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

26 September – 8 November 2015

- Featuring 20 exhibitions and over 60 national and international ceramic artists
- Survey shows **AWARD** and **FRESH** acknowledging innovation and identifying emerging talent
- Powerful WW1 memorial incorporating thousands of white bone china flowers, to commemorate men of the North Staffordshire Regiment who fell in 1914-18
- New installation by leading multi-disciplinary artist, Bruce McLean
- Chance to purchase exhibition pieces, one-off and editioned work

This autumn the UK's largest ceramics festival, the British Ceramics Biennial (BCB), will return to Stoke-on-Trent for six weeks from 26 September to 8 November 2015.

A platform for new ideas, works and fresh approaches to clay, the festival celebrates the best in contemporary ceramics through an exciting programme of new exhibitions, installations, activities and special events. This year's BCB will offer a truly interactive experience, giving visitors the chance to get clay under their fingernails.

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. Within the 2015 Award showcase the works range from monumental architectural detail to intricate and intimate contemplative pieces, with conceptual depth, expressive flair and exquisite technical accomplishment.

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 throughout the Spode site in 2015 will include:

- An installation by **Bruce McLean**, one of the UK's leading multi-disciplinary artists, who will take on clay and assemble a studio theatre set of new characters
- **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 demonstrate the use of a 'state of the art' on-site 3D printer. This will be complemented by a programme of events delivered by RIBA, focusing on the architectural use of 3D printed ceramics
- 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
- **Re-apprenticed** by **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, mould making, china painting and flower-making
- **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
- A case study of **V&A ceramics resident Amy Hughes'** recent 'Artist into Industry' design project, conceived during her residency at the museum
- The **Engaged** section of the festival, which presents a series of exhibitions, interventions and activities themed around Flowers and Food, is drawn from the work of artists in collaboration with various community groups, partners and schools. This work is part of The Clay Foundation's community and education programme
- The **Bread in Common Café** will offer locally made artisan bread and produce as handcrafted cuisine reflecting the international flavour of the Biennial
- BCB continues its collaboration with **AirSpace Gallery**, where artists will present an interactive exhibition themed around flowers, environmental management and urban regeneration

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, 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 will not only highlight and raise the profile of the many ceramics industries still working in Stoke-on-Trent, but will also create commissioning and exhibition opportunities for local ceramic artists as well as 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, Contemporary Applied Arts, Craft Potters Association, Mitchell Arts Centre, North Staffordshire Regiment, Spode Museum Trust and The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery

Media Partner:

Ceramic Review

Coverage on BBC Radio Stoke

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
- Ongoing community & education programme

