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NEWS RELEASE

Woman's Hour Craft Prize

In collaboration with BBC Radio 4 and the Crafts Council

Sackler Centre for arts education, Room 220

7 September 2017 – 5 February 2018

Free admission

vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/womans-hour-craft-prize | [#womanshourcraftprize](https://twitter.com/womanshourcraftprize)

Bold, beautiful and brilliantly diverse, works by the 12 finalists of the £10,000 *Woman's Hour Craft Prize* will be celebrated in an exhibition at the V&A, opening 7 September. From a bespoke bicycle to a dissolving fountain, the *Woman's Hour Craft Prize* exhibition provides an important snapshot of how contemporary British craft practice reflects on, and engages with, the world today. 29 expert judges whittled down over 1500 applications to select 12 finalists, and their work will be displayed at the V&A until 5 February 2018, followed by a UK-wide tour. The winner of the Prize 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 on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* broadcast live from the V&A on 8 November 2017.

The *Woman's Hour Craft Prize* celebrates the possibilities of using particular crafts and skills in different ways. Works on display include three pots by **Alison Britton**, whose 40 year career has consistently challenged traditional notions of ceramics; a performative installation by **Neil Brownsword** on china flower-making, one of the few remaining methods of mass-production reliant on manual dexterity; and a dissolving fountain made from raw clay by Phoebe Cummings, inspired by a Meissen table fountain in the Museum.

Caren Hartley and **Lin Cheung** both trained in silver-smithing and jewellery design, yet Hartley will showcase a handmade bespoke bicycle and Cheung, known for her design of the 2012 Paralympic medals, will exhibit her *Delayed Reactions* series of politically-inspired pin badges. **Celia Pym's** beautifully darned textiles speak directly to human experience by bringing the

value of mending into the spotlight. In a nod to her previous training as a nurse, Pym will be showing two darned sweaters, which once belonged to a GP and an intensive-care nurse.

The *Woman's Hour Craft Prize* exhibition also highlights the endless possibilities of the interpretation and use of a particular material. **Emma Woffenden** will showcase three new conceptual glass sculptures with mould blown and free-blown elements which reflect her observations of human behaviour. **Andrea Walsh** uses glass to explore ideas of containment, and will be showcasing a series of boxes made from bone china and glass, inspired by a visit to Japan. **Romilly Saumarez Smith's** pieces transform the stories contained in discarded everyday objects. For the Prize she will incorporate finds including Tudor glass, old buttons and an Anglo-Saxon ring into 18th century inspired snuff boxes.

Some of the artists shortlisted for the Prize consider themselves loyal to no specific craft or label. **Peter Marigold's** output ranges from furniture design to public art projects. His shortlisted pieces from the 'Bleed' series are based on his interest in movement and decay. **Laura Youngson Coll**, who has trained in both sculpture and bookbinding, creates sculptures influenced by the marine environment, made from Vellum. The pieces she will show are inspired by the 19th century biologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel.

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."

Karen Dalziel, Editor of BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour, said: "It has been fantastic to profile the 12 remarkable finalists on Woman's Hour, and an incredible achievement for them to be exhibiting at the V&A Museum. The quality of their work is outstanding and their passion for craft is contagious. Our listeners have been fascinated to learn more about each maker; their background, working methods and sources of inspiration. They have brought to life their

innovative pieces on the radio and now we are very excited to see the finished works on display.”

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors:

1. For interview requests, images or further information please contact Catie Poust in the V&A press office on c.poust@vam.ac.uk or +44 (0)207 942 2683 (not for publication).
2. About the finalists:

Laura Ellen Bacon is a sculptor who works with willow and other natural materials to create striking monumental and site-specific sculptures, using techniques traditionally associated with basketry. After studying Applied Arts at the University of Derby, she began making work from dogwood and hazel branches on a large-scale, before moving into willow. She was selected for Jerwood Contemporary Makers in 2010. For the Woman’s Hour Craft Prize, she’s created a new work, *Form of Instinct*, from Flanders Red willow, which is, in her words, “about movement and vigour and trying to show how the material is being worked”.

Alison Britton’s career spans 40 years of making and writing. She first rose to prominence in the 1970s as part of a radical group of ceramic artists whose work challenged established traditional notions of the material. 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. For the prize she is showing three pots from three different series. In her words, “They all explore layers of ambiguity across art and craft, the sculptural and the everyday.”

