

Media information: Embargoed until Wednesday 29 February 2012

BALTIC | 39

Media Preview Thursday 5 April from 2.00pm

Launch Party Thursday 5 April, 6.30pm

Public Opening Friday 6 April, 12.00noon

BALTIC 39, a new cultural hub for contemporary art located on **High Bridge** in the heart of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, will open to the public on **Friday 6 April 2012**. This exciting venture is a collaboration between funders **Newcastle City Council** and **Arts Council England** and new operating partners, **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art** and **Northumbria University**.

The conversion of the former Ward's printing warehouse and Grade II listed building at 39 High Bridge Street will be home to a vibrant community of practising artists. The building will house a new **public gallery** programmed by **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art**, **32 artists' studios** and a new home for fine art students from **Northumbria University's Department of Art and Social Sciences**.

The building will bring together opportunities for training, creativity and exhibitions, offering a unique centre of artistic excellence, development and experimentation. It will act as a magnet to draw artists from across the world for teaching, residencies and exhibitions. It is this distinct and unparalleled range of services and opportunities which makes **BALTIC 39** such an exciting addition to the region's rich cultural offer.

Cllr Henri Murison, Cabinet Member for Quality of Life, Newcastle City Council, said: *"This groundbreaking partnership between a world class academic institution and an internationally renowned contemporary arts organisation will enhance Newcastle's growing status as a unique centre for cultural and creative industries, promote the North East as a place of creativity and innovation for a new generation of artists.*

"This is the result of four major organisations - the City Council, the Arts Council, BALTIC and Northumbria University- working together to give the city and the region a powerful new voice on the cultural stage, and I am glad that despite the challenges in the past High Bridge now has a very promising future. "

Alison Clark-Jenkins, Regional Director, Arts Council England said, *"BALTIC 39 is a testament to the tenacity and aspiration of collaborative working in the city and the region. A pioneering approach to partnership between public, cultural and academic institutions has resulted in a nationally significant visual arts facility, developing both artists and practice. At times this has been a long journey for the Arts Council and our partners – but we've ended up in a very exciting place"*

The creative vision and administration of the top floor, **BALTIC project space**, will be managed by **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art**. This gallery will offer artists and guest curators creative freedom to experiment and innovate, enabling them to stretch the boundaries of contemporary art practice. **BALTIC**'s reputation and recognition for responding to artists' creative ambitions with the highest levels of technical presentation will attract the most exciting practitioners to **BALTIC 39**, ensuring that this gallery not only develops a loyal public audience but also quickly gains the attention of the wider visual arts sector.

The first exhibition, opening to the public on **Friday 6 April at 12 noon**, will be selected by internationally recognised and Newcastle-born sculptor **Phyllida Barlow**. The exhibition explores the processes an artist goes through when making work and will emphasise this journey as much as it will any completed object or final outcome. Including the work of 12 UK-based artists, with practices spanning performance, sculpture, drawing, photography, film-making and writing, work will be both made and shown in a setting that demands the reconsideration of an artwork's centre. Within this arena the audience will be able to share, test and understand the performative complexities of a work's production.

BALTIC Director Godfrey Worsdale adds: *"BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art has, over the past ten years established itself amongst the UK's most ambitious institutions for the presentation and interpretation of international contemporary art. This partnership with Newcastle City Council, Northumbria University and Arts Council England, will enable BALTIC to embed those ambitions in a new and experimental context. The new gallery space will enable exhibiting artists from all over the world to bring their work and ideas into a context that is also home to academic practice-based research and over 30 professional artists' studios. With these component parts, it is hard to imagine how BALTIC 39 would not contribute something special to contemporary art in the UK and particularly to the North East's burgeoning cultural community and creative economy".*

Northumbria University is offering its students an opportunity to work and learn within this unique creative environment by relocating the **Third Year undergraduate** and **MA Fine Arts** teaching and research to **BALTIC 39**. This will immediately enable the University to double its postgraduate student capacity in the short-term, with a view for significant growth in the future. Through an existing partnership between **BALTIC** and **Northumbria University**, the **BxNU Institute of Contemporary Art** will also be present at **BALTIC 39**. Students will have the opportunity to develop their practice in a supportive, stimulating environment of leading academic, postgraduate researchers and internationally renowned artists. They will work alongside the professional and established artists based at the studios, gaining daily access to the exhibitions and an artistic community beyond the region.

The **BALTIC Professor, Christine Borland** will also be resident and will present a series of events for the public and students from the venue later this year. **Professor Borland** adds: *"The Institute will be a very special place where conventional barriers between disciplines, artists and researchers, between the public and the institution, need not apply."*

Northumbria University's Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Professor Andrew Wathey, concluded: *"The University's position in the heart of the city's flourishing cultural quarter further advances our relationships with BALTIC and the City Council and will raise the profile of contemporary arts in the North East on a national and international scale.*

"Our Institute of Contemporary Art, which will be based within this development, will strengthen our Fine Art research, learning and teaching capacity. It will allow significant growth of our postgraduate provision, as well as providing outstanding opportunities for arts students which will be difficult for any other UK university to match."

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For further information please contact:

Exhibition programme: Alan Sykes T: 0777 361 5170 E:

alansykes@talkinhead.demon.co.uk / Ann Cooper BALTIC Head of Communications T: 0191 4404915 E: annc@balticmill.com

Newcastle City Council and Studio Holders: Charlotte Sly, Communications Adviser
T: 0191 211 5057 E: charlotte.sly@newcastle.gov.uk

Arts Council England: Kathryn Goodfellow, Senior Manager, Advocacy
and Communications T: 0191 255 8580 E: kathryn.goodfellow@artscouncil.org.uk

Northumbria University:

Andy Carter, Director of Communications and Development

T: 0191 227 4117 E: andy.carter@northumbria.ac.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

BALTIC 39

31 – 39 High Bridge, Newcastle upon-Tyne NE1 1EW

Admission to BALTIC 39 is free.

Opening hours: Wednesday – Sunday 12.00 – 18.00 except Thursday until 20.00

www.balticmill.com/39

BALTIC 39 was created from an existing six story warehouse building built in 1905. The structure of the building was largely preserved, with the introduction of three modern interventions, although the building has been designed to retain its original industrial feel.

The architectural concept for the building was created by Austrian Architects, Jabornegg & Palffy, with detailed design by the Newcastle office of Atkins Global. The Structural Engineer was White Young Green. Newcastle City Council provided the Mechanical and Electrical design and the overall Project Management was undertaken by JPM Consultants. The main contractor was Rok Building Ltd.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. BALTIC presents a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation, commissioning and communication of contemporary visual art. BALTIC has welcomed over 4 million visitors, since opening to the public in July 2002.

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. The Arts Council support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2011 and 2015, the Arts Council will invest £1.4 billion of public money from government and an estimated £0.85 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk

BALTIC 39 is supported by:



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