

This symposium is organised by the **Ceramic Cultures, Practices and Debates Research Group** at Staffordshire University in partnership with the **Heritage Crafts Association**.



It is funded by the **Pilgrim Trust** and supported by **Staffordshire University**, **Potteries Museum & Art Gallery**, and **British Ceramics Biennial**.

# Beyond Preservation

## endangered ceramic skills symposium

*Saturday 16 October 2021, 9am to 5pm*  
*Refreshments will be provided*

**Potteries Museum & Art Gallery**  
Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DW

#beyondpreservation



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## Beyond Preservation: re-evaluating Intangible Cultural Heritage in the UK Ceramic Industry

Global economics and advances in automation technology have radically transformed the landscape of the UK's ceramic industry in recent decades. Whilst these transitions have facilitated greater productivity, once commonplace skills associated with ceramic manufacture have now been displaced, threatening the continuation of much traditional knowledge. Should such practices, deemed outmoded or economically unviable for contemporary ceramic production be simply relegated to history or the trails of heritage tourism? What value is there in safeguarding this knowledge for the future? How can traditional practices be revived through new modes of thinking and creativity in a digital age?

This symposium builds upon these questions, and highlights specialist skills at significant risk of being lost from the industry, surveyed through recent research for the Heritage Craft Association's *Red List of Endangered Crafts*. Making particular reference to North Staffordshire's intangible cultural heritage\*, scholars together with former employees and current representatives from the ceramics industry, will explore a variety of perspectives concerning a re-evaluation of the industrial crafts and their revitalisation through contemporary exchange and adaptation.

Although the symposium will be taking place within a cultural event, it will discuss ways to connect with the local community beyond cultural institutions, so that they can develop, engage and participate in 'their' intangible heritage. It is hoped that this event will introduce new ways of valuing industrial ceramics skills that are not influenced by the immutable heritage discourse of experts, by facilitating those that were and are still involved in the industry to articulate the value of their own heritage.

\*UNESCO define intangible cultural heritage as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge or skills that remain integral to a place's cultural heritage <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/01852-EN.pdf>. In 2003, UNESCO adopted a Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, including 'traditional craftsmanship'. It stated: 'Any efforts to safeguard traditional craftsmanship must focus not on preserving craft objects – no matter how beautiful, precious, rare or important they might be – but on creating conditions that will encourage artisans to continue to produce crafts of all kinds, and to transmit their skills and knowledge to others.' 180 countries have signed up to the convention, effectively making Intangible Cultural Heritage part of their cultural policy. Unfortunately, the UK is not one of them.

The Heritage Crafts Association supports the 2003 UNESCO Convention and its goal of safeguarding traditional craftsmanship by supporting the continuing transmission of knowledge and skills associated with traditional artisanry – to help ensure that crafts continue to be practiced within their communities, providing livelihoods to their makers and reflecting creativity and adaptation. The Heritage Crafts Association is one of only three UK-wide NGOs recognised by the UNESCO Convention for Intangible Heritage (accredited as an NGO under the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention 2003). This symposium aims to capture more in-depth data to inform the Red List of Endangered Crafts, and develop a course of action to preserve and protect knowledge and skills. A report published from the symposium will be used subsequently to create an action plan to address the potential loss of high-level ceramics skills.



