

Inspiration for 2012

May 2011 saw our launch of national Craft & Design Month; it was a resounding success and already many makers and artists across the UK are planning their events for May 2012.

The Potters in the North East did us particularly proud, organising a stunning exhibition and sale of work, with busy hands-on sessions that got lots of people working with clay.

If you'd like to be involved in Craft & Design Month 2012, but you're not quite sure what to do, take inspiration from the Potters featured here... you can also read about what others have done and how they did on the Craft & Design Month website at www.craftanddesignmonth.net/downloads

Tell us about the event you organised for National Ceramics Week, as part of Craft and Design Month 2011.

To celebrate National Ceramics Week I approached potter friends in the area with the idea of holding an event called 'Northern Clay' at Newcastle Arts Centre. Our aim was to help promote ceramics in our area. To achieve this we had an exhibition of the work of 13 local ceramic makers and on each day we had demonstrations by one of the exhibitors. To really make an impact we ran the exhibition for two weeks and had different demonstrations by the participating artists every day. The event ended on the same evening as the Late Show, which was a real bonus. The Late Show is a hugely popular event when dozens of cultural venues across the city stay open late to take part in a fantastic 'culture crawl'.

On the Late Show evening we encouraged the public to get involved as much as possible; they could raku a pot, have a go at throwing a pot and help decorate and make pieces that made up the Mad Potters Tea Party, where artists and members of the public displayed objects made throughout the 2 weeks.

Who participated and who were the main organisers - what did everyone do?

The exhibitors were Harding & Palmer (Northumbrian Craft Pottery), Dave Fry, George Ormrod, Julia Ruxburgh, Simon Griffith, John Scott, Rob Watson, Alan Ball, Stephen Brown, Lisa deLamy, Jessica Cohan, Andrew Pentland and Christine Constant.

I didn't feel that I had the time to arrange everything myself, so Simin Griffith's wife, Heather, did a great job with the design of the fliers etc. Dave Fry and his partner took on promotion and advertising. Alan Ball and George Ormrod agreed to set the exhibition up. On the Late Show we all got involved; I made cups, bowls, bottles and food for the Mad Potters Tea Party, Simon was sculpting a Cheshire cat, Michael, Dave and Jenny (a student at Newcastle College) were teaching throwing, John and Steve (another student) were raku-ing and the others were

The Mad Potters Tea Party

helping the kids decorating and making pieces for the Mad Potters Tea Party.

What publicity did you do, how did you fund it?

We all paid £60 to take part in the event, some of this went towards advertising, bookmarks, fliers and invites. We also had an article in the Culture Magazine and editorials in as many local papers as possible. In addition, we had our own website for the event www.northern-clay.webspace.virginmedia.com

Did people turn up/participate? What kind of feedback did you receive from people?

The Private View was very busy and had a great buzz and the Late Show attracted over 1200 visitors to the event, many of whom got involved with raku-ing, throwing and decorating pots. Although the exhibition itself could have perhaps been busier, we had nothing but positive feedback from people.

What do you think your event during Craft and Design Month achieved?

I hope we educated some of the public about the wealth of ceramics in the North East, the complexity of making and the versatility of clay.

What did you learn about organising something like this and what advice would you give others thinking about doing the same type of thing in their region?

You need to plan things well in advance, have a good team behind you and have the patience of a saint.

Any other thoughts/comments?

After we'd paid for the advertising etc, the remaining funds were used to pay for wine for the Private View and any other expenses which accrued.

For the 2012 event we're not planning to spend as much on fliers etc., as we didn't feel that these had been as effective as we'd expected.

Will you do it again next year?

Yes! We are now in the process now of organising a similar event for 2012 at the Newcastle Arts Centre again. There will be an exhibition and demonstrations once more and possibly workshops as well - and, like our event in 2011, we will end on the Late Show as that worked so well for everyone.

