

# STUDIO VOLTAIRE

Studio Voltaire announces details of new permanent public commission by Joanne Tatham & Tom O’Sullivan



Factory research trip, Craven Dunhill Jackfield, December 2019. Photo courtesy Studio Voltaire.

Studio Voltaire has announced further details of an ambitious new commission by artists Joanne Tatham & Tom O’Sullivan. *The Institute For The Magical Effect Of Actually Giving A Shit (a note to our future self)* is one of two new commissions at Studio Voltaire. The permanent commissions, which are the first in the organisation’s history, will open in October 2021, following completion of Studio Voltaire’s transformative £2.8 million capital project.

Tatham & O’Sullivan have created the installation, *The Institute For The Magical Effect Of Actually Giving A Shit (a note to our future self)*, across three of Studio Voltaire’s public toilets. The work is formed of hand-glazed ceramic tiles which draw from recurring motifs in Tatham and O’Sullivan’s practice. Positioning their work within the context of a public toilet, the artists’ vibrantly coloured installation employs humour and the absurdity of the unexpected as a strategy for both disruption and generosity. Tatham and O’Sullivan have worked with leading heritage ceramics manufacturer Craven Dunnill Jackfield to produce bespoke tile sets and develop a palette of ten glazes. Founded in 1872 at the Jackfield Tile Works in Ironbridge, Shropshire, Craven Dunnill is the oldest surviving purpose-built tile factory in the world.

Two of the toilets make use of a limited, contrasting colour range. The third culminates in waterjet cut friezes based on the duo’s distinctive visual language, in particular, staring, cartoon-like faces. Intersecting with the surrounding sanitaryware, the sink becomes a ‘mouth’ when placed below two staring ceramic eyes; another tiled pattern surrounds the toilet like a throne.

The graphic colour palette extends to the room's accessories: toilet brushes, toilet roll holders, handles and door hooks. Outside the toilets, a decorative, hand-painted mural of the commission's title connects the three rooms.

While at first the toilets may seem an unusual choice for a permanent commission, the work builds on Tatham and O'Sullivan's long engagement with how art, particularly sculpture, can be reframed or repositioned as a means to critique art's values and behaviours. Recent works by the duo have engaged specifically with the forms and histories of publicly-sited sculpture. These have included major public commissions at museums such as Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (2017), but also projects that explore other ways of producing and disseminating artworks outside of contemporary art contexts, including collaborations with Swatch (2020), Hermès Maison Shanghai (2018) and Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival (2017).

This permanent commission – their first – builds on and celebrates a longstanding relationship with Studio Voltaire. Tatham and O'Sullivan have collaborated on projects with the organisation since 2004.

Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan's commission is supported by:

## Art Fund\_

Notes to editors

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About the artists

Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan (b. 1971/1967, West Yorkshire/Norfolk) have collaborated since 1995. The duo emerged out of an important generation of Glasgow-based artists who brought international attention to Scotland's contemporary art scene, and have staged significant commissions at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (2018); Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (2017) and Tramway, Glasgow (2014; 2010; 2001). In 2005 they represented Scotland at the 51st Venice Biennale. This commission is a culmination of Studio Voltaire's long-standing relationship with Tatham and O'Sullivan, which includes the solo commissions *Oh we will, we will, will we* (2005) and *THE STORY OF HOW WE CAME TO BE HERE, WHAT WE DID BEFORE WE GOT HERE, HOW YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN WHY YOU ASKED US HERE AND WHY WE CANNOT REMEMBER WHY WE CAME, OR: IS THIS WHAT BRINGS THINGS INTO FOCUS?* (2012).

Tatham and O'Sullivan are represented by The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd (Glasgow).

## About Craven Dunnill Jackfield

Craven Dunnill Jackfield is the leading global manufacturer of traditionally styled, decorative ceramic tiles, hand-making ceramic tiles in the UK for 150 years. They offer a complete restoration service for the faithful manufacture of ceramics for the heritage market, and to use those same skills in the design and production of specialist ceramics for both the commercial interiors and residential markets. Since Craven Dunnill & Co's formation in 1872, the company has continually invested in new approaches to production by embracing new technologies. This was fundamental in the decision to develop its own purpose-built factory at Jackfield in Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire, UK. It is part of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site at the heart of Britain's Industrial Revolution. Projects include the Palace of Westminster, an array of London Underground stations, Kew Gardens, St. Stephen's Hall in Liverpool, Beaverbrook Spa and numerous Columbo Group Blues Kitchens.

## About Studio Voltaire

Studio Voltaire is one of the UK's leading not-for-profit arts organisations. Its pioneering public programmes of exhibitions, participation projects, live events and offsite commissions have gained an international reputation. Studio Voltaire has an outstanding track record of supporting artists at a pivotal stage in their careers, championing emerging and under-represented artists and placing a great emphasis on risk-taking and experimentation.

Many commissions are an artist's first solo exhibition in London or the UK. Exhibiting artists have included Phyllida Barlow, Monster Chetwynd, Anne Collier, Nicole Eisenman, Sharon Hayes, Jamian Juliano-Villani, Sanya Kantarovsky, Ella Kruglyanskaya, The Neo Naturists, Henrik Olesen, Paulina Olowska, Elizabeth Price, Charlotte Prodger, Jo Spence and Cathy Wilkes.

Studio Voltaire commissions a wide range of participatory activities and projects working in collaboration with artists, local organisations, schools and community groups. Projects take place in the gallery as well as off-site.

Studio Voltaire provides a much-needed resource of affordable and accessible onsite artists' studios supporting the development of a diverse range of individual and collective practices, from recent graduates to internationally recognised practitioners.

Studio Voltaire is a registered charity and part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio.

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