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## Programme

- 9.00 – 9.30am **Registration & refreshments**
- 9.30 – 9.35 **Welcome to PM&G**  
Ben Miller, Assistant Curator of Ceramics Potteries Museum & Art Gallery.
- 9.35 – 9.50 **Introduction: *Beyond Preservation***  
Dr Neil Brownsword  
Professor of Ceramics, Staffordshire University.
- 9.50 – 10.20 **Keynote: *Varieties of Camaraderie in Craft: Hands, Handles, Bones, & Ghosts***  
Dr Ezra Shales, Professor History of Art, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, US (*virtual lecture*).
- 10.20 – 10.50 ***Inheritance and Development: Jingdezhen Ceramic Cultural Heritage Protection and the Promotion of Ceramic Art Prosperity***  
Yu Xiaoping, Professor, Jingdezhen Ceramic University, China (*virtual lecture*).
- 10.50 – 11.20 ***Behind the Glaze: 'Showing making' and Telling Stories in Yixing (China) and Yingge (Taiwan)***  
Dr Geoffrey Gowlland,  
Research Fellow at the Section of Educational Sciences, University of Geneva, Switzerland (*virtual lecture*).
- 11.20 – 12.10pm ***Intangible Ceramic Heritage and the Museum***  
Dr Laura Breen  
Independent arts and museums researcher, Manchester Metropolitan University (*virtual lecture*).
- 12.10 – 12.30 **Audience questions chaired by Vicki McGarvey**  
Doctoral research student at Staffordshire University.
- 12.30 – 1.30 **Lunch** – Please make your own arrangements. There is a café in the museum but also shops in the vicinity of the museum.
- Alchemy and Metamorphosis***  
Exhibition and demonstrations.
- 1.30 – 2.00 ***Re-evaluating Intangible Cultural Heritage in the UK's Capital of Ceramics***  
Vicki McGarvey, postgraduate research student at Staffordshire University.
- 2.00 – 2.20 ***Why it Matters***  
Emily Johnson, founder and director of 1882.
- 2.20 – 2.40 ***Introduction to the Red List and current findings***  
Mary Lewis, HCA Endangered Crafts Manager.
- 2.40 – 3.00 **Refreshments**

*Continued...*



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3.00 – 4.45pm

### Discussion with ceramic industry representatives

Including:

- **Jason Simms and Andrew Tooth** (Duchess China 1888 and Heraldic Pottery)
- **Gary Hawley** (Denby Pottery)
- **Kevin Milward** (Clay College)
- **Emily Johnson** (1882)
- **Sara Whybrew** (Creative and Cultural Skills)
- **Kate Cadman** (Ironbridge Gorge Museums)
- **Rita Floyd** (flower maker, former Adderley Floral factory)

*Chaired by Mary Lewis, Daniel Carpenter and Neil Brownsword.*

4.45pm

### Symposium close

## Abstracts

### Introduction: Beyond Preservation

*Professor Neil Brownsword*

The six towns of Stoke-on-Trent have been famed for their industrial-scale pottery manufacturing since the 18th century. By 1938 half the workforce of Stoke-on-Trent worked in pottery factories with employment peaking in 1948 to an estimated 79000 people. However, global economics and advances in automation technology have radically transformed the landscape of the UK's ceramic industry in recent decades. Whilst these transitions have facilitated greater productivity, once commonplace skills associated with ceramic manufacture have been displaced, threatening the continuation of traditional know-how. Since 2013, Neil Brownsword has explored these transitions through his artistic practice by foregrounding the embodied knowledge of personnel formerly employed in North Staffordshire's ceramic industry. Using a range of intersecting approaches that include social practice, collaborative performance and object installation, his works have drawn greater critical attention to people and traditional knowledge displaced by regional industrial change. This presentation elucidates Brownsword's artistic projects which re-evaluate intangible cultural heritage within Stoke-on-Trent's ceramic sector and introduces the content of the symposium.

### Biography

Neil Brownsword is an artist, researcher and educator who holds a Professorial position in ceramics at Staffordshire University. Brownsword's artistic research examines the manufacturing histories of North Staffordshire's ceramic industry, and the effects globalisation has had upon people, place and traditional skills in recent decades. His reactivation of associated post-industrial spaces and endangered industrial crafts has achieved impact internationally via cross-cultural exchange, and curated trans-disciplinary collaborative projects. From 2012 – 2020 he initiated and co-led Topographies of the Obsolete with University of Bergen, which has engaged 97 participants from 13 countries with the former Spode factory and Stoke-on-Trent's broader post-industrial landscape.



## **Varieties of Camaraderie in Craft: Hands, Handles, Bones, & Ghosts**

*Professor Ezra Shales*

If craft is often celebrated today as an alternative to impersonal mass production, a compartmentalized way to compensate for a loss of unique possessions, this presentation will delve into manufacturing and factories as sites of camaraderie and social connectivity, from the use and re-use of tools, whether 'hand' tools or plaster moulds. If terms like 'heritage' and 'patrimony' connote a sense of tangible succession with implicit social hierarchies, can an increased valuation of camaraderie help us discern what to preserve and what to pass on?

### **Biography**

Ezra Shales is a Professor in the History of Art department at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, the first public art school established in the United States, where he has taught seminars on "The Banjo as American Material Culture" and "Ceramics and Cultural Identity" as well as surveys of art, design, and craft that probe the interface between social history and narratives of technology and innovation. Shales's first book, *Made in Newark* (2010) reassembled demonstrations of industry in New Jersey's dynamic museum circa 1900-16. His second, *The Shape of Craft* (Reaktion, 2017), prompted a reviewer to characterize him as a "philosopher of the factory floor."

