

arts



Learn the art of bronze casting at Meltdowns in Ramsgate

tainably continue to work after graduation?

With Sarah's experience at organising events and exhibitions, Stephen's teaching skills, knowledge of how to build a studio and foundry, and buckets of joint enthusiasm, they decided to dive in together and find a studio site.

After two years of backbreaking work, the first phase of Meltdowns was up and running. Stephen and Sarah then brought in Stacy Keeler, who added her skills in working with communities and schools to the mix.

Acquisition of further space at the Ramsgate site has seen Meltdowns blossom into a big-hearted, holistic and totally professional, self-sustaining arts project run by artists for artists; a thriving commercial business and a philanthropic educational programme with affordable fixed rental artists' studios; rentable project spaces; an exceptional fine arts working foundry and a fully-equipped workshop.

The commercial work undertaken by the foundry comprises a healthy catalogue of commissions each year, using a broad range of casting mediums. Projects realised in 2008 include the production of a life-sized bronze shell lady, by sculptor Anne Carrington that now stands at the tip of the Margate Harbour Arm.

The largely altruistic educational arm of the project ranges from courses in bronze casting, life casting, the history of bronze, school visit

Meltdowns

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Next courses

- **Introducing Bronze Casting**
Saturday 21 March (and each month until Nov 2009) £40
- **Bronze Casting 2009:**
Ten Wednesdays from 6 May and again from 23 September. Cost £560 inclusive
- **Intensive Twelve-Day Bronze Casting**
From Wednesday 1 April and from Wednesday 29 July.
Cost £720 inclusive
- **Introducing Life Casting**
One-day course on Saturdays 23 May or 11 July. Cost £37

programmes (to see a bronze pour for example), art lectures and seminars, and running national and international guided art tours.

Still pushing the remit, exciting new developments for 2009 are afoot. A new arts award, The Bronze Award, a year-long project supported by KCC, will encourage schools, artists and the public to get hands on with bronze.

National exhibitions of work produced on the bronze courses will open dialogue about bronze and generate projects to help discover and experience the medium. To support the project further, a young artist will be selected to take up residency at the studios to explore their own work through the casting process.

The award itself will invite artists from around the world to submit proposals for a piece of work. The winning design will be cast in bronze and exhibited nationally, along with the short-listed designs.

The open-handed approach employed at Meltdowns is getting them noticed, and they are going from strength to strength. Links with some of the industry big boys, such as Tate Modern, the British Museum, English Heritage, the Scottish Sculpture Workshops, University College for Creative Arts and The Artists Information Company are being forged.

It seems to me that Meltdowns is good for Thanet and very, very good for the Arts! ■