

CCA DERRY~LONDONDERRY

PRESS RELEASE

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Alan Phelan *Liberica* coffee cups for *The Company of Others* (2021)

CCA Derry~Londonderry presents the second iteration of *The Company of Others*

The Company of Others is a project that concerns relationships between colonialism, capitalism, and material culture. It takes its starting point from Derry~Londonderry's history – of the plantation of the city and surrounding area by the commercial guilds of London – but from there speaks outwardly to other contexts and time-frames. The project is especially interested in the material practices of the livery companies that formed the foundations of British colonialism in the Maiden City.

The 12 guilds that were given control over Derry~Londonderry and the regions adjacent were the Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, Merchant Tailors, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners, and Clothworkers. The smaller guilds that joined them included the Cordwainers, Dyers, Scriveners, Upholders, Wax Chandlers, Tallow Chandlers, Broderers, Founders, Pewterers, and

Fletchers. The names of these skills and trades evoke a set of practices, materials and processes that the artists have been invited to research in this public event.

The research will be presented within *The Company of Others* box; a limited edition box made in collaboration between David Beattie and Alan Phelan. Working with the potter Brian McGee, Phelan creates the branded Liberica 'kulhar', or clay cup. Made using the "off the hump" wheel-throwing method. You are invited to paint in the white logo with supplied paint and brush. On the side of the box is a QR code by Beattie. Reading this code will take the viewer to an augmented reality, available Wednesday 1 June–Wednesday 1 September 2021.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

For *The Company of Others* [David Beattie](#) has worked with the UCD School of Experimental Archaeology to explore the process of tablet weaving as a means to discuss technological change and a current shift towards an automated, machine focused society. Using the Guilds of Derry and the Weavers in particular as a starting point, Beattie's research is drawing parallels between the effect of the Jacquard loom on the textile industry and current implications of artificial intelligence on future human labour. In 1801 Joseph Marie Jacquard invented a power loom that could base its weave upon a pattern automatically read from punched wooden cards. This system became the basis for many automated and computational machines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, leading to the creation of IBM and the first computers of the mid 20th century.

In the current digital computing age, image recognition and deep learning is perhaps of greatest significance. Machines are being taught to see, think and behave as humans do, recognising images, objects, and emotions according to their databases. The goal is to achieve a trans-human state that can replicate or even improve on human behaviour, evolving to co-exist in virtual, mixed and augmented worlds.

[Alan Phelan](#) references Roger Casement and the coffee bean variety he acquired in Congo, called Liberica, now held in the collection of the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin. Liberica is also the name of a café chain in Indonesia where the bean replaced the diseased local arabica. Phelan hand draws the company logo to re-brand and up-cycle used paper coffee cups. The project develops in this new iteration by combining other unrelated cultural references to explore a different kind of operational sequence common to anthropological discourse.

Related to histories of the Guilds and the Company of Grocers, Phelan's research initiates a discussion about the interconnections of global capitalism, disposable consumerism, branding, cultural appropriation, empire, nationalism and freedom.

The Company of Others takes place as part of the Walled City – 400 Years programme of events, funded by Derry City and Strabane District Council. Thanks to Emmet Brown for graphic design, Naomi Arbuthnot at Derry Print Workshop for screen-printing and Paola Bernadelli for photography. For further information please email info@ccadld.org.

ENDS

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Opening times:
Tuesday–Saturday
12:00–18:00
Free admission

About CCA Derry~Londonderry:

CCA is a publicly funded space within the historic city walls of Derry~Londonderry. CCA creates opportunities for audiences to experience ambitious, experimental and engaging art and for emerging artists to develop successful careers. CCA fosters a wide range of artistic, curatorial and critical practices through five programme streams: research and production, exhibition-making, public programmes, publishing and residencies.

CCA is a member of Plus Tate:

Plus Tate is a network, which comprises 35 cultural institutions – including the Tate galleries – that have strong artistic vision, a focus on contemporary art, outstanding public programming and a commitment to local community engagement through art. Plus Tate aims to support the development of the visual arts across the UK.

Safety:

CCA has a range of safety measures to ensure staff and visitors can enjoy exhibitions with the knowledge that every precaution is taken. This includes hand sanitisers at entrances and exits, track and trace, screens and heightened cleaning schedules. All who are able to wear a mask are invited to do so and a dedicated isolation room is available in the event of the onset of symptoms.

For further information and additional press images please contact:

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CCA is supported by:

