

18th December 2018

## **St Hugh's Arts Award Winner 2016**

**Project:** Heritage on the High Street – a town wide public realm art trail to celebrate the world famous Hornsea Pottery, East Yorkshire, 2016 – 2018.

**Research:** To investigate the production methods and the back catalogue of designs, glaze technology and application, within the historic Hornsea Pottery collection.

**Outcome:** Research and Design for the Celebration Bus Stop is complete. Public Art installed on Newbegin (6 x pavement art repeater tiles, 1 x large museum pavement art), Artisan Park, Market Shoal Roundabout; Muramic Murmuration Roundabout and the Elegance Sculpture due for installation in February 2019.

### **Background.**

In 2015, I was commissioned to develop a concept heritage trail in collaboration with the Hornsea Folk Museum, Hornsea Secondary School, HARP and ERYC<sup>1</sup>. The objectives of the project had been formed through consultation with the local community. The governing aim is to provide economic development for the seaside town of Hornsea and capitalise on the town's history for its award-winning pottery. The concept designs for the trail were exhibited at various venues across the town. They were received with enormous support and enthusiasm with 98% of people who completed the questionnaire saying they would like to see a trail celebrating the Pottery in Hornsea and 98% felt the concept designs reflected the Hornsea Pottery designs. People were particularly drawn to the Roundabout art and the proposal for the decorated bus shelter. The support from the St Hugh's Foundation provided an essential period of action research that has led to a full architectural ceramic design specification to create a permanent piece of ceramic art to permanently adorn the Bus Shelter<sup>2</sup> on Newbegin in Hornsea. The research has proliferated the overall trail and design concept.

### **Concept**

The HARP Partnership develops, delivers and supports projects, which meet the aim and the objectives of close community consultation set out in the strategic Hornsea Master-plan to advance the town. I worked in close consultation with the partnership to develop the funding applications to the HLF and Arts Council England. Our application for a creative engagement project to run parallel with this research was successful. The collaboration continued throughout the research and production phase. Hornsea Folk Museum has the collection of archived stories gathered from Hornsea Pottery ex-staff, friends and family over the years. I thought it poignant to create a commission for a poet as part of the education programme for students at secondary level and to involve the community. The 'Sharing Memories' sessions with poet Mary Ahern and ex pottery employees was very successful and their shared memories combined with poems charting the story of the designs themselves where explored through art and poetry with Art / English / Humanities students. The poems are now available on a

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<sup>1</sup> Hornsea Area Renaissance Partnership and East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

<sup>2</sup> In the concept designs, the Bus Shelter was worked through with Art students from Hornsea Secondary School and became known as the 'Celebration Bus Stop'.

newly created webpage linked to the Hornsea Museum page, and excerpts are literally set into granite as part of my landscape design for the Artisan Park on Newbegin, Hornsea. This creative engagement has added value to the final pieces, enabling the wider community to take ownership of the artwork for the future. Consultation and creative engagement continued at the Hornsea School and Language College where I developed an education package to engage Years 7, 8, 9, 10, and sixth form students in the local history and craft production. I set up a small pottery with Kiln, potter's wheel, and materials at the school and provided training to teachers in delivery and technical support. The creative education package is now a free tool available to download from the webpage. The package demonstrates the educational links and the studio - based skills that relate to the pottery manufacturer, with a design sheet to focus on making and decorating a George Ratcliffe trinket box<sup>3</sup>. Students have been involved since the early consultation period and developed ideas for the trail, which inspired early concepts. These concepts are now fully developed real pieces and are installed along the main street called Newbegin, at the Market Place Roundabout, Southgate, and in 2019 at the Hull Road / Southgate junction roundabout. The project created a work experience opportunity within the art as regeneration sector and an art graduate worked at Studio Eleven (my base) during the Summer 2018. The trail is supported by a series of floor 'repeater' sign-art. There are six of these brightly coloured terrazzo tiles with an embedded stainless steel pot profile and are situated on Southgate, Market Place, and along Newbegin, all at 500mm x 500mm. One information board is situated in the Artisan Park detailing the trail with contact information to link to the Hornsea Museum Website where more information about the Potteries, Poetry, and Education Pack, can be found. A large piece of colourful terrazzo pavement art measuring 3m x 1.2m is now outside the Hornsea Folk Museum complete with elemental design decorations, the twin dove logo and award winning Elegance Pot Profiles produced in metal and embedded into the pavement. In 2019, we will have the Muramic Murmuration roundabout sculpture and the Elegance Sculpture added to Newbegin. The design for the Celebration Bus Stop was initiated whilst working with the sixth form group at the Hornsea School and Language College. The St Hugh's Arts Award has provided the research time to develop this concept into a final design that is ready for production. The bus stop is now a popular location and is totally supported by HARP and the community. Their hunger for the project to happen was reflected in the WW1 Centenary Event Commemorations' in November 2018 when a local group took it upon themselves to decorate the shelter – a site that had been overlooked in previous years.

