



## **V&A Wedgwood Collection launches its Autumn 2021 programme including collaboration with British Ceramics Biennial**

The Autumn 2021 public programme is announced today for the V&A Wedgwood Collection in Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, in the next phase of the V&A's partnership with the World of Wedgwood. Forthcoming activity includes the staging of local interventions as part of the British Ceramics Biennial (11 September – 17 October 2021) and *I am a Man and a Brother*, a live research project and series of displays examining Josiah Wedgwood's anti-slavery medallion – shining new light on the historical context of this under-explored yet important story through a contemporary lens.

*I am a Man and a Brother* considers Wedgwood's medallion as a case-study for discussion of allyship and racism in Britain over the past 300 years, examining the iconography and meaning of the medallion today. Created in 1787, the medallions were created by Wedgwood – a keen supporter of the campaign against slavery - to draw attention to the inhumanity of the slave trade, and produced in Wedgwood's Jasperware and distributed for free at abolitionist society meetings. They feature an image of an enslaved man in a half-kneeling posture with the inscription "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?".

As part of the project, local students from City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College, academics and artists including Grace Barrett, founder of anti-racism teacher training programme I AM ALLY and Georgia Haseldine, V&A Research Institute Public Engagement Fellow have worked together on a series of workshops, which will culminate in a temporary redisplay of the medallion at the V&A Wedgwood Collection. One of the earliest known examples of the medallion will be shown alongside modern protest symbols and archival material from the V&A Wedgwood Collection exhibited for the first time, including Wedgwood's correspondence with prominent Black abolitionist and writer Olaudah Equiano. During the summer workshops, students learned new skills working with clay to create their own designs, moulding and modelling 21st-century medallions in Wedgwood jasperware. Their medallions will be on show as part of the new display, along with a new trail guiding visitors through the galleries, providing context for the medallion and the wider history of abolition and anti-racism. Visitors will be encouraged to share their thoughts and comments, which will help inform a permanent re-display of the anti-slavery medallion in the museum in 2022.

As the project continues, new digital resources will be launched on the V&A website, including a downloadable, free teaching resource offering teachers the opportunity to explore the theme of allyship in the classroom.

Alongside the display at the V&A Wedgwood Collection, on 2-3 October 2021 a cohort of young people from YMCA North Staffs will deliver a workshop at the British Ceramics Biennial in The Goods Yard, Stoke-on-Trent, giving visitors the chance to try their hand at creating their own wearable protest medallion in clay.

A further display at the British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) will celebrate the work of Alice Walton, a British ceramic sculptor whose intriguing labyrinthine forms have attracted international recognition. In 2019 Walton was awarded a BCB Fresh Talent Award for her use of coloured porcelain to create highly complex and multi-layered objects. Her award was an invitation to complete a residency with Wedgwood, and she has developed a new range of works in Wedgwood jasper using her 'ribboning' decoration technique, drawing inspiration from the wonderful collections housed on the site of Wedgwood's factory in Barlaston. Her new work will be on display at the V&A Wedgwood Collection throughout this year's British Ceramics Biennial and showcased at The Goods Yard site.

Also featured in the British Ceramics Biennial programme is a major loan of Wedgwood creamware and jasperware glaze and body trails to The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery's exhibition *Alchemy and Metamorphosis* (opening 18 September 2021). This unique record of experiments carried out by Josiah Wedgwood in the late 18th century form part of an exhibition curated by and featuring artist and

Staffordshire University Professor Neil Brownsword, exploring the heritage of Stoke's ceramics industry.

Further programming includes the Upstart Careers Festival featuring a panel of artists, designers and makers, interrogating Stoke's ceramics industry and offering guidance to young people about career opportunities across the field, as well as the week-long Heritage Open Days event that will invite visitors on a guided tour exploring the theme 'Edible England' through Wedgwood's weird and wonderful ceramic shapes and a menu of historic recipes taken straight from the V&A Wedgwood Collection archives.

