

Media release  
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## Call for Community Ceramic Pet Artworks for Upcoming Exhibition



*One of a Pair of Pekingese Dogs*, 1875, Meissen Porcelain, Germany, ©The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle

The Bowes Museum is calling on the local community to share their ceramic pets whether they're vintage treasures, handmade keepsakes or quirky collectibles for a new exhibition, *Pippa Hale: Pet Project*, opening 26 July 2025.

By showcasing ceramic pets lent by the public alongside the museum's collection, the exhibition aims to bridge the gap between traditional ceramics and contemporary engagement. From a well-loved Staffordshire spaniel displayed on a mantelpiece, to a playful clay cat figurine made in school, every ceramic pet has a story, and the museum wants to tell them.

This call-out is part of a broader aim to celebrate how pets hold symbolic and emotional importance across cultures and have taken on roles from status symbols to family members. Throughout art history, pets have been a source of inspiration for artists, including in the form of ceramics. Ceramic animals form a significant part of the Bowes's ceramic collection. Whilst ceramics can often be seen as decorative and static objects, *Pet Project* seeks to redefine how audiences experience ceramics and suggests they can be playful objects.

Vicky Sturrs, Director of Programmes and Collections at The Bowes Museum said: "Co-production and community engagement are central to everything we do at The Bowes Museum. We're always looking for new and creative ways to collaborate with our local community, and this latest call-out is a perfect example of that. We're inviting people to submit their ceramic pet object that are meaningful, playful and or tell a unique story. Personally, I'm even submitting my own guinea pig egg cup for the exhibition, there's a distinct lack of guinea pigs in the Bowes collection so I'm

looking to address that, even just on a temporary basis! It's exciting to see what else our visitors might submit."

To take part, send a photo of your ceramic pet, your name, address and a brief description (100 words) to [submit@thebowesmuseum.org.uk](mailto:submit@thebowesmuseum.org.uk) by 13 May. In the 100 words please answer: what is it and why is it important to you?

Selected contributors will be contacted with details about drop-off, care and inclusion in the show. As a thank you to the selected contributors they will receive free entry to the museum to see their piece in the exhibition.

-ENDS-

**Note to editors:**

Please find a picture of *One of a Pair of Pekinese Dogs* [here](#).

For film and photography requests and more information, please contact our Marketing & Communications Coordinators:

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**About Pippa Hale: *Pet Project***

26 July 2025 – 1 March 2026

For a major new commission by The Bowes Museum for summer 2025, acclaimed artist Pippa Hale transforms the museum's renowned ceramic collection into a vibrant and interactive experience for all ages. Turning fragile into shatterproof, this playful exhibition, titled *Pet Project*, invites visitors to engage with ceramics boldly and hands-on, reimagining the collection's precious figurines as 2.5m high, soft, sculptural forms. These giant 'squishees' welcome you to hug, climb and create imaginary play scenes, encouraging personal connections with these larger-than-life shapes as if they were cherished pets or beloved toys. Through interactive activities, *Pet Project* also explores the rich history of ceramics, from decorating and manufacturing techniques to cultural contexts and invites reflection on the timeless bond between people and pets. Visitors can contribute their treasured animal figurines to the show, offering fresh perspectives on value and public collecting, and decorate their bisque-fired object too.

**About Pippa Hale**

Pippa Hale is a contemporary artist based in Leeds whose practice centres around social history, geography and play. Hale's work is often specific to the site and large-scale, she works in a variety of mediums from foam and inflatables to film and digital technology. Much of her work seeks to close the gap between past and present, drawing on history and playfully interpreting it through the lens of contemporary art to connect with audiences in new and exciting ways. Her past exhibition history includes *Play Revolution* (2023), National Railway Museum, York, *Heaven* (2021), Left Bank Leeds and *Play Rebellion* (2019-20) at BALTIC Centre For Contemporary Art, Gateshead.

**About The Bowes Museum**

The Bowes Museum is a charity managing a Grade 1 listed accredited Museum and Grade 2 listed parkland in Barnard Castle. Founded by Joséphine & John Bowes 150+ years ago, this purpose-built Museum brings together an extraordinary, Designated collection of European fine and decorative art as a cultural resource for the people of Northern England, where today we celebrate artists, designers and makers.

The Bowes Museum receives funding from Durham County Council and, as a National Portfolio Organisation, receives support from Arts Council England. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. [artscouncil.org.uk](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

The Bowes Museum is a member of the Discover Durham partnership of attractions, whose commitment is to promote Durham as an exciting and vibrant group travel destination and to provide the travel trade with a professional and knowledgeable service. [discoverdurham.co.uk](https://www.discoverdurham.co.uk)

Admission to The Bowes Museum is £17.70 for local members (residents of County Durham and Darlington), £20.00 for members (residents elsewhere), £19.50 for a day ticket, £21.45 for a day ticket including gift aid. Under 18s, full time students and carers are free.

As a registered charity (number 1079639) The Bowes Museum needs to generate more than half of its income each year to care for the historic collection, buildings and parkland. Your donations are vital to that work. Visit [thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support/](https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support/) for more information.



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