



27 May 2008

## **Newcastle Building Society Puts Leading Local Artists On Ice As Part Of Major New Commission**

Two of the north east's most exciting young artists have been put on ice by Newcastle Building Society as part of a series of original artwork commissions set up to mark the opening of the Society's prestigious new offices at the Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside.

Twin brothers Steve and Chris Rocks, who are unique in working collaboratively and simultaneously on their artworks, spent four days in Iceland as part of preparation for creating a semi abstract triptych of paintings for the wall of the Cobalt building's first floor atrium balcony.

The brothers will be building some of the landscape and atmosphere of the dramatic Icelandic scenery that they experienced into their piece for the Newcastle, which will be displayed in an area occupied by Newcastle Strategic Solutions teams who work on behalf of Icelandic bank Landsbanki who process savings accounts for the UK brand Icesave.

A range of commissions have been given by the Society, in conjunction with the Sponsors Club for Arts & Business, to a selection of north east artists, who are now working on different artworks for different parts of the Cobalt building.

Well-known Tyneside artist John Coatsworth will be creating a series of paintings which visualise the Society and its various premises over the years, whilst creative designers Juo will be creating a number of pieces of wall-based glass art.

University of Newcastle graduate Alex Charrington and abstract artist Eva Bauer complete the list of commissions, along with visual artist Karen Rann, who has been appointed as the Newcastle's artist-in-residence.

Karen is already working on a number of pieces in different parts of the Cobalt building which will be designed to promote the idea of art and creativity in the workplace, as well as to offer creative opportunities to staff.

The artists' work will be unveiled at the Cobalt's official opening ceremony in June, and a special competition for students attending local universities and FE colleges has also been created, with a top prize of £1,000 and two £500 runners-up prizes on offer for pieces of work in any medium which reflect and celebrate the Society's history and links with the local community.

A selection of the students' work will be exhibited in Cobalt's café gallery space, with the winners, as voted for by the Society and its employees, being announced ahead of the office's official opening event.

Gillian Tiplady, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Newcastle Building Society, says: "The artists we've commissioned have come up with some extremely exciting and diverse ideas that we are certain will do full justice to the array of spaces in which they will be exhibited, and the range of artists with whom we've chosen to work clearly shows the sheer volume of creative talent to which our region is home.

"Our move into the Cobalt building is obviously a major landmark for the Newcastle, so we wanted to mark it by undertaking a significant initiative that embodies both traditional values and fresh thinking, and we expect that this initiative will have a lasting impact on both our new premises and the wider organisation as a whole."

-ENDS-