

Celebrating ceramics in the city - British Ceramics Biennial returns to Stoke-on-Trent

26 September – 8 November 2015

- With 20 exhibitions featuring over 60 national and international ceramic artists
- Survey shows **AWARD** and **FRESH** acknowledging innovation and accomplishment and identifying emerging talent
- Artists' commissions including a powerful WW1 memorial commemorating men of the North Staffordshire Regiment who fell in 1914-18 with an installation incorporating thousands of white bone china flowers, film and sound
- **Bruce McLean**, one of the UK's leading artists takes on clay and assembles a studio theatre set of new characters
- Chance to purchase exhibition pieces, specially commissioned one-off and editioned works
- Interactive displays and hands on workshop activities
- **The Bread in Common Café**, in partnership with **B arts**, will offer locally made artisan bread and produce as handcrafted cuisine reflecting the international flavour of the Biennial

This autumn the UK's largest ceramics festival will be in Stoke-on-Trent for six-weeks, a platform for new ideas, new works and fresh approaches to clay, celebrating the best in contemporary ceramics through an exciting programme of new exhibitions, installations, activities and special events.

At the heart of this international cultural event stands the historic former Spode pottery factory, which will once again form the creative hub for the festival. For the first time the building's imposing China Hall will be home to the Biennial's centrepiece exhibition **Award**. Following selection by a panel of judges chaired by Alun Graves, Senior Curator at the V&A, the 11 artists shortlisted for its £5,000 prize will each present new works exemplifying the energy and vitality of British contemporary ceramics.

Joining **Award** in the China Hall will be another festival highlight **Fresh**, showcasing the most promising talent from the UK's recent graduates working across ceramics disciplines. This popular exhibition provides an important launchpad for tomorrow's ceramic stars, with approximately 20 graduates selected in partnership with NACHE, the National Association of Ceramics in Higher Education. The exhibition campaigns for the continued investment in creative programmes within education. Featured artists are to be announced in August.



A programme highlight for 2015 will be a **new WW1 commemorative installation** created by artists Steven Dixon and Johnny Magee. In honour of the fallen men of the North Staffordshire Regiment and recognising Stoke-on-Trent's long history of ceramic flower making, *194000* will feature 5,608 flowers incorporating forget-me-nots as a symbol of memory and love, handcrafted from white bone china and tagged with individual memory markers. A blanket of flowers will serve as the monumental screen for a filmed seascape. There will be unique opportunities for visitors to get involved in the creation and interpretation of the installation.

Further highlights will include:

- **Re-apprenticed** by Stoke-on-Trent based artist **Neil Brownsword** will artistically reactivate a series of traditional practices from North Staffordshire's ceramic industry. Neil will apprentice himself to skilled former ceramic industry employees learning traditional techniques including copper plate engraving, china painting and flower-making, working with three former ceramic artisans Paul Holdway, Tony Chellinor and Rita Floyd respectively. Through film, image and object making Neil will explore how this expert knowledge is displaced through advanced technology and politics of outsourcing
- Having completed a short R&D project exploring the Spode Museum Trust's archive, ceramic artist **Charlotte Hodes** will develop a new body of work and create an installation of tableware for exhibition
- BCB continues its collaboration with **AirSpace Gallery**, where artists will present an interactive exhibition themed around flowers, environmental management and urban regeneration
- **Press Print to Make?** Artists' exploration of ceramic rapid prototyping and its applications in industry, architecture and design. Leading experimental ceramic artist Michael Eden will use a 'state of the art' on-site 3D printer to demonstrate the process. This will be complemented by a programme of events delivered by RIBA, focusing on the architectural use of 3D printed ceramics
- Displays from a **new research project at the Royal College of Art** led by Professor Martin Smith and Dr Steve Brown, which explores the potential for the digitally printed ceramic transfers to a commercial context, in partnership with Digital Ceramic Systems and Royal Crown Derby
- A new participatory installation by **Lawrence Epps** titled *AGAIN*. Featuring a fairground 'coin-pusher' machine adapted to operate using hand-made ceramic coins, the piece combines the tactile materiality of Epps' ceramic works with the adrenaline of the arcade, inviting the viewer to enter into a wager with the artwork. *AGAIN* launches in conjunction with a new publication *the very last time*, edited by Epps with poet Holly Corfield Carr
- **Awarded** - A new site-specific project in the China Hall from 2013 AWARD winner **Nao Matsunaga**. Nao will present a ceremonial gathering of his sculptures from the last two years, inspired by his own experience and interest in Stoke-on-Trent, Neolithic cultures and the Spode site itself

The **Engaged** section of the festival, presents a series of exhibitions, interventions and activities themed around Flowers and Food, drawn from the work of artists in collaboration



with various community groups, partners and schools. Outcomes of all the projects will be included within the installations at BCB 2015. This work is part of The Clay Foundation's community and education programme.

Over the last five years the BCB has been successfully working with flower makers and artists, revitalizing flower making, repurposing their use as beautiful and symbolic objects in their own right and as components for compelling sculptural and art installations. BCB continues to work towards its ambition of repurposing traditional local skills and helping to rebuild a small part of the ceramics industry that was almost lost – bone china flower-making. This year flowers feature in one of our commissions – 194000 and also through our work to bring back flowers into the health environment.

