

## PRESS RELEASE - From Wasteland to Wasteland

A group of artists from Margate, Kent are set to create new work inspired by an event that happened over 100 years ago as they travel From Wasteland to Wasteland.

On the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, Captain James Young of the 179th Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers pressed a switch. He detonated two explosive charges in tunnels dug through chalk from the British trenches to a position under the German front line.

Captain Young had blown the mine at La Boisselle, creating a single, vast, smooth sided, flat bottomed crater measuring nearly 100 metres across and 21 metres deep. Now known as the Lochnagar Crater, it is the largest crater ever made by man in anger, and it serves as a unique memorial to all those who suffered in the Great War.

Five years later, after suffering a nervous breakdown, TS Eliot travelled to Margate to rest. Sitting in a seafront shelter, and inspired in part by the horror of the First World War, he wrote his epic poem *The Waste Land*.

Award-winning printmaker Dawn Cole, who has work in the V&A's permanent collection, is known for her work exploring stories from the First World War. She visited Lochnagar Crater in 2015.

Inspired by the dramatic site, the manmade landscape, and the stories behind it, she has brought together a small group of artists from Margate to visit the battlefield site, draw connections with TS Eliot's poem, and make new work as a response. The artists are a diverse group, from different backgrounds and with different practices.

Portugese artist Helder Clara uses arduous processes to make objects, installations, sculpture, printing, performance, paintings, and photographic documentation. He has exhibited work in Margate and Hastings.

Lorna Dallas-Conte has a fascination with colour and an interest in traditional craft skills. Her work looks at transformation, manifesting energy, and honouring the sacred. As a commended creative business adviser and academic she combines the different strands of her work together seeing their totality as her practice. She has exhibited in London, Surrey and Kent and is a published researcher.

Dan Thompson is an award-winning social artist and writer. Thompson was commissioned to make new work for the first Estuary Festival in 2016, exhibiting alongside John Akomfrah, Jeremy Deller and Adam Chodzko. In 2015 he published a complete history of Stoke, from the Ice Age to thirty years in the future, told through stories he collected on one road and partly inspired by *The Waste Land*.

Graham Ward is a painter, working in egg tempera and acrylics on board. His work is based on sacred themes, and is strongly influenced by pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. Ward studied illustration in Manchester and painting at Stoke. He has exhibited widely in the United Kingdom and Europe, with solo exhibitions in London, Edinburgh, Paris and Berlin.

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England, the five artists will travel together to see the Lochnagar Crater in March 2017. Each artist will record the visit and make new work which will be presented at a First Friday event at Marine Studios, Margate on Friday 2nd June.

First Fridays have been held at Marine Studios most months since November 2009. The events are driven by a curiosity about the world and a belief that events bring communities together. Previous First Friday events have included performances, book launches, films, exhibitions, talks, installations and even picnics. First Friday runs from 6.30-8.30pm, is free, and is open to all.

The artists plan to continue to work together after their initial exploration, with a view to holding an exhibition in 2021, the centenary of Eliot's time in Margate. For more information and to follow the project as it unfolds, visit [dawncole.co.uk](http://dawncole.co.uk).

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