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**PRESS RELEASE**  
06 December 2017

## **Collect Open 2018: 14 Makers Breaking New Frontiers in Craft**

Selected by Jay Osgerby and the Crafts Council

22–25 February 2018



Birch Standing Vessels by Forest + Found.

A year in a life told in a tapestry, the aftermath of a meal presented as a 20-piece metal still life, an enclosed garden of sculptural jewellery, a plea for ocean preservation made by hundreds of smoke-fired ceramic fish... The installations of **Collect Open 2018** provide a striking and sometimes provocative insight into the power of craft to tell stories, make arguments, and explore ideas big and small.

Introduced in 2011 **Collect Open** has built a reputation as the home of some of the biggest and boldest installations exhibited at **Collect: The International Art Fair for Contemporary Objects**. While the main body of the fair presents a gallery-by-gallery showcase of museum-quality craft works from around the world, **Collect Open** shines a light on individual makers, and provides a platform to present exceptional new works at a much larger scale.

In February, **Collect Open** returns to the **Saatchi Gallery**, unveiling new work from **14 makers** from across the UK to **Collect's** international audience. For the makers, the exhibition provides a unique opportunity to step outside the confines of their usual practice and experiment with new concepts and creative directions – and to showcase the results at one of the highest-profile platforms in the UK. **Collect Open** has historically been a channel through which many of the featured makers find gallery representation, earn commissions and get picked up by curators.

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Stepping into the shoes of last year's selector, Faye Toogood, internationally renowned designer **Jay Osgerby** has steered the 2018 selection, working with the Crafts Council's Head of Exhibitions and Collections **Annabelle Campbell** and Project Curator **Julia Ravenscroft**.

In the months leading up to the fair, these 14 makers are each creating new works to be exhibited for the first time at Collect Open. With large-scale installations in jewellery, ceramics, glass, furniture, textiles and metal, the materials and disciplines may differ, but the makers are united by a combination of exceptional talent, risk-taking and thematic imagination.

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*'We look for conceptually strong ideas which show a clear vision and skill in making. I am struck this year by the seriousness of some of the themes that have inspired the works. The pollution of our seas, scarcity of clean water, child welfare and the environment are just some of the ideas explored.'*

– **Julia Ravenscroft**, Project Curator, Collect Open



Aquatopia Drinking Vessel by Katrin Spranger.  
Photography by Jamie Trounce.

## COLLECT OPEN: THE WORKS

### ***Doulton/Bazalgette by Alison Cooke***

London-based ceramic artist Alison Cooke is a co-founder of the Associated Clay Workers Union, a ceramics collective that collaborates on site-responsive work in non-gallery settings. Sourcing her clay from historic locations and construction sites, Cooke often creates forms that reference the area's past. For Collect Open, she is using clay excavated from under the Thames foreshore to create an installation that reflects upon a narrative relationship between site, material and finished form.

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### ***The Fallen Woman by Alison Lowry***

*'The subject matters I like to deal with are generally of a challenging nature. I believe that applied arts – as well as being beautiful and well made – can have a voice.'*

From her studio in Northern Ireland, Alison Lowry creates vessels and sculptural works in glass, with a focus on pâte de verre – the 'glass paste' technique whereby finely crushed glass and binding agent are cast in a kiln and fused into solid forms. Initially trained in printed textiles, Lowry draws on this background to create fabric-like sculptures in glass. *The Fallen Woman* installation uses this approach to pay tribute to the women confined in Ireland's Magdalene Laundries – the religious-order-operated institutions that incarcerated as many as 30,000 women between the late-19th and late-20th centuries.

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### ***Hortus Conclusus by Donna Brennan***

*'Working with stones, minerals, gold and silver, my work explores the nature/artifice dichotomy, transporting stones and minerals from the realm of nature into the realm of culture.'*

For over 20 years, London-based fine art jeweller and photographer Donna Brennan has been creating small-scale wearable sculptural forms composed of precious and semiprecious stones that explore refraction and the interplay of light. In the early 1990s, she pioneered a unique technique of enamelling on crystal, which she is developing further for Collect Open. Despite her lengthy career, this will be the first time that Brennan has presented a concept-driven installation in the UK, as well as the first time she has incorporated her photography into an exhibition. Derived from the Latin term for 'enclosed garden', *Hortus Conclusus* is a series of wearable sculptural art pieces, crafted from a mélange of minerals, stones, gold, bronze and silver, presented against an ethereal backdrop of dye-sublimation floral images printed on aluminium. Part of one of those images has been extracted and incorporated into a brooch – an allusion to shakkei, the Asian landscaping term referring to the notion of 'borrowed scenery'. Taken as a whole, Brennan's installation explores the dichotomies of nature and artifice, fine and applied art.

