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Inaugural Woman's Hour Craft Prize finalists announced showcasing richness and variety of craft practice in the UK

BBC Radio 4, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (V&A), and the Crafts Council have announced the 12 makers in the running for the inaugural £10,000 Woman's Hour Craft Prize. From huge handwoven willow structures, darned high street hoodies and bespoke bicycles, to unfired clay installations, futuristic glass figures, and jewellery made with 18th-century pins found in the mud of the river Thames, the finalists explore issues ranging from our consumer culture, to the decline of UK manufacturing, and geo-politics.

The 12 finalists are: Laura Ellen Bacon, Alison Britton, Neil Brownsword, Lin Cheung, Phoebe Cummings, Caren Hartley, Peter Marigold, Celia Pym, Romilly Saumarez Smith, Andrea Walsh, Emma Woffenden and Laura Youngson Coll. The finalists were selected over the course of eight selection panels by 29 expert judges.

The Woman's Hour Craft Prize was launched in order to celebrate the most innovative and exciting craft makers in the UK, and coincides with the 70th anniversary of Woman's Hour. The 12 finalists were selected from almost 1,500 applications, and their works will feature in a Woman's Hour Craft Prize exhibition at the V&A from Thursday 7 September 2017 to Monday 5 February 2018, followed by a UK-wide tour. The winner will be selected by Rosy Greenlees (Executive Director, Crafts Council), Tristram Hunt (Director of the V&A), and Martha Kearney (BBC journalist and broadcaster), and announced in a live broadcasted ceremony from the V&A on Wednesday 8 November 2017.

Karen Dalziel, Editor of BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour, said: *"I'm delighted to be working with our partners the Crafts Council and the V&A on our new prize. The calibre of entries was really*

impressive so it was a challenging yet immensely enjoyable task to choose the 12 finalists. It's an incredible achievement for them to be selected to exhibit at the V&A. Woman's Hour listeners have shown a huge interest in the award and the range of crafts we've highlighted. I'm sure they will be excited to learn more about the exceptional and innovative pieces made by the Woman's Hour Craft Prize finalists."

Alun Graves, Senior Curator of Ceramics and Glass at the V&A, said: *"The twelve finalists for the Woman's Hour Craft Prize demonstrate the depth and breadth to be found in contemporary craft practice in the UK. A brilliant array of talent, they represent diverse approaches and work across a range of media, creating sculptural installations and performances to refined bespoke design. Challenging, thought-provoking, yet often exquisitely beautiful, their work is craft for our time, reflecting and engaging with the world today."*

Annie Warburton, Creative Director, Crafts Council, said: *"The twelve Woman's Hour Craft Prize finalists embody the vibrancy, energy and ingenuity of contemporary craft. The expert jury's already high expectations were surpassed by the astonishing quality of entries, making for some intriguing debates and challenging decisions. What's without question is the current confidence and vitality in craft. Representing a breadth of material practice and variety of approaches, the twelve finalists are united by their consummate skill and artistry."*

BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour will interview the 12 finalists before the exhibition launch.

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors:

- 1. For interview requests or further information contact Jill Read, Head of Communications, Crafts Council, media@craftscouncil.org.uk T: 020 7806 2549**
2. A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk
3. Notes on the finalists:

Laura Ellen Bacon works with willow and other natural materials to create striking monumental sculptures, using techniques traditionally associated with basketry.

Alison Britton rose to prominence in the 1970s as part of an influential group of ceramic artists whose work challenged established traditions. She has consistently focused on the pot as a

form, to which she continues to bring new ideas about sculptural form and painted surface, exploring function, history, containment and ornamentation.

Neil Brownsword creates installations using ceramics, film and performance taking the ceramics industry of The Potteries in his native Staffordshire as his primary subject, observing its people and production systems.

Lin Cheung is an artist and designer who questions the established uses and meanings of jewellery. She looks at how jewellery is used to express identity, and how it is a powerful trigger of memory and emotion.

Phoebe Cummings creates temporary sculptures and installations from unfired clay. Intricate and detailed, her work responds to the natural world and lasts only for the duration of an exhibition after which the clay is where possible reclaimed and reused.

Caren Hartley uses her metalwork skills to produce high-performing bespoke bicycles tailored to each rider. Often incorporating precious metals and exploring the surface finish of the frames through paint, patination and gilding.

Peter Marigold is a furniture designer influenced by his background in sculpture, theatrical set building and product design. He experiments with materials and form to create considered yet playful objects.

Celia Pym uses darning, knitting and embroidery to create intimate works that speak directly to human experience. She carefully darns other people's clothing, including socks, hoodies, jumpers and cardigans, making us think about our attitudes to care, repair and vulnerability.

Romilly Saumarez Smith transforms the stories contained in discarded everyday objects, such as dress pins found in the mud of the Thames, into beguiling works of art. Unable to use her own hands, she works alongside jewellers Lucie Gledhill, Laura Ngyou and Anna Wales who translate her pieces.

Andrea Walsh creates exquisitely-crafted box and vessel forms made of glass in combination with bone china that explore ideas of containment, materiality, preciousness and value.

Emma Woffenden creates glass sculptures and installations based around the human figure. Uncanny and at times unsettling, her works reflect observed human behaviour, with traits of humour, aggression and the absurd.

Laura Youngson Coll works mainly in vellum creating intricate pieces that lie somewhere between fiction and fact as she articulates the often overlooked details of our environment.

4. The judges: Maria Amidu (artist), Annabelle Campbell (Head of Exhibitions and Collections, Crafts Council), Professor Carole Collet (Design for Sustainable Futures, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London), Karen Dalziel (Editor, Woman's Hour), Deirdre Figueiredo MBE (Director, Craftspace), Simon Fraser (Course Leader, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London), Grant Gibson (Editor, Crafts magazine), Alun Graves (Senior Curator, Ceramics and Glass Collection, V&A), Alastair Hudson (Director, mima), Philip Hughes MBE (Director, Ruthin Craft Centre), Catrin Jones (Curator of Decorative Arts, The Holburne Museum), Corinne Julius (writer and curator), Jenni Lomax (Director, Camden Arts), Polly Macpherson (Associate Professor – Design, Plymouth University, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, School of Art, Design & Architecture), Kim Mawhinney (Head of Art, National Museums Northern Ireland), Martina Margetts (Royal College of Arts), Oliver Makower (Vice-Principal, Bishopsland Educational Trust), Professor Lesley Millar MBE (Director of the International Textile Research Centre and Professor of Textile Culture at the University for the Creative Arts), David Mills (Director of Goldsmiths' Fair), Clare Philips (curator, V&A), Helen Ritchie (The Fitzwilliam Museum), Sarah Rothwell (Assistant Curator, National Museums Scotland), Julia Stephenson (Head of Arts, National Glass Centre), Professor Carol Tulloch (Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London), Professor Jeremy Till (Head of Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London), Helen Walsh (Curator of Ceramics, York Art Gallery), Annie Warburton (Creative Director, Crafts Council), Daniella Wells (Events Consultant with craft specialism), David Weir (Director, Dovecot Studios).