## **Inheritance and Development: Jingdezhen Ceramic Cultural Heritage Protection and the Promotion of Ceramic Art Prosperity**

*Professor Xiaoping Yu*

Jingdezhen is a worldwide Porcelain Capital with more than a thousand years history. After the shutdown of the state-owned industrialized daily-use porcelain production in the 1990s, the ceramic handicraft has been passing and protected in the following ways such as taking the advantage of the national intangible cultural heritage protection regulations, and selecting the typical cultural inheritors, providing them with the necessary inheritance sites, funds, and supporting their activities of apprenticeship, teaching skills and techniques, etc. Meanwhile the government established the national, provincial and municipal productive protection demonstration bases for intangible cultural heritage, inheriting ceramic production skills so as to make them the bases of production, tourism, cultural education and art exhibition as well as dramas according to the ceramic history of Jingdezhen. Jingdezhen Ceramic University carried out the Chinese intangible cultural heritage training program to teach hand-made porcelain techniques. The Jingdezhen Intangible Cultural Heritage Research and Protection Center organized the national ceramic traditional handicrafts and outstanding inheritors to conduct ceramic throwing forming competitions, and performed hand-made crafts such as sculptures, carvings, blue and white paintings, famille rose painting and needle painting on porcelain. It also organized e-commerce platform to meet the inheritors and the productive protection demonstration bases for intangible cultural heritage so as to promote the product marketing by online and offline platforms. Furthermore the center organized the communication activities between the inheritors and the designers. By means of modern design, let traditions go into modern life, realize the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture, and promote the intangible cultural heritage to better integrate into contemporary life.



### Biography

Xiaoping Yu is a professor at the School of International Studies of Jingdezhen Ceramic University and the discipline leader "Chinese and Foreign Ceramic Cultural Exchange and Communication" as well as a senior expert of the Ceramic Culture Branch of the Chinese Culture Promotion Association. His translation of "Traditional Ceramic Techniques of Jingdezhen" was awarded the China's outstanding publications. He shared his research on the protection of Jingdezhen intangible ceramic culture at the academic seminars in Poland and Vietnam.

### Behind the Glaze: 'Showing Making' and telling stories in Yixing (China) and Yingge (Taiwan)

*Dr Geoffrey Gowlland*

Artisans are increasingly asked to take on the role of performers, demonstrating craft techniques in museums, factory tours, their own workshops, or in video recordings posted online. This paper presents some thoughts on the power of demonstrations to engage audiences, and their potential to create new values and meanings for crafts. Gowlland asks what is, and what can be, the role of demonstrations in the promotion of intangible heritage? And what can we learn from artisans and their approach to the demonstration of craft techniques? He bases his reflection on ethnographic field research in two ceramics production centres: Dingshu (Yixing) in the Jiangsu province of China, and the town of Yingge in Taiwan. In Dingshu, artisans make handcrafted unglazed teapots from leather-hard clay. Gowlland argues that demonstrations have become important to sustain forms of craft knowledge, as they allow young potters to add value – economic as well as cultural – to their work, motivating them to spend years learning the craft's intricate techniques. In Yingge, he looks at the demonstrations of the use of the kick-wheel by one artisan at the Yingge Ceramics Museum. He reflects on how demonstrations are not just a means to show techniques, but can be opportunities to create a shared sense of local history and shared values with audiences.

### Biography

Geoffrey Gowlland is a researcher at the Section of Education Sciences, University of Geneva, Switzerland. An anthropologist by training, he is interested in processes of acquisition of material knowledge and skills, and in initiatives of revitalisation of material culture practices. His current research addresses cultural revitalisation among the indigenous people of Taiwan, and education in the crafts of dry-stone masonry in Europe. In prior research, he explored the contemporary production of ceramics and issues of learning and development of expertise in China's 'Capital of Pottery' (Dingshuzhen), and in Taiwan's ceramics production centre of Yingge. He is the author of *Reinventing Craft in China: the contemporary politics of Yixing zisha ceramics* (Sean Kingston, 2017).

