

Manchester's Venture Arts Artist Amongst Britain's Leading Ceramicists in Headline Exhibition at Major UK Festival

British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) - the UK's largest contemporary ceramics festival - has selected Manchester artist Barry Finan for its headline exhibition AWARD 2019, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this September in Stoke-on-Trent.

From September 7th – October 13th Finan will be exhibiting amongst ten of the UK's most talented ceramicists with a chance to win the £10,000 prize for excellence, innovation and creative ambition. Set in the magnificent China Hall on the former Spode Factory site, this opportunity will see Finan undertake his most ambitious project to date.

Barry Finan has been practising for over ten years at Manchester's **Venture Arts**, which supports learning disabled artists to develop and showcase new art.

Finan's art defies categorisation. He has an eye for producing bold, text-based visual art and his work straddles writing, painting, ceramics, banner-making and performance. With the support of an Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant and ceramic artist Caroline Tattersall, Finan will create a large-scale site-specific ceramic installation.

Just under six hundred unfired bricks will form a malleable wall, a giant platform for the artist to broadcast personal messages, ambitions and life goals through live inscriptions, or 'WRRIGHHTINNGSERRSS', in which he uses repetitive letters to elongate his declarations of personal identity. This artwork will evolve throughout the festival, as his perspective on life and his hopes and dreams are etched into the impermanence of unfired clay.

Since 2014, Finan has been exhibiting his work nationally and has achieved critical acclaim. This year Venture Arts celebrated the acquisition of his piece *YES I WANT TO DO TRICKS* (2016) by the Whitworth Art Gallery for their Contemporary Fine Art Collection, with support from Nerys Johnson Contemporary Art Fund and the Friends of the Whitworth. This work is currently on show in their Exchanges Gallery and paired with Tracey Emin's, *MEOW*, on display until 2020.

Past exhibitions include **Charlie Smith Gallery**, London, which saw Finan exhibit a collaborative installation with artist Rosanne Robertson in the company of Turner Prize winner Mark Wallinger and nominee Fiona Banner; **Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art**, Gateshead; **The Manchester Contemporary** art fair; **The Lowry**, Salford Quays and national touring exhibition **Radial Craft: Alternative Ways of Making with Craftspace and Outside In**.

These achievements become more significant when considering the barriers to learning disabled artists in the mainstream art world: they lack the traditional routes through arts education and are routinely kept on the margins, with many never having the opportunity to reach their creative potential.

Amanda Sutton, Director of Venture Arts said:

'Venture Arts is delighted to be able to support Barry in this brilliant project. As an organisation that strives to promote and profile the work of learning disabled artists, this represents quite an achievement for us but most of all for Barry. He is an astounding talent and we are immensely grateful to all at BCB for recognising and supporting his application and ongoing success.'

Barney Hare Duke, Artistic Director of the British Ceramics Biennial said:

'We're pleased that Barry has been selected as one of the shortlisted artists for the BCB 2019 AWARD exhibition. Barry's proposal which was put forward in association with Venture Arts represents an ambition to generate work

on a scale that impresses but which equally offers potential to expand public understanding and appreciation of the vitality of what contemporary artists are doing with clay.'

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NOTES TO EDITORS:-

The British Ceramics Biennial opens 6th September and open to the public from 7th September –13th October 2019 at Spode Works, Stoke-on-Trent.

AWARD 2019 is open 7th September –13th October at Spode China Hall, Former Spode Works, Kingsway, Stoke-on-Trent , ST4 1JB. OPEN: Mon - Sun: 10am - 5pm. More about AWARD 2019: <https://www.britishceramicsbiennial.com/event/award/>

For further information or images or to arrange interviews please contact Kate Royle or Amanda Sutton, Venture Arts on comms@venturearts.org / Amanda@venturearts.org or telephone 0161 232 1223. www.venturearts.org

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Barry Anthony Finan is an artist born in Manchester. Finan sees himself as a writer, actor and artist and produces bold, text based visual art. His style of 'WRRIGHHTINNGSERRSS' is unique with repetitive letters that elongate his words which can become scripts, personal messages and hopes for the future. This visually absorbs the viewer and gives an insight into his journeys through life and his fascination with particular objects and people. It is also important for him to enact the work through readings and broadcasting. He works with a range of materials including paper, canvas, metal, wood and ceramics, with the latter being of significant interest during the past five years. The AWARD show will see his most ambitious project to date. Finan is supported by art studio, Venture Arts, to develop his work and he has been showing nationally since 2014. <https://venturearts.org/artists/barry-anthony-finan/>

Venture Arts is a progressive visual arts organisation supporting learning disabled people to reach their life potential through the visual arts. Based in Hulme, Manchester, it works supporting learning disabled artists to create and show new visual art using a range of art mediums including illustration, photography, moving image, animation, textile art, ceramics, painting and multimedia. The organisation's vision is to see learning disabled people play a valued and valuable role within arts and culture as artists, critics, audiences, advocates and workers. To this effect it delivers over 1500 visual arts workshops per year working with over 200 people and run work schemes which help learning disabled people to work and volunteer in cultural and educational environments. Venture Arts showcase the work of its artists locally, nationally and internationally. www.venturearts.org

Venture Arts is part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio and is a cultural partner of Manchester City Council 2018-22.

British Ceramics Biennial

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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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Special thanks to IBstock Bricks for supporting this project

