



## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Clare Wood – British Ceramics Biennial Artistic Director and CEO

# Time to celebrate our creativity in ceramics

THOSE who have been out and about recently, may have spotted the distinctive pink adverts indicating that it's time for Stoke-on-Trent to host the British Ceramics Biennial once again.

The British Ceramics Biennial, or BCB as it is often known, is a two-yearly festival of clay. For those who know BCB, the festival needs no introduction, but for those less familiar, here's a simple summary.

- It's a festival of clay taking place in the home of clay;
- It's free to visit;
- It's friendly and welcoming;
- It takes place in Stoke-on-Trent and online;
- It runs for five weeks (September 11 – October 17, Wednesday – Sunday, 10am to 5pm);
- It includes the work of artists from Stoke-on-Trent, the rest of the UK and around the world;
- There's no need to know anything about art or ceramics to enjoy it and get involved

BCB celebrates Stoke-on-Trent, its creative edge and its industrial heritage.

can relate to and has linked so many of us over the past 18 months. Perhaps this shared experience is a way of bridging the gap between artists and audiences.

It is not uncommon to hear people say that they find it difficult to relate to artists, which results in a reluctance to attend exhibitions and galleries. 'It's not for the likes of me' is a common response when people are asked about their involvement with the arts. This is a huge pity, as it means missing out on a vast range of experiences – from the hilarious to the shocking and the thoughtful to the absurd.

With so many of us having been restricted in what we can do and who we can meet in recent times, it feels like we have some catching up to do. Now is perhaps the perfect time to

reconsider some of the self-imposed barriers we create and to try something new. So, if you haven't visited the British Ceramics Biennial before, make this the year to get involved. Everyone's invited and a warm welcome awaits.

On offer is the work of more than 60 artists, contributions from 150 community partners, a packed programme of talks and tours and the opportunity

to have a go at making and decorating plates. Entry is free, with free clay activities to enjoy with friends and family. Check the programme and come along to try your hand at throwing a plate or designing and applying your own plate decorations.

Hundreds of people throughout Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle have already created a plate with us as part of the Stoke Makes Plates project, which will form part of BCB 2021. Partners so far have included Rowan Court Care Home, Stoke

Recovery Group, Harlands Hospital and the Grocott Centre. Now it is your opportunity to make a plate and join this huge community creative endeavor.

The BCB festival pops up in various places across the city. This year, the main festival hub is at The Goods Yard, just a few minutes' walk from Stoke Railway Station.



This former warehouse is a new venue for BCB.

In the next few years, it is destined to become a new residential, leisure and social destination with thanks to investment from the City of Stoke-on-Trent Council and development partner Capital&Centric. Before that all gets under way though, it will be the festival hub for BCB 2021. We look forward to audiences old and new joining us this year for the best of ceramic creativity, innovation and expression in the world capital of ceramics.



POTTERIES PERFECTION: Exhibits from a previous BCB, top. Above, Gordon Brooks, whose scale model of Longton's Duchess China Works will feature this year.

## British Ceramics Biennial

### Where to go...

- The Goods Yard, Glebe Street, Stoke;
- AirSpace Gallery, 4 Broad Street, Hanley;
- Spode Museum Trust Heritage Centre, 32 Elenora Street, Stoke.
- The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Hanley.

This year is BCB's seventh festival and over that time it has developed a reputation for valuing the life, character and creativity of the city. BCB couldn't happen anywhere other than Stoke-on-Trent.

The planning and preparation for a BCB festival takes two years, which means that no sooner has one festival finished then we start preparing for the next one. This cycle makes the 2021 festival more remarkable than normal as the artists, BCB team, community partners and contributors have been brilliant in adapting to the challenges of the lockdowns and ensuring the BCB commissions, projects and proposals were delivered despite the pressures of the pandemic.

Feeling the pressure and persevering regardless is an experience many people

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