## Research

I am particularly interested in the traditional techniques of resist screen - printing and glaze technology. Therefore, I spent a number of months researching archives mainly available at the Treasure House Archive in Beverley and various but limited online resources. Archives for glaze and stain numbers date back to the Fineness Book of 1986 – 1987 and later in the materials specification files dating up to 2000. The glazes and stains were produced by the Stoke on Trent based company, Cookson's, and indicated the glazes for key designs that are included in the trail. For example; Fleur, Saffron, Contrast, Bird of Paradise, and, named glazes such as Blue Opaque, Low Sol Black. The pottery industry in the UK has since demised and I contacted the few remaining large companies in Stoke to trace the Cookson brand. All remember the Hornsea Pottery and the famous collections and designs; therefore I was able to trace the evolution of the resist glazing method. Cookson merged into Cookson Matthey in 1994, later bought into the PotteryCrafts UK Company, which was formed in 1983. The Cookson Matthey glazes had a prefix of the numbers '24' and '25' that was no longer traceable. After much discussion with Endeka Ceramics Ltd; they provided a similar transparent glaze with the high firing earthenware temperature similar to one that the Hornsea Pottery had used. I was now able to make some honey glazed tests.

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<sup>3</sup> Trinket box with sun burst motif and chocolate brown glaze; George Ratcliffe was one of the shape designers at Hornsea Pottery.

My research into the resist print ceramic medium led me to the Patent's Office where I found the original specification filed on 23rd May 1967. This submission pre-dates the digital revolution by thirty years and was linked to no. (54) Improvements in and relating to glaze pottery. This patent meant that Hornsea Pottery (the brothers Rawson) being the inventor of had total rights to use this decorative technique. It was the company's unique selling point and provided the famous contrast between the black pattern and the raised glazed surround on collections such as Saffron, Brontë, decorative mugs and Muramics.

*'According to the invention, this method comprises applying by direct screening, to a biscuit article having preferably a water absorption capacity of between 15 and 20% by weight, a design glaze dispersed into a resist medium consisting of a drying oil alkyd resin and a light lubricating oil...'<sup>4</sup>*

As the digital revolution has reinvented the printing process, the patent is not in use and the resist medium is now widely available at specialist suppliers for potters working at a studio scale. I was able to purchase and set about doing some screen - printed tests on white medium grogged clay supplied by Endeka Ceramics Ltd. This process is very time consuming and therefore difficult to 'scale up' as commercial printmaking has become digitally streamlined. Simultaneously, I continued to research the back catalogues of Positives and collections exhibited and archived, at the Hornsea Folk Museum.