**Catrin Jones, Chief Curator, V&A Wedgwood Collection said:** *"It's so positive welcoming visitors back to the V&A Wedgwood Collection after the challenges of Covid-19. Over the summer, we've enjoyed working with a fantastic group of inspiring students from Stoke-on-Trent, along with Grace Barrett of I AM ALLY, researchers and activists, to re-examine Wedgwood's iconic anti-slavery medallion. Wedgwood's protest symbol inspired a generation and we hope that by revisiting the story of this important object and reflecting on its enduring relevance in our contemporary world, we can create a new medallion for the 21st century."*

*Behind the scenes, we have been busy developing an exciting shared vision with Fiskars for Wedgwood's home in Barlaston and for celebrating the extraordinary collections here through a new programme of events, collaborations and cataloguing to make the collections more accessible than ever."*

**Jemma Harrison, Head of World of Wedgwood said:** *"This fantastic programme really connects our communities with the rich heritage of Wedgwood, giving the principles upon which the iconic brand was founded a greater relevancy today. I am really looking forward to working alongside Catrin and the team at the V&A Wedgwood Collection as the partnership forges a bright future for our home in Barlaston."*

**Grace Barrett, Founder, I AM ALLY said:** *"Through the V&A Wedgwood Collection's collaboration with I Am Ally we were not only able to teach more about Wedgwood's creations and invention of Jasper but also detail Britain's history with regards to The Slave Trade, The Empire and The Windrush. I was struck by the ability of the students to understand and condense something so huge into such a tiny ceramic, ensuring that it packs a punch. The detailed way in which they considered the curation of their display is beautiful and the vigour with which they approached the project as a whole is entirely inspiring – not to mention the skill level!"*

Comprising over 165,000 works of art, ceramics, manuscripts and photographs, the V&A Wedgwood Collection is one of the most important industrial collections in the world and a unique record of British ceramic production. The Wedgwood Collection was saved for the nation and presented to the V&A in 2014 following a major public appeal lead by Art Fund. The campaign was generously supported by thousands of individuals, companies and trusts, including significant support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Art Fund. Following Catrin Jones' appointment in 2020 as inaugural Chief Curator comprehensive cataloguing, archiving and digitisation of the collection will commence this autumn, as part of a new programme of displays and events that will open up these historically important national collections to the public. Visitors to the museum will be able to enjoy new interpretation and a broader range of stories to discover their own interests and inspiration, with a new trail kids' trail due to launch this half term exploring the inspiring stories of Wedgwood's factory workers.

The V&A Wedgwood Collection is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm. Visit us at the World of Wedgwood, Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent.

**ENDS**

**For further PRESS information please contact Callum Walker on [c.walker@vam.ac.uk](mailto:c.walker@vam.ac.uk) / +44 (0)203949 2502 (not for publication).**

**A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)**

**V&A Social Media**

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**V&A Wedgwood Collection Social Media**

Twitter: @vawedgwood

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**Notes to Editors:**

- The museum is free to visit and located within the World of Wedgwood complex, a visitor attraction and the home of the UK headquarters of Fiskars Group and Wedgwood's UK factory.
- The V&A Collection has been on long-term loan to World of Wedgwood since 2014, when it was saved for the nation and gifted to the V&A following a major public appeal led by Art Fund. A new partnership between the V&A and Fiskars Group was forged in 2019, to celebrate, conserve and catalogue this iconic collection.
- *I am a Man and a Brother* has been made possible through support from Art Fund, World of Wedgwood and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. More information about the Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion can be found [here](#).
- Further information about Art Fund's appeal to save the Wedgwood Collection in 2014 can be found [here](#).
- The British Ceramics Biennial (11 September to 17 September) is a vibrant five-week festival of new artist commissions, exhibitions and hands-on events that celebrate the life, character and creativity that ceramics bring to Stoke-on-Trent. More information can be found at [britishceramicsbiennial.com](http://britishceramicsbiennial.com)