



40 BRITAIN'S POT TALENT

Our nation has already produced ceramic greats – from Josiah Wedgwood's china teacups to Edmund de Waal's porcelain vessels. But behind closed studio doors, the nation's pottery wheels keep turning. We celebrate the state of the craft today

The British Ceramics Biennial is returning to Stoke-on-Trent, the home of British ceramic manufacturing, for its fifth edition this month. The Staffordshire town's brick bottle kilns have been producing iconic designs – including Wedgwood's jasperware, Portmeirion's chunky mugs and, more recently, Emma Bridgewater's charming country-style bowls – since the 17th century, and the former factory of stoneware company Spode is the heart of this festival held in the craft's honour. Its airy warehouse will display work submitted to Award – a competition with a £5,000 prize – by ten artists, including Matthew Raw, whose collaboration with architectural collective Assemble is soon to appear at Seven Sisters tube station in London. Visit makers at their wheels during the six weeks of open studios, have a go at raku firing (an ancient Japanese technique in which pots are taken from the kiln still red hot, then placed in a flammable material), or building your own bowl in The Clay Pit. Plus, don't miss a re-imagining of the 'Brown Betty', Britain's archetypal teapot. Young creative Ian McIntyre – an installation artist who also makes homeware for craft furniture brand Another Country – has been tasked with re-engineering the iconic design to fit the aesthetic of the contemporary British kitchen (23 September – 5 November; britishceramicsbiennial.com).

KILN FOLK THREE YOUNG POTTERS TAKING THE CRAFT TO NEW HEIGHTS

The architectural potter Emma Payne

Since returning from an apprenticeship in Copenhagen, 29-year-old Payne has been producing work for architect Simon Astridge's workshop as well as her own pieces. We love 'Tilt' (right), her witty tea set – the cups stand upright when full, tilting as they empty, to show your host you're due a refill (emmalouisepayne.com).



The tableware maker Elliott Denny

Perusing 27-year-old Elliott Denny's thrown tableware is a soothing experience. His collection of utilitarian porcelain plates, bowls and carafes is soon to be joined by similarly minimalist mugs with chalky exteriors. Keen to spread the word of the wheel, Denny holds classes at his Thames-side studio (elliottceramics.com).



The porcelain origamiist Toby Gascoyne

At shared studio The Kiln Rooms in Peckham, London, Gascoyne of Meiro Ceramics uses slivers of porcelain like pieces of paper, slicing and folding them to construct delicate vases and bowls, finished with a glossy glaze, that merge crockery with art (meiroceramics.com; thekilnrooms.com).



WORDS: CHARLOTTE BROOK