



Canal &  
River Trust

## PRESS RELEASE

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High res images - <https://we.tl/xgrzILDMDZ>

The Ring - <https://theringart.org.uk/>

The Ring film - <https://theringart.org.uk/about/>

26 June 2017

### CULTURAL FIRST FOR WORCESTERSHIRE

### MAJOR NEW ARTS PROGRAMME IS INSPIRED BY CIRCULAR WATERWAY

#### THE RING

Details of *The Ring* - a major arts programme that will celebrate the rebirth of an historic 21-mile Worcestershire canal – are being announced today.

The project is supported by the Canal & River Trust, the charity that cares for the nation's waterways.

From September 2017 until September 2018, internationally acclaimed artists, as well as artists from across the region will be working with local communities to create a series of unexpected and inspiring artworks, events and activities exploring the heritage, ecology and local community along the urban and rural waterways of Worcestershire. The ambition, calibre and breadth of the dynamic contemporary arts programme will be a cultural first for the waterways of this region.

In April 2018 the public programme will be launched. Audiences will be invited to explore on foot, by boat or bicycle a series of five public art commissions, as well as a series of works by local artists. Activities will take place along the waterways encircling Droitwich and Worcester and includes the Worcester & Birmingham Canals, the Droitwich Canals and the River Severn.

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After 75 years, the Droitwich Canals were restored, resulting in the reconnection of the Mid-Worcestershire Ring in 2011, a 21-mile route, reconnecting Droitwich to the River Severn and from there the open sea. The restoration involved decades of hard work in which 300,000 tons of mud was shifted by volunteers and canal workers. Today, the waterway is a thriving boating route and a peaceful retreat for the local community and wildlife.

*The Ring* is part of the Canal & River Trust's *Arts on the Waterways* programme, a collaborative arts programme situated on and inspired by waterways in England and Wales.

Tim Eastop, executive producer of the Canal & River Trust's *Arts on the Waterways* programme says: "Our canals are a network of cultural capillaries that have potential to carry ideas but also — literally — to carry new works of art to places where the arts traditionally haven't been able to reach, such as the Mid-Worcestershire Ring. We are realising the tremendous opportunity for cultural activities on our waterways, thanks to support from Arts Council England and exciting, high calibre artists and arts partners."

Cathy Mager, Artistic Director of *The Ring*, adds: "We're thrilled and inspired by the ideas of our growing collective of artists, performers, filmmakers and writers who are working in a variety of ways to reimagine the waterways of Worcestershire. *The Ring's* new events and commissions will flow through 21 miles of contrasting landscapes: from the calm and sleepy suburban canals to fast flowing tidal rivers, through to busy historic city centres and to picturesque countryside."

Manda Graham, Project Manager added: "We're delighted to be launching our new website to share the many opportunities coming up over the next year for artists and local people to join in and take part in the programme of exciting arts events and activities we're planning."

Each of the five artist commissions will result in a new public artwork being produced. Three of these have been confirmed:

**1) *Diglis Island Residency - Rich White***

Bristol-based sculptor Rich White will be taking residence on and exploring the heritage of Diglis Island. Just a short walk from Worcester City centre, the island which lies at the junction of the Worcester-Birmingham Canal and the River Severn has changed little since it was first used in 1815 to lift heavy timber, boats and coal between boats and the striking crane used remains today. White will present its uses and future plans, developing public realm work to reveal these findings. Research and in-progress reports will be documented on his project website. He will also be constructing a large-scale sculpture(s) that will be visible from the towpath.

**2) *Droitwich Salt Heritage - Katy Beinart***

Brighton-based interdisciplinary artist Katy Beinart will be bringing together her interests in public art practices, urban regeneration, migration, heritage and salt to create a new public art commission that will sit within the geographic context of the Droitwich Canal. Based in central Droitwich, where the Droitwich Barge Canal enters a small basin (Netherwich Canal Basin in Vines Park). Beinart will create an artwork to engage a wide audience in the unique salt heritage of Droitwich and help to impart the significance of this historical waterway. The canal was reopened in 2011 following a major restoration programme, including the Netherwich Canal Basin which was the terminus of the Barge Canal where larger vessels came to pick up salt from the brine springs.

### **3) Droitwich Canals Restoration - Heather Wastie**

Former Worcestershire Poet Laureate (2015/16), Kidderminster-based poet, oral historian and singer-songwriter Heather Wastie will be creating a series of songs and poems informed by her research into the modern-day heroes who helped to restore the Droitwich Canals. Her writing during an initial period of research and consultation will be publicly shared and used as creative inspiration for a final performance or artwork in 2018.

