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Stoke-on-Trent celebrates Wedgwood Museum's Art Fund victory

The City of Stoke-on-Trent is celebrating the Wedgwood Museum's victory in the 2009 Art Fund Prize for museums and galleries.

The judges, who included artist Grayson Perry, described themselves as "bowled over" by the Museum. They praised the way it uses its internationally-renowned collection to take visitors on a 250 year tour of British social, design and industrial history, while remaining firmly embedded in the local community.

Chair of Judges, David Puttnam, commented: "This Museum is extraordinary for so many reasons, and we were all but unanimous in our decision. The Wedgwood Museum brilliantly highlights the marriage of art, design, manufacturing and commerce; a marriage that resonates more today than at possibly any time in the intervening years. In every respect it fully meets our criteria of what a 21st century museum should aspire to be."

This year, the public was also a judge in the first ever People's Choice poll. Over 27,000 people voted – also choosing The Wedgwood Museum as their clear winner.

In addition to the cheque for £100,000, the Wedgwood Museum will also receive the Art Fund Prize Bowl, which they can display for one year.

The £10-million Wedgwood Museum, which opened at the end of last year, houses the majority of the Wedgwood ceramic archive and art and has – for the first time in history – brought the entire Wedgwood collection together under the same roof in an eye-catching and creative way.

The award also coincides with the 250th anniversary of the Wedgwood company, which is being highlighted across the city with a programme of walks and talks, plus a full study day, which celebrates three centuries of Wedgwood history.

Stoke-on-Trent itself has been the home of the British ceramics industry for the past 250 years and, in 2009, will be hosting one of the leading events of its kind in the UK - the British Ceramics Biennial (www.britishceramicsbiennial.com).

A prestigious, new, cultural event which not only embraces the heritage of The Potteries as the 'home' of British ceramics, The British Ceramics Biennial will also celebrate Stoke-on-Trent's creative edge as an international centre for excellence in contemporary ceramics.

The Biennial year is already under way, and is set to feature an ambitious and ground-breaking calendar of exhibitions, events and activities throughout the year - culminating in a major *international* Biennial Festival in the Autumn.

The Festival – involving a series of high profile exhibitions and presentations in new and unfamiliar buildings, locations and public spaces across the city – is scheduled to run from October 3rd to December 13th, 2009.

For further information about Stoke-on-Trent, the Wedgwood Museum and other ceramics attractions within the city, including Emma Bridgewater, Moorcroft and Portmeirion, visit www.visitstoke.co.uk.

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