



PRESS RELEASE, 25 January 2017

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# Tiling Stories

Matthew Raw barges into the Ragged School Museum  
with solo show *Clad*

4–14 May 2017

The **Jerwood Prize**-winning ceramic artist **Matthew Raw** is interested in the stories that tiles tell about the people who lived in and among the buildings that bear them.

In May, Raw is devoting his first solo exhibition to examining the relationship between shifting populations and the built environment through a series of eight sculptural ceramic artworks. These vary from wall-mounted works to floor-based pieces, and include two freestanding sculptures. Each piece is a different response to the concept of the 'urban grid', a pattern of development that informs the structure of the city at every scale.

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Matthew Raw at the Ragged School Museum. Photography by Marina Castagna.

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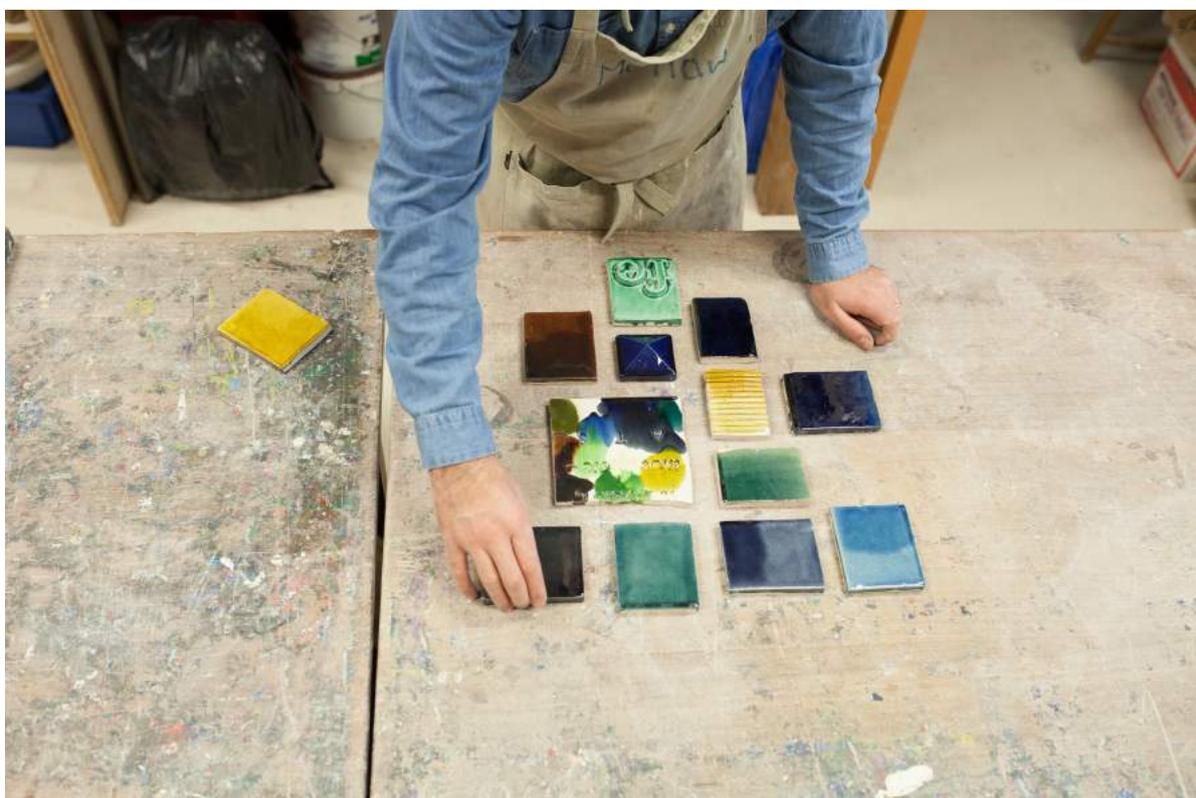


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Supported by **Arts Council England**, **Clad** takes place over 10 days at the **Ragged School Museum** in Tower Hamlets during **London Craft Week**, inviting visitors to explore the part we all play in the physical transformations of the areas in which we live. Each of Raw's works will use ceramics as a means of engaging with Britain's manufacturing past and its evolving craft culture. The relationship between urban communities and the built environment is something Raw explored during his 2015 residency at the **Victoria & Albert Museum's** Ceramics Studio, and which is also touched upon in his current **Art of the Underground** work with architectural collective **Assemble** at Seven Sisters Underground station, but this is his first exhibition solely dedicated to the theme.