### Intangible Ceramic Heritage and the Museum

*Dr Laura Breen*

As agents of what Laurajane Smith (2006) has labelled 'Authorised Heritage Discourse' (AHD), museums play an important role in shaping public narratives about ceramic heritage. They also help to determine which aspects of the industrial past are deemed worthy of preservation. Their focus on safeguarding material evidence for future generations can side-line other forms of knowledge production, threatening their continuation. However, whilst their external profile centres on 'gestures of showing' (Bal, 1996), exhibitions and displays form a small part of their remit. Drawing on research into how museums in the UK have managed ceramic heritage, this paper explores the affinities between the changing



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role of the museum professional and what Trevor Marchand (2010) has labelled 'making knowledge.' Foregrounding the relationship between behind-the-scenes work in museums and the factory, it advocates opening out - rather than interpreting - heritage, shifting attention from the static notion of 'in perpetuity' to perpetual re-making.

#### **Biography**

Dr Laura Breen is Impact and Engagement Manager at Manchester Metropolitan University. She was part of the AHRC-funded Ceramics in the Expanded Field project at the University of Westminster (2011-2016). Her monograph, *Ceramics and the Museum* was published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2019. Laura's writing also features in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* (2020), *The Ceramics Reader* (2017) and *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture* (2016). Prior to her PhD she worked in the museum sector at institutions including The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery and Tameside Museums Service.

### **Re-evaluating Intangible Cultural Heritage in Britain's Capital of Ceramics**

*Vicki McGarvey*

The focus of this paper will be the re-evaluation of Stoke-on-Trent's ceramic industry's intangible cultural heritage, specifically focusing on the skills of the people that worked and continue to work within the industry. Intangible heritage is often referred to as ideas, beliefs and ideologies, and value frameworks regularly associate these characteristics with physical objects and sites. As a result the intangible becomes a subsidiary to the tangible heritage, requiring less rigorous definitions. This paper will question why the intangible heritage of industrial ceramics skills, within Britain is still under-represented and documented. Furthermore, it will suggest the reframing of intangible heritage within a living heritage context that goes beyond the established cultural monolith of the museum. It will consider the opening up of a community dialogue to develop new ways of promoting and commemorating industrial ceramics skills, that repositions the central role of expert judgment with a movement towards participatory cultural approaches co-authored by those that have been involved in the industry. As somebody who was born in Stoke-on-Trent and has lived and worked in the potteries most of my life McGarvey will also critically analyse her subjective position within this research.

#### **Biography**

Vicki McGarvey is a chartered librarian and an e-learning educator with nearly 25 years of experience in higher education. Born in Middleport, she went to school in Burslem, her Sociology degree is from Staffordshire University. She currently manages the team that provides access to library resources and research publications at Staffordshire. She is also a part-time postgraduate research student, her research is within the area of intangible cultural heritage, focusing on the evaluation of industrial ceramics skills within Stoke-on-Trent's pottery industry. Furthermore, she is the chair of Stoke and North Staffordshire's Women's Network, which in 2019 led the National Heritage Lottery Funded Project *Bound by Clay* [www.boundbyclay.com](http://www.boundbyclay.com) celebrating women's contribution to the pottery industry in Stoke-on-Trent.

### **Why it Matters**

*Emily Johnson*

1882 Ltd. is a design-led ceramics brand produced in Stoke-on-Trent, England formed by fourth and fifth generations of the Johnson Brothers family. At the core of 1882 Ltd. is progressive design that highlights



centuries of industrial heritage craft skills and knowledge that reside in the heart of the British ceramics industry, Stoke-on-Trent. '1882' was the year that Johnson Brothers was founded. The factory was situated in Hanley, the largest of the Six Towns. In the ten years since forming the company, 1882 Ltd. has collaborated with pioneering artists and designers such as Barnaby Barford, Max Lamb, Faye Toogood and John Pawson, producing works of art as well as tableware. This presentation will elucidate the company's journey over the last decade and discuss the importance of harnessing Stoke's intergenerational skills for generations to come.

#### **Biography**

Having lived in California selling television advertising for eight years, Emily Johnson decided to return home to the UK. While studying for a Masters in Architectural Interior Design she was required to pick a material to study in detail, she chose fine bone china and in the process realised that not only did she know more than she thought but that it was a material that was undervalued as a vehicle for innovative design. Indicative of what was to come and the start of something very exciting – 1882 Ltd. and with that supporting the ceramics industry of Stoke-on-Trent.

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