

Knowledge is Power: 6 Towns 2017 Spode Factory, Stoke-on-Trent, 23 September - 5 November 2017

Project Outline:

Knowledge is Power: 6 Towns was a major, public and interactive work made in response to the special *Six Towns Collection*, held across all 6 libraries in Stoke, an ever expanding repository of information about the local history of The Potteries. Harrison had originally proposed **Switchboard**, a durational work centring around a complete set of UK Phone Directories, the Public Library's most used item, that addressed the role of public libraries as an impartial source of knowledge, but with the internet diminishing its use as a physical object, and after further research Harrison decided the focus should be the evolving *6 Towns Collection* of history books highlighting the library as transformative cultural agent.

Situated at the Spode China Hall, Stoke-On-Trent, **Knowledge Is Power: 6 Towns** orchestrated a working collective of over 200 local secondary and primary school children, local industry and community groups to create the installation. During a series of workshops, and using 2.5 tonnes of different types of clay representing each of the 6 towns in the Stoke- on-Trent area, over 800 clay replica books from the 6 Towns Collection were made, their spines coloured using a combination of the electrical resistance colour code and the Dewey library subject classification system. Housed in 6 adapted library shelving units, each volume was connected to specifically manufactured electrical elements and operated by an interactive switching network which was fired daily in accordance with the library's lending figures - the more books borrowed the more power was transmitted, an intentionally volatile process - a metaphorical 'cooking the books' with unpredictable results. While the clay replicas were fired, visitors were able to interact with books from the 6 *Towns Collection* in the pop up library and reading room situated in front of the work. Operating as a process based experimental live firing event, the project sought to open up a collective investigation into the potential of the seemingly paradoxical creative and destructive processes of making and material transformation, suggesting it is the point at which these opposites collide where new discoveries are made and current systems might be questioned.

Knowledge Is Power: 6 Towns culminated in a ceremony to award Certificates of Participation, featuring drawings by the artist, to all schools who had worked on the project. Harrison also gave a keynote speech on the project at the *Ceramics and Its Dimensions Congress*, an international event held in Stoke as part of BCB 2017 to extend debate on the current influence of ceramics, examining the relationship between historic centres of manufacture and contemporary centres of learning, production and consumption.

Knowledge Is Power: 6 Towns was due to be installed at Central Library in Hanley

as a permanent public work after the BCB Festival, but plans were delayed and a date is yet to be confirmed.