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## ***The Value of Making* by Emily Jo Gibbs**

*'As a society we are losing so much by not recognising we need a population with a broad variety of skills and talents. I'm really concerned about the position of making in the hierarchy of skills we value as a society, and how this is exacerbated by the decline of making in schools.'*

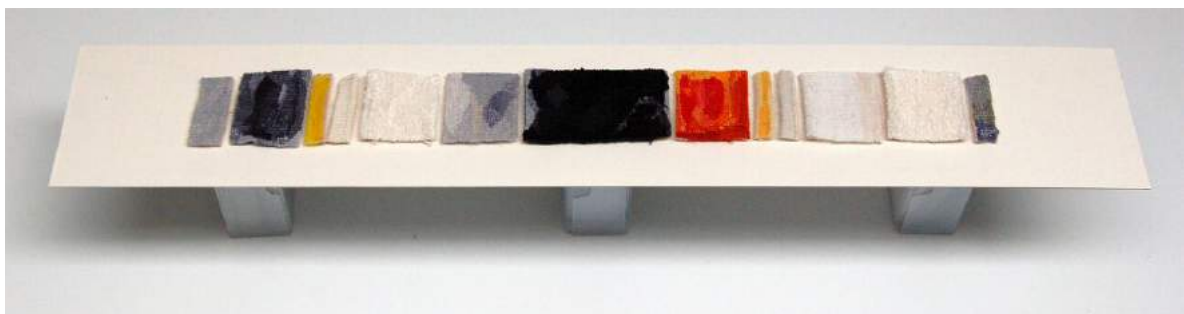
A professional maker for the last 25 years, textile artist Emily Jo Gibbs left a career making luxury evening bags to focus on wall-based embroidered works, hand-stitching exquisite still life portraits in a collage of silk organza. For Collect Open, she is presenting a new body of portrait work, depicting various making disciplines through to-scale representations of tools and making an argument for the social and cultural importance of craft in the process.

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## ***Elements* by Jilly Edwards**

*'I want viewers to really think about woven tapestry, not just to see it as decoration or a means of keeping castles warm! Unlike medieval tapestries, mine are abstract rather than pictorial, but they still contains a story, and allow the viewers to find stories for themselves.'*

Based in Bristol, Jilly Edwards is a tapestry weaver who uses a scaffolding-pole loom to tell stories in cloth inspired by journeys and memories. For Collect Open, she is crafting a woven chronicle of her last year; a tapestry in 13 sections, each depicting a four-week period, with the emotions she experienced each month represented in different colours and textures. The tapestry will be displayed on a long table rather than a wall, allowing visitors to inspect it closely, observe the marks of its making and interpret the story behind the work.



In-between the Spaces by Jilly Edwards.

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## ***Ersilia* by Hannah Robson**

*'Traditionally, weaving is used to make two-dimensional cloth; I explore how threads can escape the vertical and horizontal structures of the loom, and create opportunities for threads to break away and come together in three-dimensional forms.'*

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RCA-trained textile maker Hannah Robson is interested in the myriad complex possibilities that can be realised through the simple mechanics of weaving. Using a combination of loom-weaving and lace-making, she transforms threads into three-dimensional textile structures, often incorporating materials with reflective properties to exploit the interplay of light. Her Collect Open installation – her largest work to date – is a response to Italo Calvino’s story ‘Ersilia’, from his book *Invisible Cities*. Through colour, design and construction, Robson explores the contrasts between two and three dimensions, light and shadow, and reflective and matt surfaces.



Twists by Hannah Robson.

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## ***The Between* by Forest + Found**

*‘We choose to use traditional craft processes in subversive and new ways that allow us to produce work that challenges the preconceptions surrounding traditional crafts and natural materials. We are seeking an understanding that goes deeper than the raw material itself. We are looking to reconnect to a very human need to make and explore form and the way we interact with the made object.’*

Forest + Found is a collaborative studio practice based in East London, where Max Bainbridge and Abigail Booth work with wood, natural pigments and textiles to produce sculptural and wall-based works. Influenced by their strong relationship with landscape and natural materials, the processes they employ are often physically demanding and elemental in nature – such as dyeing, scorching and carving. *The Between* installation will be their largest work to date, exploring the relationship between the physicality of sculpture and the abstract quality of textiles, while also emphasising the material resonance of working with wood, earth and iron by hand.

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## **TABLE** by Juliette Bigley

*'For me, the act of making bridges the gap between the tangible world in which we live and the intangible worlds of emotion, belief, thought, language and memory.'*

A classical musician turned metalsmith, Juliette Bigley is interested in the lives we live and the objects we choose to enrich them. Made from flat sheets of base and precious metals, her unique vessels are often rooted in ideas of domestic ritual, existing at the threshold between object and experience, function and meaning. *TABLE* is her first installation and her largest work today to date. A stylised interpretation of a table at the completion of a meal, it acts as a snapshot of the moment when eating is over but the ritual communion of dining continues. At 2.5m long and 1.1m tall, the table itself is a scaled-up version of Bigley's own, topped with a 20-object tableau comprising a wine bottle, jug and water glasses crafted from a mixture of patinated copper, brass, nickel silver and silver.

