

RETAIL

Radicals, pioneers and Brands of Tomorrow. Why the spirit of Josiah Wedgwood lives on in Britain's creative entrepreneurs

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Helen Brocklebank is chief executive of Walpole

Walpole chief executive Helen Brocklebank penned a letter to members of the organization in support of its Brands of Tomorrow program

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By [Helen Brocklebank](#)

"A scientist and businessman, artist and marketer, radical and industrialist, whose material impact would be felt right across the globe..." writes Tristram Hunt in his new book, *The Radical Potter*, "...Wedgwood's vision and passion, technical ingenuity and business acumen, speak excitingly to us today."

Not only did he play a pivotal role in the Industrial Revolution, for Walpole, Josiah Wedgwood was the founding father of British luxury: his ability to marry technology with design and to mass-produce objects of exceptional quality and beauty coupled with his flair for making them desirable, chic and highly prized by affluent taste-makers at home and abroad, turned his family business into an international phenomenon, and set the benchmark for a whole industry.

Hunt is right when he says Wedgwood - with his *"relentlessly experimental frame of mind"* - speaks to us today. And perhaps his message is particularly resonant for Walpole members. It's not only that every creative founder in British luxury since Wedgwood has stood on the shoulders of a giant, it's also that his unique blend of genius and graft is something bred in the bone for every successful British luxury brand.

I've been thinking a lot about Josiah Wedgwood lately, partly because Tristram Hunt is coming to talk to Walpole members about his book at a party we are giving at The Savoy on 18th October, and partly because every year at this time, we start the hunt for the following year's Brands of Tomorrow, Walpole's program for creative founders at the early stage of their brand-building journey.

The call for applications opens on the Web site, and we reach out to members and to the wider Walpole network to

ask for recommendations for any emerging luxury brands which may have caught the eye. It's at the selection interviews towards the end of November, when the shortlisted brands pitch for their place on the program, that the Wedgwood spirit comes into its own.

The eligibility criteria for Brands of Tomorrow is straightforward: you need to be a British brand positioned in the luxury sector, turning over more than 200,000 but less than 5 million and to have been founded fewer than 10 years ago, but if you've also got that "relentlessly experimental frame of mind," the blend of art and science, the instinctive and canny ability to market your product and make discerning people long for it, if you're a pioneer on a quest for perfection, and if you're already making people around the world take notice of something new, exciting and British, then that's what makes the judges sit up and take notice. It's that Wedgwood DNA that makes the difference between good and great.

It's been there in all 130 of the brands who've made it onto the program since 2007 - not least in Bremont, Miller Harris, Fitzdares, Nyetimber, Emilia Wickstead, Orlebar Brown, The Restory and so many more. And it's what fires the spark in the mentors from Walpole's established brands who work with their Brands of Tomorrow mentee to help nurture, nudge and guide them to fulfil their ambitions. If you've got it in you, then we want to hear from you.

In "The Radical Potter," Mr. Hunt quotes the Victorian prime minister, W.E Gladstone, who wrote, "*Wedgwood was the greatest man who ever, in any age, or in any country applied himself to the important work of uniting art with industry.*"

Whether you're a new creative founder, ready to apply for Brands of Tomorrow, a Brands of Tomorrow alumnus, or a creative founder of many years standing, follow in the footsteps of "the greatest man" and let Wedgwood inspire you. And if you're working in luxury, then Tristram Hunt's book is essential reading, as much for the story of someone with vision, conviction and purpose as for the story of a game-changing proto-luxury pioneer.

Helen Brocklebank is CEO of [Walpole](#), London.

[The Radical Potter; Josiah Wedgwood and the Transformation of Britain. Tristram Hunt. Published by Penguin 25.](#)

Brands of Tomorrow applications are now open [here](#).

Tristram Hunt will be joining Walpole to talk about *The Radical Potter: Josiah Wedgwood and The Transformation of Britain* on Oct. 18 at The Savoy hotel in London. Event by invitation only.

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