelved - while attending college he had started his own antiques business with a weekend stand at Portobello Market in London.

He has always loved antiques and has been working with wood, making models and miniature sculptures since he was a small boy. His childhood was spent in the workshops of his parents' antiques restoration company both in the UK and in France, whittling, carving and refinishing. By the time he reached his late teens he was not only an accomplished antique dealer but also a very competent cabinet maker, and was quite at home restoring such varied items as heavily carved oak and walnut furniture to the odd Queen Anne finely veneered bureau bookcase. He first travelled to The Philippines by chance in 1989; it was to be an extended holiday. It was love at first sight. He was entranced by the countryside, the beaches, the wildlife and above all by the people with their natural flair for colour and artistry. In 1990 he set up a company designing and making a range of wooden objects to sell in Europe and the USA, boxes and picture frames encrusted in shells and marble, large papier mache animals and pieces of fine furniture made from wood salvaged from old demolished hardwood houses.

James is an avid outdoor enthusiast, mountain biking, hiking and kayaking in the remotest parts of the Philippines. During his "Adventure-Racing" days, he was a well-known local sportsman, twice an "Iron man" with many regional Adventure Racing titles under his belt. He has extensive local knowledge of most of the larger islands that make up the archipelago. Through such activities and travels he has built up a small network of driftwood gatherers, which provides much needed cash to impoverished provincial villages. For every kilo of driftwood that James buys he plants a seedling on denuded hills in North and South Cebu. He has started a program called 80,000 trees ([www.80000trees.com](http://www.80000trees.com)) which aims to plant 80,000 trees over the course of the next 5 years and build relationships with the tenants and claimants of the land and DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) to assist him in nurturing the seedlings to full growth which, in the case of some of the rare Premium High species of trees which he is planting, might take as long as 25 years. This initiative has been put on temporary hold while James and his team assist those affected by the devastation of late 2013's Typhoon Haiyan. James has amassed an extensive collection of driftwood, varying in size and form

from small pieces to large natural sculptures, each piece hewn by natural forces into a myriad of individual shapes. The wood is found along the shorelines and riverbeds of the archipelago and is from a number of indigenous species, all dense enough to withstand years and years of exposure to both extreme tropical climate and intense frosts.

James started to design driftwood furniture in the early 2000's and it was while playing with the various natural forms that he was drawn to experiment with his first driftwood animal sculpture. His large supply of wood has made it possible for him to find the pieces, which most lend themselves to the natural form and shape needed to give his animals the movement and reality he strives to obtain in every piece he creates.

He works in his studio full time alongside a small team of assistants who help him sort and clean the wood, weld the steel frames and generally assist where and whenever they are needed.

James exhibits at the Chelsea Flower Show, London each May where, in 2013, he was awarded the Director General's Award for the best trade stand. He also holds a solo exhibition in the autumn, hosted by the Eton Contemporary Fine Art Gallery. His largest public work to date is a 6 ton 6 metre high sculpture of a dragon about to launch from a craggy primeval tree which is on permanent display at Singapore's prestigious Gardens by the Bay alongside James' iconic galloping thoroughbreds.