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## **Aquatopia** by Katrin Spranger

*'The pieces aim to challenge water consumption, value perception and depletion of water and straddle the line between function, imagined function, and decoration.'*

Born in Germany, and now based in London, Katrin Spranger is a conceptual jewellery artist and metalsmith whose work reaches beyond her craft's traditional metals and gemstones to incorporate natural materials that are in danger of depletion – such as crude oil, honey and water. The jewellery and vessels she makes often comment on resource scarcity, consumption and climate change through science-fiction narratives in form and material. *Aquatopia* is a collection of objects associated with water, ranging from small drinking vessels to larger bathing-related and storage objects. Their shapes have been inspired by piping and plumbing parts, mostly made from copper and glass – materials traditionally used for holding or transporting water – and will also include experiments with limescale.

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## **HARVEST** by Mella Shaw

*'My work is primarily driven by ideas. I use ceramics partly because it is such a brilliantly diverse and versatile material and partly because there is something immediate and vital about clay – that makes it an excellent means to communicate and connect with viewers.'*

Originally a documentary-maker, then a museum and gallery curator (working at the V&A, Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), Mella Shaw moved into making in 2009, and now works as a ceramic artist, combining traditional and digital techniques to create objects and site-specific installations in clay. *HARVEST* is a large-scale installation comprising hundreds of hand-made, smoke-fired ceramic fish and ceramic interpretations of plastic containers, forming an arresting portrait of the impact of plastic pollution in the world's oceans. Each component has a pattern digitally applied to its surface before firing, making *HARVEST* a fusion of ancient ceramic process and modern-day technology.



Harvest by Mella Shaw.  
Photography by Andrew Norman.

## **A Circle of Porcelain by Sue Paraskeva**

*'For a large part of my life I have made pieces that are beautiful and functional. Now I have developed my practice and alter vessels to form shapes that evoke other meanings and depth.'*

Based in a studio on the Isle of Wight, Sue Paraskeva creates thrown porcelain vessels. Over the course of her 25-year career, her practice has evolved from the making of functional objects and tableware to include sculptural installation and performance, exploring the potential of porcelain to communicate meaning, and she has recently begun to incorporate precious metals into her work. For Collect Open, Paraskeva is creating a circular installation of 300 thrown vessels, linked with silver wire. The dimensions of the vessels make reference to the measurements of the human body, including Paraskeva's own fingertip-to-fingertip span determining the width of the plinth, and the 250g weight of the human female heart informing the amount of raw clay from which many of the vessels are thrown. Deliberately damaged in some way, each vessel represents an inherent vulnerability in the human condition, while their circular grouping suggests collective strength. The installation is accompanied by a sound recording created from the sound of porcelain pieces gently ringing off each other, introducing an additional sensory element, and encouraging viewers to engage with the work up close.

## **West Dean Tapestry Studio and Eva Rothschild**

*'The commission offers me the opportunity to collaborate with master weavers at the highest level to develop a new artwork and to expand the vocabulary of my practice'*

One of the UK's only professional tapestry studios, West Dean has a four-decade history of collaborating with contemporary artists on the creation of large-scale woven artworks. In 2016, the studio issued an open call for design concepts and Irish sculptor Eva Rothschild was selected from more than 150 submissions. For the

last six months she has been working with West Dean master weaver Phillip Sanderson on the creation of a 1.4 x 2.6-metre tapestry, which will be unveiled for the first time at Collect Open.

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### **Jan Hendzel**

Specialising in marrying reclaimed timbers with English-grown hardwoods, the Jan Hendzel Studio in Woolwich creates contemporary furniture and cabinetry that combine digital making methods with the traditional woodworking techniques that have defined the craft for centuries.

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### **OMA Space**

OMA Space is a design textile studio based in Seoul, Korea. From garments to art, its work connects the traditions and skills of ancient Asian textile practice through contemporary design.

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For more information about **Collect 2018** and the **Crafts Council**, please contact **Jodi Moss** at [jodi@zetteler.co.uk](mailto:jodi@zetteler.co.uk) or on **07910 705147**.

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**Notes for editors**

COLLECT OPEN AT COLLECT 2018

**Dates**

Thursday 22 February to Sunday 25 February 2018

**Location**

Saatchi Gallery  
King's Road  
London SW3 4RY

**Opening times**

Thursday 22 February: 12noon – 7pm  
Friday 23 February: 11am – 9pm  
Saturday 24 February: 11am – 6pm  
Sunday 25 February: 11am – 6pm

**About the Crafts Council**

Leading innovation in making across the UK, the Crafts Council is the country's foremost authority on contemporary craft in all its forms. Founded in 1971, its role as guardian and champion of national craft practice has evolved to include exploring and enabling new possibilities, making methods and technologies. Having played a pivotal role in the development of some of the UK's most accomplished and respected makers, the Crafts Council is devoted to finding and empowering new talent across the craft sector, creating platforms for emerging makers to show their work, forging connections between people and industries, advocating for craft education, and providing practical and inspirational resources to support the careers of our next generation of makers.

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