



*Forge, an exhibition of Artist Blacksmithing produced by the Ruthin Gallery and curated by Delyth Done is continuing on from its UK tour and coming to Metal Museum, Memphis, from May 13 to August 19, 2018*

*Curator Delyth Done explains the thoughts behind the show:*

In recent years, the practice of artist blacksmiths has transformed. Contemporary artist blacksmiths are creating original and cohesive bodies of work, works which engage not only with the practices and forms of traditional blacksmithing, with its focus on material, process and function; but also with many broader cultural, environmental and socio-political conversations. These works bring a fresh perspective to the discipline and demand new critical consideration, giving focus to an international community of artist blacksmithing driven by ideas and concept as much as by process and material.

The title 'Forge' embodies something of the tension and complexity we see both in the contemporary profession of artist blacksmithing and in the works. Forge points to an exhibition characterised by a process and a material; the forging of hot metal is at the heart of all this work. Forge as a noun also evokes centuries old ideas and practices of blacksmith, hearth and anvil, which have a place in literature and myth as well as social and economic narratives past and present. For individuals, the relationship with this multi-dimensional history varies. When it is used as a verb, forge is often used in the context of driven change and innovation: 'to forge ahead' or forge something new, the objects here all represent the work of artists concerned with originality and the context of the contemporary world in which they live.

Here the very strength of traditional blacksmithing practice, and a persistent cultural tradition of rural nostalgia, may arguably have hindered artist blacksmithing from gaining wider recognition as a contemporary art form. We hope these fifteen international artists will have a significant impact on current thinking about forged metal art and demonstrate creative and conceptual working with forged metal to be a meaningful and innovative international discipline.

*"Forge is a cultural slider. This exhibition breathes new life into the old vessels. Many of the contributors selected demonstrate a practice transformed through teaching and the necessity for academic and industrial research. The ambiguities in these works of metal are as clear as they need to be, open to anyone with an interest in the anvil, and anyone who thinks bending spoons is merely an illusionist's skill. Where will scholarship begin locating this practice, and what will define, even validate, its specificity?"*