In addition to the five major artist commissions, there is a new £10,000 commissioning opportunity open to artists in the region to make a public artwork by re-purposing and recycling flood waste collected from canals and rivers in the Worcestershire area. The commission was launched on Friday 23 June at Diglis House Hotel by Artistic Director Cathy Mager with talks from international guest speakers from the Floating Museum project in Chicago, US. Jeremiah Hulsebos-Spofford and Faheem Majeed about the history of the project, an upcoming Chicago River activation and future projects. For more information about the event and commissioning opportunity visit:

<https://theringart.org.uk/news/opening-the-floodgates-arts-on-the-waterways-open-call-opportunity-in-worcestershire/>

To receive regular updates sign up to *The Ring* e-news or for enquiries about the project, please contact *The Ring* project team: [theringworcs@gmail.com](mailto:theringworcs@gmail.com)

**ENDS**

### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

For interview opportunities, photographs and other enquiries please contact:

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## The Ring

This project has become a leading project of the Worcestershire Arts Strategy '1000 Days' following initial meetings led by the Worcestershire Arts Partnership.

Project partners include: Arts Council England, Canal & River Trust, Worcestershire County Council, Worcestershire Arts Partnership, Wychavon District Council, University of Worcester, Worcester City Council, Meadow Arts, Destination Worcestershire, South Wales and Severn Waterways Partnership, For Droitwich Spa, Worcester, Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society, Droitwich Arts Network, Sustrans, Museums Worcestershire, New Art West Midlands, Droitwich Waterways Trust and Museum of Royal Worcester.

Web: [www.theringart.org.uk](http://www.theringart.org.uk)

Facebook: @TheRingWorcs

Twitter: @TheRingWorcs

Instagram: TheRingWorcs

## Arts on the Waterways

The *Arts on the Waterways* programme is supported through Arts Council England and Arts Council Wales. It provides artists with time and space along the waterways where they can slow down, research and make ambitious new work responding to important social, environmental and heritage questions. The Canal & River Trust believes that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and the role of the Trust is to ensure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

@CanalRiverTrust @crtcomms #[ArtsontheWaterways](https://www.instagram.com/ArtsontheWaterways)

## Rich White

Born in Nottingham, 1976. Lives in Bristol.

[www.counterwork.co.uk](http://www.counterwork.co.uk)

Education:

1995-98 BA(hons) Fine Art: Sculpture, University of Gloucestershire

Recent Projects:

2017 Nest, Confluence Arts, Penryn

2016 Recovery Room, BPN Architects, Birmingham

2016 Engine of Growth, Peterborough Presents and Nene Park Trust

2016 Resistance, Art Across the City, Swansea

## **Katy Beinart**

Born in Birmingham, 1977. Lives in Brighton.

[www.katybeinart.co.uk](http://www.katybeinart.co.uk)

### Education:

2010-ongoing: PhD Architectural Design, The Bartlett, University College London

2005-2006: MA Development Practices (Distinction), Oxford Brookes University

2000-2004: Diploma in Architecture, Oxford Brookes University

1995-1998: BSc Architecture, The Bartlett, University College London

### Recent commissions and exhibitions include:

2016-17: Making Suburban Faith, University College London

2015-16: The Brixton Museum

2015: Dangerous Discoveries, Biddulph Grange, National Trust

## **Heather Wastie**

Born in Cradley Heath, 1955. Lives in Cookley, near Kidderminster.

[www.WastiesSpace.co.uk](http://www.WastiesSpace.co.uk)

### Education:

1974-7: BA Hons Maths/Music (Birmingham University)

### Recent work includes:

2017: *Loom in the Loft* - children's song cycle commissioned by Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust for restoration of Weaver's Cottages, Kidderminster.

2017: Commissioned to write, film and record poems for national tv & radio ad campaign by Nationwide Building Society

2016/17: Currently touring self-penned ACE-funded double bill *Idle Women of the Wartime Waterways* with Alarum Theatre – over 50 shows to date 2015/16 Worcestershire Poet Laureate

2016: Commissioned by English Touring Opera / Turtle Song to write songs for dementia project

2015: *Weaving Yarns* – poems, song & real life stories from the Kidderminster carpet industry published by Black Pear Press

2014: Commissioned by Canal & River Trust to write and record audio poem *Idle Women & Judies*

2013: Museum of Carpet, Kidderminster Writer in Residence

**END OF ALL**