### **Designs for the Celebration Bus Stop**

I recreated most of the popular designs of Muramics, themed mugs, and decorative gift-ware. Hornsea Museum houses the largest collection of the pottery, however, most of the drawings of shapes and patterns have disappeared. The research involved scaling up and redrawing patterns from the actual pottery, and analysing the drawings from the remaining positives. I digitised the patterns to print and make positives, and to photographically transfer to the silk screens. The process is labour intensive and considering the timescale and budget, it was not efficient to use this methodology for large architectural ceramic production. It proved difficult to access commercial help for a traditional and now historic process. It would mean setting up the machinery and recreating the working process – a great project for the future but not within our funding budget at this time. The production of drawings, digitising the designs, and some printed tests, took place over a period of ten weeks. The next stage was to digitise all the designs and colour them accordingly. I have generated over 200 unique configurations of Hornsea Pottery designs for the Celebration Bus Stop only; individual tiles complete with edging tiles and including various Hornsea Pottery logos. The design is now complete and is ready for production with designated contractors. Alongside producing this design, I managed to develop further new drawings and designs for the Pavement Art Trail, Artisan Park, Market Shoal Roundabout (Market Place), Elegance Sculpture and the Muramic Murmuration.

### **Timescale**

The production and installation of the trail slipped by one year. This was due to many factors. The steering group appeared indecisive and requested unforeseen amendments, which impacted on the budget. The restraints on the ERYC core funds meant redundancies for key officers and subsequent delays in delivery. It was unclear as to whether the designs were subject to copyright as the Hornsea Pottery went into receivership in 2000. The public art consultant worked with the ERYC legal department to investigate this and several months passed until we ascertained the formalities. It is our understanding that there is a copyright holder and we eventually made contact and gained their endorsement to proceed with the designs. The allocated budget for production and installation became

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<sup>4</sup> Improvements in and Relating to Glazed Pottery; Colin Bentley Rawson & John Alan Lea; The Patent Office, London.

outdated as delays in delivery meant that prices grew within the economic climate and some manufacturers ceased production. However, with a new team on board and dedicated expertise, for example; highways managers & engineers; we are delighted that the trail in its first phase will be complete by March 2019. All designs and materials are passed and either in production or have been installed into the public realm. One element of the public realm trail is the new design for a set of architectural ceramics to tile the 'Celebration Bus Stop' on Newbegin, Hornsea, which has currently been deferred for consideration for the phase 2 by the Hornsea Area Regeneration Partnership.

## Own legacy

The trail is due to launch in March 2019. The marketing and publicity communication began in November and the BBC Look North team has interviewed me. Excitement began on social media with the BBC Look North developing a Facebook / social media campaign to locate international collectors and inheritors of the Hornsea Pottery<sup>5</sup>. BBC journalist Jo Makel presented a prime time feature on the worldwide influence of the pottery combined with a focus on the celebratory art trail in Hornsea.

The project will continue to inspire secondary school art and design students, museum / heritage lovers, pottery collectors and attract cultural tourists to Hornsea. The education package is free to download and adaptable for secondary education and adult learners. I have organised the inaugural Hornsea Pottery Fair, which has attracted both amateur and professional ceramicists to exhibit. The provisional date is Saturday 23rd February 2019 although this is subject to change according to the installation dates of the remaining two sculptures. The trail is currently being marketed through the ERYC, Hornsea Museum, HARP; and hard-copy materials combined with the legacy website will be available in the New Year. I have written an article for Ceramic Review – the international magazine for ceramics – about the value of the pottery within the context of the trail launch. This will be published in the Feb / March 2019 edition. I have created strong links with the magazine that is part of the Craft Potters Association of which I am an Associate Member. The project has gained support from the Centre for Ceramic Art in York with news being re-tweeted with the hash-tag 'RethinkCeramics' – a poignant statement for the evolution of contemporary ceramic art practice within the context of the demise of industrial ceramics in the UK. I have a wider more extensive visual language to offer clients for public realm works and to apply to my own ceramic design. The screen - printing is a production methodology that I would like to develop in the future to offer specialist artworks in ceramics.

Adele Howitt

Heritage on the High Street

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<sup>5</sup> [https://twitter.com/jo\\_makel/status/1067399836247498754](https://twitter.com/jo_makel/status/1067399836247498754)