- **World in One City** – engaging with diverse cultural communities living in Stoke-on-Trent to explore and express cultural identities and aspirations through making ceramics and sharing food. Artist Jasleen Kaur has been working alongside members of the Jubilee Club, a group of refugee and asylum seekers who meet at a luncheon club in Burslem. Local artists will work in conjunction with a newly formed community group based within the £1 Homes scheme to link old and new communities: together they will explore the notion of 'Community Maker'. World in One City is co-produced with Appetite, the Creative People and Places Programme for Stoke-on-Trent
- **TypeCast** – Two ceramic artists Helen Felcey and Joe Hartley with poet Barry Taylor have been working with groups of young adults in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. The projects are co-productions with Brighter Futures housing and care support agency in Stoke-on-Trent. In an extension of this project we have been working with partners in the UK and five further European countries, sharing our experiences
- **Health and Wellbeing** – working with the University Hospital North Staffordshire Cancer Centre over the last year to bring flowers back into hospital environments. Staff, visitors and patients created their own bone china flowers. Staff were asked to nominate a flower noted for its medicinal qualities. We developed a new design using the rose periwinkle to represent its use in two cancer treatments and have incorporate this into a final piece of work to be unveiled soon at the Cancer Centre. This project was supported by UHNS Charity and funded by Appetite. The Clay Foundation is now working with Haywood Community Hospital Trust to create a permanent piece using which bone china Rosehip flowers representing their use in the treatment of arthritis. BCB is also working with Caudwell Children's Charity and the Spode Museum Trust creating ceramic oatcakes with designs inspired by the Spode archive collection. The final exhibition will be exhibited at the Mitchell Arts Centre
- **Sparks** – Our three year programme working with clusters of Stoke-on-Trent schools keeping creative ceramics alive and well in the classroom. In year one artists commissioned by The Clay Foundation will work with children from Thistley Hough Academy and Haywood Academy and their feeder primary schools, engaging pupils by reigniting the use of ceramics in the school linking the encounter with clay, ceramic heritage, literacy and numeracy.



The artists and staff will use ceramics to address issues surrounding food: nutrition, wellbeing and the Food Revolution.

On the line-up for the British Ceramics Biennial 2015, artistic director Barney Hare-Duke commented: *'This year's festival presents a breadth of artists and practice, scale and conceptual depth, all brought together by a spirit of creative endeavour, testing and skilfully demonstrating the potential of clay. In true festival style there is lots here for everyone to see, enjoy, learn, be surprised and inspired by.'*

Further details, including the artists selected for Fresh 2015, are to be announced shortly. More information on BCB 2015 can be viewed at www.britishceramicsbiennial.com

Ends

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Notes to Editors

The 11 shortlisted artists for Award 2015 are: Amy Hughes, Andrea Walsh (graduate of Staffordshire University), Aneta Regel, Anne Gibbs, Bethan Lloyd Worthington, Caroline Tattersall, Ingrid Murphy & Jon Pigott, James Rigler, Mella Shaw, Paul Scott, Sam Bakewell.

About the British Ceramics Biennial:

The British Ceramics Biennial is a prestigious cultural event taking place in Stoke-on-Trent from 26 September to 8 November 2015. This six-week long festival will present work from the UK's leading contemporary ceramic artists in a series of new exhibitions and special events in the city, embracing the heritage of Stoke-on-Trent as the home of British ceramics, and celebrating the city's creative edge as an international centre for excellence in contemporary ceramics.

The British Ceramics Biennial launched in 2009 as a five-year initiative of residencies, fellowships, commissions, education and enterprise projects from 2009 to 2013 with a major festival every two years. BCB is intended to be a catalyst for regeneration in the region and to create a platform for innovation and excellence celebrating the best in current ceramic design, both nationally and internationally.

The Biennial draws on the historical strengths of the past in championing new future directions for the city.

The Biennial works in partnership with organisations and individuals in the museums, cultural industry, business, education, community and voluntary sectors across the city in the development and delivery of projects with a particular focus on public engagement.

The festival and supporting Engaged programme raises the profile of the many ceramics industries still working in Stoke-on-Trent, and creates commissioning and exhibition opportunities for local, national and international artists.



British Ceramics Biennial funders:

The British Ceramics Biennial Ltd is funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Arts Council England and Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

BCB Sponsors:

Staffordshire University, Johnson Tiles. Materials and Equipment Sponsor Potclays.

BCB Partners:

Appetite, B arts, Mitchell Arts Centre, Spode Museum Trust, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, North Staffordshire Regiment, Craft Potters Association.

Media Partner:

Ceramic Review

The Clay Foundation

A new cultural agency and registered charity for Stoke-on-Trent configured into three core components:

- Artists' programme of commissions and residencies, developed in partnership with education, culture, industry and community sectors in the city
- British Ceramics Biennial – realising the vision for the 2015 and 2017 festivals
- Year round community and education engagement programme