*"The pieces will develop upon my past work and thinking in relation to key themes within my practice: 'the tile' and migration, or, more generally, the movement of people. The pieces will challenge us to reflect on the temporary nature of geographically rooted communities, and what roles we all play in the constantly changing faces of our urban environment; visitors will be asked to question what the values are that they truly hold."*

– Matthew Raw, ceramic artist.



Glaze tests by Matthew Raw. Photography by Marina Castagna.



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The location of the show at the **Ragged School Museum** is also especially apposite: its three buildings have also developed in usage and appearance as the society around them has shifted, transitioning from goods warehouses for canal traders to Thomas Barnado's community-education-saving free school in the late 19th century, through various industrial incarnations, before acquiring their present role as the East End's museum of Victorian education and social history in 1990.

The museum is situated beside Regent's Canal, a short journey east from Raw's own studio, where he is making the pieces. Adding a further dimension to **Clad**, Matthew will be transporting each sculpture to the museum along the canal on a barge in tribute to a bygone era of transportation and modern-day echo of 18th-century pottery mogul, Josiah Wedgwood, who invested heavily in Britain's canal system as the safest means of transporting his ceramic works. The canal thus acts as a physical connection between where the works are made and where they will be displayed.



Work in progress by Matthew Raw. Photography by Marina Castagna.

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*"Matthew Raw finds inspiration in the footnotes of history, where, he trawls through fading and lost cultures where now only fragments survive. From the start it was clear his exhibition Clad was a perfect fit for the Ragged School Museum where a densely layered history is reflected in the variegated surfaces of the building. Matt's brilliant combination of technique, innovation and research into the past will inspire us to reflect on hidden lives and forgotten histories."*

– Erica Davies, Museum Director at Ragged School Museum.

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Work in progress by Matthew Raw. Photography by Marina Castagna.

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As well as transporting Raw's ceramics, a converted barge named the **Fordham Gallery** will also be used to host two workshops led by the artist. Drawing upon the themes considered by **Clad**, each workshop will begin with a tour of the exhibition, before seeing participants embark on the two-hour journey from the Mile End museum to Raw's Hoxton studio, learning how to work clay into tiles along the way.

Clad is being documented by the photographer **Marina Castagna**, who is following the exhibition's development from the construction of the works in the studio, to their journey along Regent's canal, and their display at the exhibition itself.

The exhibition's design and catalogue is being produced by graphic designer **Marine Duroselle**.

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For more information about Clad or Matthew Raw, and images of his work, please contact me (Jodi Moss) at [jodi@zetteler.co.uk](mailto:jodi@zetteler.co.uk) or on +44 (0)7910 705147.

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## Notes for Editors

### About Clad

4–14 May 2017

10am to 5pm

Ragged School Museum  
46-50 Copperfield Road  
London  
E3 4RR

Nearest tube - Mile End

[raggedschoolmuseum.org.uk](http://raggedschoolmuseum.org.uk)

### About Matthew Raw

Matthew Raw is a ceramic artist who seeks to push the possibilities of clay to communicate, and to challenge public perceptions of what it can do as a material. Based in East London, he is a co-founder of Studio Manifold in Hoxton, an artistic collective of nine Royal College of Art graduates, and has participated in group shows, collaborative projects and exhibitions in London, Munich, Copenhagen, Detroit and more. He collected the Jerwood Prize in 2014 for 'The Shifting Spirit', a full-size interpretation of a tiled pub exterior now on permanent display at the Five Points Brewery in East London. He has recently been working with architecture collective Assemble for an Art on the Underground project at Seven Sisters Underground station. Matthew also runs practical public workshops in ceramics via [rawceramicworkshops.com](http://rawceramicworkshops.com).

[mraw.co.uk](http://mraw.co.uk)

Instagram: [matrawworksinc lay](https://www.instagram.com/matrawworksinc lay)

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Ceramic artist, Matthew Raw. Photography by Marina Castagna.

