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# Craft NI heralds new wave of exciting designers

## *Major survey launched reveals huge potential of NI craft sector*

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**A major study launched in Belfast today highlights the emergence of a new wave of promising craft designers in Northern Ireland.**

The research, commissioned by Craft Northern Ireland, was launched at Space CRAFT, a new craft gallery, shop and exhibition area in the city centre.

Craft Northern Ireland says the study, which is the first such survey ever carried out here, reveals the growth of a new breed of craftspeople here who are typically young, talented and ambitious.

***“To date, many craftmakers have developed their businesses in Northern Ireland without achieving the international recognition they deserve,”*** says Craft Northern Ireland’s Director, Joe Kelly.

***“This study shows that a significant proportion of local craftmakers have begun making the right moves to get onto the global stage, and are hungry for further success.***

***“What we now want to see from the Northern Ireland Executive is a package of support which will enable those craft designers to compete with confidence in the international market.”***

One of the most promising young designers, Rachel McKnight gave the audience at Space CRAFT an insight into how she makes her colourful range of jewellery.

IN 2003 after graduating from the University of Ulster, 26-year old Rachel set up her award-winning jewellery design business and has been based at Greenshoots Ltd. in Newry for the past 2 years.



Rachel specialises in funky, innovative jewellery made from plastic or rubber which has proved sufficiently distinctive to appeal to the higher end of the market.

***“I do think of myself first and foremost as an artist and designer,”*** says Rachel.

***“But, to succeed in the global marketplace, you have to be a hard-headed entrepreneur as well.***

***“There’s no doubt that many young craftmakers would greatly benefit from a programme of government support designed to assist them in fully exploiting their international potential.”***

The launch event was addressed by the Chairman of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Rosemary Kelly.

She says the Council fully supports the call by Craft Northern Ireland for greater help for young craftmakers here:

***“We’re delighted to see that the new generation of craft designers contains such a rich seam of talent.***

***“We mustn’t lose this opportunity to grasp that talent and realise its full potential.***

***“To date, craftmakers in both England and the Republic of Ireland have been more successful in exploiting international opportunities.***

***“Craftmakers here are not lacking in artistic skill – but they do need more support to develop their business know-how.”***

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