

Press Release 20 Feb 2019



## Bow Arts awarded National Lottery grant to explore invention and future of plastic



Image: sample strips of Parkesine sheet, courtesy Museum of Design in Plastics (MoDiP) c.1850s

Plastics Roadshow Warm-up Event Saturday 6 April 2019, 11am-4pm

Raw Materials: Plastics Exhibition 17 May – 25 August 2019

The first ever plastic was invented in Hackney Wick; now east London-based Bow Arts has received National Lottery funding to discover its remarkable history and much debated future.

Bow Arts is delighted to announce its receiving of a £47,600 National Lottery grant to continue its local heritage project Raw Materials, which explores the industrial history of east London's River Lea Valley one material at a time.

In 2019 the focus is on **plastics**, exploring the remarkable history of the invention of the first ever plastic in Hackney Wick in 1856. Thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and with supporting partners including University College London (UCL), the Museum of Design in Plastics (MoDiP), the V&A and local archives, the project will uncover local collections and stories to reveal the beginnings of this now much debated material.

A research phase – led by a steering group made up of members of the local community – begins the project, building towards an exhibition of historical plastics and newly commissioned artwork from resident artists Peter Marigold and Frances Scott at Bow Arts' Nunnery Gallery in May 2019. Working with UCL – who have generously provided match-funding for the project – the exhibition



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will also examine the future of plastics, from its conservation to its sustainability, evaluating the ways in which technology must adapt to sustain plastic's endemic uses world-wide.

Stuart Hopley, Head of The National Lottery Heritage Fund London, said:

**"Invented in Hackney Wick, plastic changed the world and today is one of our most debated materials. Now National Lottery funding will enable Bow Arts, its partners and the community to explore plastic's origins, impact and future."**

The Raw Materials event programme kicks off with the **Plastics Roadshow on Saturday 6 April**, inviting members of the public to bring their vintage plastics for identification. The UCL Mobile Heritage Lab will be installed in the Bow Arts Courtyard and invites any plastics for analysis by its scientists, or for a free evaluation from the Plastics Historical Society who will also be on-site. Environmental charity Thames21 will be bringing – and displaying – plastics collected in London's River Thames, exploring an ongoing concern of the project to examine the contemporary evolution and impact of today's plastics.

Raw Materials: Plastics follows Textiles (2018) and Wood (2017), both of which were previously awarded National Lottery funding by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, Bow Arts looks forward to continuing its flagship heritage project with plastics – a material whose innovation started in east London.

For more information and to follow the project see [rawmaterials.bowarts.org](http://rawmaterials.bowarts.org)

**For further information and images please contact:**

Sophie Hill, Gallery Director, 020 8980 7774 ext.312 | [shill@bowarts.com](mailto:shill@bowarts.com)

Lulu Nunn, Marketing & Communications Manager, 020 8709 5290 | [lnunn@bowarts.com](mailto:lnunn@bowarts.com)

[www.bowarts.org](http://www.bowarts.org) | [www.twitter.com/BowArts](https://www.twitter.com/BowArts) | [www.facebook.com/bowarts](https://www.facebook.com/bowarts)

**Notes to editors**

### About Bow Arts

Bow Arts is an arts education charity that provides affordable creative workspaces for over 500 emerging artists. Alongside this, Bow Arts manages one of the country's most exciting education programmes, which takes world-class artists into 90 schools to improve the lives and learning of children and young people. Bow Arts runs the Nunnery Gallery, a public gallery that supports a diverse range of high quality exhibitions and events as well as the delivery of a public arts programme. Established in 1995, Bow Arts holds an important place in east London which is fast becoming known as London's Artist Quarter. [www.bowarts.org](http://www.bowarts.org)

### About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead and resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future.

[www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk).

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