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British Ceramics Biennial celebrates 10 years with five-week festival of exhibitions, installations and events in the home of British ceramics

The **British Ceramics Biennial** (BCB) returns to Stoke-on-Trent from 7 September to 13 October 2019, bringing together more than 300 contemporary artists in a vibrant programme of exhibitions, installations and events taking place in six iconic cultural venues across the city.

This international festival of ceramics celebrates its 10th anniversary this year with an expanded programme that begins in the BCB hub, the **China Hall** in the **original Spode factory site** extending to **AirSpace gallery**, and springs up across the city with special site specific commissions and interventions at **Middleport Pottery, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Spode Works** and **World of Wedgwood**, each a champion of Stoke-on-Trent's ceramic identity.

The post-industrial setting of the original Spode factory site in the heart of the city is once again be the main hub of the festival, bringing together 13 exhibitions in the China Hall, alongside live workshop areas where visitors can explore and experience clay for themselves, and an exchange place for buying work and sharing ideas and inspiration.

At the centre of the biennial are BCB's two flagship exhibitions, **AWARD** and **Fresh**. **AWARD** bringing together new work created by 10 innovating ceramic artists competing for the prize, which has been increased to £10,000 to mark BCB's 10th anniversary. The shortlisted artists are: **Adam Buick, Elliott Denny, Barry Anthony Finan, Jessica Harrison, Vicky Lindo and William Brookes, Sam Lucas, Zoe Preece, John Rainey, Irina Razumovskaya and Hannah Tounsend**.

Alongside this, **Fresh** returns with a showcase of work by 20 of the UK's most talented recent ceramics graduates. **Fresh** is a platform from which the next generation of ceramic artists can advance their creative careers. **Awarded** presents new work by 2017 **AWARD** winner Tana West and 2017 **Fresh** winner, Eusebio Sanchez.

Growing Cultures led by **Peter Jones** extends the interaction with local residents and artists in exploring the cultural history of the ceramic vessel used for growing Penicillin cultures, which was made in Stoke-on-Trent, linking to current day issues with public health and antimicrobial resistance.

Artist **Lawrence Epps** continues his exploration of the collective attribution of value to objects processes and people with his new installation **Accolade**, a multiple set of ceramic trophies, some of which will conceal gold bullion, cast by Epps in China that will be available for purchase through a negotiated bidding process.

Partnership with other major international ceramic festivals the Indian Ceramics Triennale and Korean International Ceramics Biennial brings two artists Shirley Bhatnagar and Wookjae Maeng to the China Hall. Highlighting the international significance of BCB, a showcase of work by prize winners from two international competitions, the Franz Rising Stars (China) and Ceramics And Its Dimensions Future lights, will promote emerging ceramic talent from beyond the UK.

AirSpace Gallery in the cultural quarter of Hanley presents **Terms and Conditions: propositions in clay**, a performative residency and exhibition of new works by artists Dunhill and O'Brien exploring the physical qualities of clay as a material.



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High-profile and emerging artists working closely with local residents are creating exhibitions, installations and generating activities at **Middleport Pottery in Burslem, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in Hanley, Spode Works and Spode Museum Trust Heritage Centre in Stoke and World of Wedgwood in Barlaston**. Using clay, sound, film and performance, the interventions respond to the history and fabric of each site, making use of unconventional spaces and together revealing the richness of Stoke-on-Trent's cultural heritage - and highlighting its reputation as an international ceramic city.

Drawing on **Middleport Pottery's** profile as a heritage and manufacturing site, *Resonating Spaces* brings together a series of interventions based around the mass production of ceramic bell-like forms to build on ideas of individual and collective commemoration and celebration. A multi-disciplinary team of artists, including **Helen Felcey, Joe Hartley** with **Standard Practice** with a film-maker and sound artist, are leading in the creation of clay and production installations, experimental sound works, community engaged practice and co-produced artwork with local residents, Burselm Jubilee Project, giving audiences opportunity for spectacle, scale, making and reflection.

The **Staffordshire flatback** was a popular mantelpiece figurine made in the 19th centuries created by people for people. In a new exhibition at the **Potteries Museum and Art Gallery**, curator **Tessa Peters** with artists **Christie Brown, Claire Curneen, Ingrid Murphy, Joanne Ayre, Matt Smith,** and **Stephen Dixon** are creating un-compromising contemporary versions of these figures, drawing inspiration from the museum's extensive folk art collection of Staffordshire flat backs.

Spode Works was one of the few ceramic manufacturers in Britain to have operated continuously for over 230 years on the original site. In *Externalising the Archive*, artist **Neil Brownsword** brings the former function of the site back into the public realm. Working with other artists and artisans from industry, his large-scale installations will use some of the 64,000 plaster moulds from the Spode site stores with new castings, film, digital projections, sound and performance.

22 Hands at World of Wedgwood. In the 1970s the artist Glenys Barton was Wedgwood artist-in-residence, creating figurative and sculptural pieces that were intended to compliment general factory production with their pure artistry. Using this as a starting point, ceramic artists **Duncan Hooson** and **Stephanie Buttle** collaborating with performance and sound artists will present **22 Hands**, large-scale clay installations expanding Barton's vision through the creation of three theatrical sets that will be animated throughout the festival. The title **22 Hands** refers to the number of hands that handle a pot during its factory production process.

A free week-end festival bus will run between the different venues, enabling visitors to get round the city to experience the full programme and enjoy the the cultural assets of the ceramic city.

Barney Hare Duke, Artistic Director of the British Ceramics Biennial, comments: *'The British Ceramics Biennial is about people, place and clay. I am delighted that, as we mark our 10th anniversary, we are able to work so closely with artists, local residents and with partners across Stoke-on-Trent to create such an ambitious, thought-provoking programme – one that celebrates and highlights the heritage and cultural riches of this extraordinary city.'*

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For more information visit www.britishceramicsbiennial.com

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Notes to editors

The British Ceramics Biennial has partnered with the following institutions to create and present four site-specific exhibitions in Stoke-on-Trent during the BCB festival:

- Middleport Pottery
- Potteries Museum and Art Gallery
- Spode Works Site, in association with Spode Museum Trust, ACAVA
- World of Wedgwood

About the British Ceramics Biennial:

This year's festival runs from 7 September to 13 October 2019.

The British Ceramics Biennial is a prestigious cultural event taking place in Stoke-on-Trent every two years. The five-week long festival presents 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 new initiative of residencies, fellowships, commissions, education and enterprise projects running year round with a major festival every two years. There have been five festivals to date. The BCB initiative 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 year round with a particular focus on public engagement.

The festival and supporting community and education programme highlights and raises the profile of the many ceramics industries still working in Stoke-on-Trent, but also creates commissioning and exhibition opportunities for local ceramic artists as well as national and international artists.

2019 saw BCB become an Arts Council NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) in recognition of the quality of both its artistic programming and engagement activity.



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British Ceramics Biennial funders:

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BCB IS SUPPORTED BY

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BCB is proud to be part of Stoke-on-Trent Cultural Destinations, which brings the city's arts, culture and destination management organisations together to promote the city's rich year-round cultural offer.



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