Neil Brownsword creates installations using ceramics, film and performance. He takes the ceramics industry of The Potteries in his native Staffordshire as his primary subject, with globalisation and the loss of industrial knowledge as the backdrop. His piece, *Factory*, is a pared-down version of an exhibition opened in South Korea earlier this year. In this performative installation, Brownsword explains that, “Rita Floyd – one of the last generation of artisans to retain the skill of china flower-making [one of the few methods of mass-production that relies on manual dexterity] – re-enacts her former working practices, disrupted by the instruction to discard whatever she makes. The waste that accrues becomes a metaphor for the loss of intangible cultural heritage.”

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. For the prize she will be displaying 15 different pin badges from her *Delayed Reactions* series, inspired by people wearing pin badges in reaction to political, social

and personal events. Her 'Confused' badge, a play on the EU flag, shows the gold stars reorganised in a confused mouth shape.

Phoebe Cummings creates temporary sculptures and installations from raw 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. Eschewing conventional practices of producing objects that are then sold through a gallery or shop, Cummings has forged a career through commissions for public museums and galleries, She was a resident at the V&A in 2010, where she first saw fragments of the (recently restored) Meissen fountain that has inspired her piece for the Craft Prize.

Caren Hartley uses her metalwork skills and background in jewellery making to produce high-performing bespoke bicycles tailored to each rider, using techniques from bronze brazing and silver-soldering to piercing and wax-carving. Founder of Hartley Cycles, she makes bespoke bikes by hand and transforms an industrial process into applied art. Caren trained in 3D Design, Metalwork and Jewellery at University College for the Creative Arts, Farnham, and in Goldsmithing, Silversmithing, Metalwork and Jewellery at the Royal College of Art, London. For the prize, Hartley will be exhibiting a bike she made for the Design Museum's *Cycle Revolution* show in 2015, her Design Museum 953 Gravel Road Bike.

Peter Marigold's output ranges from furniture design, to public art projects such as the 188m wall outside the Edinburgh's new Royal Hospital for Sick Children, to material experimentations, such as FORMcard, a credit card sized piece of meltable bio-plastic. In 2009 Marigold was given a Designer of the Future award by Design Miami. His shortlisted pieces for the Prize, from the *Bleed* series, are based around an interest in movement and decay. Using cedar tongue-and-groove cladding and steel nails, stripped of their zinc coating, the pieces are left outside and exposed to the elements. The tannin in the timber has then reacted with the metal to create a bleeding pattern.

Celia Pym carefully darns other people's clothing, including socks, hoodies, jumpers and cardigans, making us think about our attitudes to care, repair and vulnerability. She completed an MA in Textiles at the Royal College of Art, London, and later trained as an Adult nurse. For the prize Pym will be showing, *Where Holes Happen*, two sweaters, from a GP and an intensive-care nurse, along with text describing their stories and profile pictures. She will also be working in the V&A doing repairs for visitors and creating a new work from a tracksuit.

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. For the prize, Romilly will be showing a combination of new and old boxes, which include finds such as Tudor glass, old buttons and an Anglo-Saxon ring, and allow her the

freedom to use materials sometimes too awkward for jewellery. Saumarez Smith says, “Everywhere we walk in this country there are treasures beneath our feet. I am touched that a particular find comes to me and that I can give it a new life, while referencing the place from which it emerged.”

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. She studied Fine Art at Staffordshire University, followed by a year at Dudley’s International Glass Centre, learning an array of different techniques. This was followed by a Masters in glass at Edinburgh College of Art, where she introduced clay to her practice and learnt to slip cast. For the craft prize, Walsh will be presenting a continuation of her Contained Boxes series inspired by a research visit to Japan.

Emma Woffenden creates glass sculptures and installations based around the human figure, using a wide variety of techniques and materials, including gypsum fibreglass and plastic. Uncanny and at times unsettling, her works reflect observed human behaviour, with traits of humour, aggression and the absurd. She says her pieces “look quite alien but quite classical at the same time”, and that glass as a “material signals modernity and has a futuristic quality”. She specialised in glass on the 3D Design, Ceramics and Glass course at West Surrey College of Art and Design and studied at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. For the prize she will be showing three pieces in mixed media, containing mould blown and free-blown elements.

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. The daughter of an archaeologist and an environmental educator, Youngson Coll has always been fascinated by the natural world, particularly those parts that are often overlooked. For the prize she will present three sculptures *Haeckel to Aplidium* inspired by the 19th century biologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel, and examines the pharmaceutical use of marine organisms.

3. 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).