

STIRRING THE SWARM

There is a dark and most curious mist twirling about the towers of Wollaton Hall, which is home to a grand Natural History collection. Deep within the collection vaults lies a rather peculiar accumulation of ancient beetles. The pin-speared specimens have slept a dreamless sleep within their glass cabinets and sunless drawers for nigh on a century. The multitude of ancient beetles, moths and butterflies had been serenely suspended in time until something called to them from afar. The strangest of whispers whirred around in the wind. Meanwhile, unknown to their guardians, the specimens have awoken. A thousand pairs of ancient wings unfurl in unison to beat away the dew of time. Deathly dormant limbs twitch and flicker with growing anticipation. Soon these charmed specimens will burst from their glass time capsules to chase the echoes in the wind, which command them to assemble en masse. Their intent is ominous as the swarm scuttles up the rocks towards the castle.



Stirring the Swarm is a ceramic installation that tells a curiously dark tale, inspired by the collection of Entomology in the Natural History collection at Wollaton Hall, Nottingham. The exhibition lures viewers into this macabre story as they find these enchanted insects, gathered in the Castle after their journey from Wollaton.

Anna Collette Hunt's ceramics aim to rekindle a forgotten, childlike sense of curiosity and delight. Scenes from her *Wall Dish* series of intricately detailed and decorated plates, speak of historic grandeur and past traditions, whilst closer inspection reveals a sometimes sinister undertone. Each piece has a story to tell, tempting the viewer's imagination to assign personal narrative to the assembly of images, forms and textures within the work. *Stirring the Swarm* develops this notion further by creating a fictional narrative that viewers can stumble into and follow, tapping in to the imagination of the artist. The exhibition has the atmosphere of a *Brothers Grimm*-style gothic fairytale, intended to stir imagination and incite curiosity, whilst fleeting and disjointed sounds add to the unease and discomfort of the installation.



The exhibition is a result of Anna's preoccupation with historic houses. After reoccurring visits to Wollaton Hall, she was repeatedly drawn to Entomology, particularly to the fragility of the aging beetles within the collection and by the possible stories that could be crafted from them. *Stirring the Swarm* was made in several stages: Hunt created the original models and their moulds, then a team of assistants made and glazed the 10,000 individual elements. Some insects have a trickle of gold lustre, which references the traditional technique of presenting insects in museum collections by pinning each one to a board. This particular aspect has also fallen into the story, where the enchanted beetles bled gold from their wounds.

A static swarm of 10,000 handmade ceramic insects infest the South Hall stairwell at Nottingham Castle, each one unique and strikingly beautiful. Dry, dingy creatures cling lifelessly to the walls, frozen in the viewer's sight, alongside more dazzling 'specimens' that sparkle and shine with rich glazes and lustres. Many also have missing limbs or wings to reflect their ancient and delicate condition - or perhaps they mutated during their escape, sprouting extra heads or wings: evolution and magic transforming the swarm into a new life-form. The rich palette of gold, green, blue, brown and cream pays homage to the flocked wall paper of Wollaton Hall, the pattern of which has even sprouted on some of their wings.



Anna Collette Hunt received a first class honours degree in Decorative Arts from Nottingham Trent University in 2009. Later she received a grant from the Craft Pottery Charitable Trust. In 2010 Anna was nominated for the Grand Prize at the Nottingham Castle Open exhibition and also won the Solo Exhibition Prize. Anna was shortlisted in the UK Young Artist Expo and has been selected for Hothouse by the Crafts Council and partners. She is a professional member of Design Factory.

Exhibition open from 8 October 2011 - 29 January 2012

Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery
Off Maid Marian Way
Nottingham
NG1 6EL
0115 915 3700

www.annacollettehunt.com
www.mynottingham.gov.uk/whatson

Design by Eve Warren
Photography by Julien Marcetteau



STIRRING THE SWARM

ANNA COLLETTE HUNT

NOTTINGHAM CASTLE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

8 October 2011 to 29 January 2012