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#### **Q&A: Matthew Raw discusses Clad**

**Clad is about the relationship between the urban environment and the transient populations that pass through it. There are numerous physical traces on the urban landscape that different cultures and social groups leave in a given area over time – what is it about tiles that interests you in particular?**

It is 'urban grids' that I am particularly drawn to. Brick walls, tiled façades, paving, etc. I have come to realise that growing up in post-industrial Manchester has shaped this appreciation and aesthetic interest. A pre-Christmas visit to Lisbon really hammered home to me the international and historic significance that tiles have. Living in London surrounded by such a variety of interior and exterior architecture and building techniques provides me with a constant inspiration, as does travelling the Tube, which further localises my research.

#### **What form will your eight works take? Do they all explore the same theme?**

The pieces for Clad are all based on 'the tile' and the grids that we find around us. Modern grids found in cities are generally graphical, and I have been inspired by them, but I also class a cobbled road as an urban grid, which is obviously much more organic. Five of the pieces are wall-based, one lives on the floor and two are freestanding sculptures. Some of the pieces are plentiful in the number of elements that make them up (the most extreme of which is the 100 tiles that come together to create 'Individual Motives'), while others are bespoke and look to have been plucked from an imaginative group ('Flex').

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'The Inscription Remains Forever' suggests transience, and sits among works that have been made physically permanent with adhesive ('In / Out').

**Are the works all of a similar scale/level of complexity?**

How long does each take to make? All of the works take different amounts of time to produce. Most of them are made up of multiples, so it means a lot of juggling in the production stage. Every piece is hand-made through a variety of techniques – press-molded, rolled, scratched, carved, slab-built and coiled work combine to produce the pieces at the making stage. I then have to factor how to 'finish' them, which can add a second firing in the kiln if the piece is glazed. The irony is that I got hooked on using clay due to its immediacy, however the process soon becomes time consuming once the drying time and firings are taken into account.

**Have you had to acquire new skills or develop new techniques in the process?**

I think that when you take the plunge to translate tests and/or ideas into a fully-fledged piece of work, then there is loads of tweaking and new understanding as you go. The piece that is the most risky (and therefore exciting) are the tiles that make up 'Individual Motives'. After firing I am taking the tiles to the studio of Martin Smith (acclaimed ceramic artist and former RCA Ceramics & Glass head of course), where we will trim them down using a diamond saw to achieve a crisp edge. I've never done that before, but need the tiles to 'butt-up' against each other in a precise way. To achieve the scale that I want for 'Flex' I have had to do lots of work behind the scenes in preparation for the thick, heavy slabs. Time will tell if this works out. Other pieces that I am more practiced at in the making are pushed in the installation ('Create A Scene' and 'Fearful Symmetry') or glazing stages ('Panel Discussion').

**What unique elements does the Ragged School Museum itself bring to the exhibition?**

The interior and exterior of the building is incredibly rich and relevant to me and Clad in terms of architecture and how it has been used. It helps the show explore how the area has witnessed first-hand the move from an economy built on hand manufacturing in the pre-industrial era to its current post-industrial landscape. Its canal-side location also sparked the idea to transport the pieces on a barge to the museum from my studio in Hoxton – a physical link between where the work will be shown and where it was made. And in more contemporary terms, it has seemed like the right place at the right time. Erica Davies, director of the museum, has been unbelievably supportive and enthusiastic, which helped me acquire the funding, and is now crucial in seeing the project through.

**You've called the exhibition 'Clad' – do you think there are parallels – symbolic or literal – between tiling and clothing?**

Interesting question! The building does have a relationship with clothing – Dr Barnardo's clothed thousands of impoverished children when it was his school in the late 19th century. It was later used as a store for rags, and a company called Highwayman Leather made their jackets in the building in the 1960s and '70s. But I learned these factors well after I had named the show and decided on the museum for its location. I like the word 'clad' because it can be interpreted as being practical, sneaky, or represent

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aesthetic tastes. When I hear it, I do think about it in an architectural sense rather than clothing, but maybe I could open out my research... once I've made this show.

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