

Theatre and Arts

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Leach Restoration

Final preparations are currently taking place in St Ives as the internationally renowned Leach Pottery prepares for its reopening at the beginning of March following a sympathetic £1.7 million redevelopment and transformation.

Following a sympathetic redevelopment, Leach Pottery will once again become an international centre with the creation of a new pottery training and business incubation facility, education resources and a showcase gallery, all of which will celebrate the life, work, influences and legacy of its famous creator.



Bernard Leach

The Pottery's founder, Bernard Leach, was one of the great figures of 20th Century art, playing a crucial pioneering role in developing ceramics in Britain and around the world.

Bernard Leach was born in the East and educated in the West. As he trained first as an artist in London and then as a potter in Japan he became fascinated by the two cultures that seemed so different.

His continued work and experience in Japan and Korea and the establishment of the Leach Pottery in St Ives in 1920 led to the development of his

reputation as a key pioneering figure in the ceramics world. Collaborating with a young Japanese potter, Shoji Hamada, Leach built the first oriental climbing kiln in the West.



The old store cupboard

Over the course of fifty years Leach taught, wrote and trained other potters in the great art, combining Japanese and European aesthetics through his work. Today, many international links are still in existence between Leach Pottery and Japan in particular.

Although there are some notable public collections of Leach pots at the Crafts Study Centre, Farnham and the Victoria & Albert Museum, most of his work is now in private hands.

Through a partnership with University College Falmouth, the new development will enable students to work alongside established craftspeople to develop their techniques, and Leach Pottery will provide a high level of skills training in a supportive atmosphere.

The transformation has been made possible as a result of funding and support from, amongst others, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, Arts Council England South West, the Rural Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Partnership, Penwith District Council, Cornwall County Council and St Ives Town Council.



The restored drying room

Leach Pottery has scored a significant coup in attracting Jack Doherty, the chairman of the Craft Potters Association of Great Britain and the organising committee of Ceramic Art London, as its new Lead Potter.

His work is exhibited widely, winning gold medals at international exhibitions and his involvement with the education and training of potters includes lecturing, specialist conferences, mentoring and leading workshops in many countries.

Jack will take up residence in Bernard Leach's old studio and will direct the educational and developmental work of Leach Pottery as well as creating and showcasing his own work.

Joining him as Director of the Pottery is Julia Twomlow, formerly a creative industries Consultant with Perfect Moment Consultancy and Director of the Acorn Theatre in Penzance.



Jack Doherty at the wheel

A series of special events is planned for the opening on Thursday March 6th 2008 when notable guests will include the Japanese Ambassador His Excellency Mr Yoshiji Nogami, who is coming to Cornwall especially for the launch. The ribbon will be cut by John Leach, the eldest grandson of Bernard Leach, and Tomoo Hamada, grandson of Shoji Hamada to recall the original days of the pottery.

There will also be a reception evening at the Guildhall with a talk by acclaimed Leach biographer Dr Emmanuel Cooper, John Leach and Professor Simon Olding, Director of the Crafts Study Centre, University College of the Creative Arts, Farnham, Surrey.

The Pottery will then be open to local residents for a free one-off special on Friday 7th March before fully opening to the general public on Saturday 8th March.

- **Leach Pottery > <http://www.theleachpotterystives.co.uk/>**