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# Craft NI fast track for promising young entrepreneurs

## *Five new craft businesses begin Craft NI's incubation programme*

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**A new wave of promising young designers took their first steps in business yesterday as they attended Craft NI's launch of making it 07, a 2-year business start-up programme aimed at nurturing emerging young talent in Northern Ireland.**

The 5 talented and ambitious craft businesses which have been selected to participate in the incubation programme will join 12 designers already developing their businesses throughout Northern Ireland.

Each business is located at an arts and cultural organisation where they have access to a package of financial and professional support to develop the skills and tools needed to grow a viable craft business.

***"The making it programme is about developing the potential of Northern Ireland's creative talent of young innovative designer-makers"***, explains Joe Kelly, Directory of Craft NI.

***"By equipping them with the entrepreneurial skills they need, the programme helps them turn their creative talent into a sustainable business."***

The programme is supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Invest NI. Donal Durkan, Director of Life Sciences & Creative, Invest NI says, ***"By working closely with a range of stakeholders including Craft NI, Invest NI can ensure that a variety of support is available to assist new enterprises and help them to provide the support network necessary to grow their business and ensure that it remains competitive."***



One of the five promising designer-makers starting the programme today is Sharon Lindsay Ferguson, a costume and jewellery designer originally from Cookstown, County Tyrone.

29-year old Sharon worked on a number of international craft projects after completing a Masters at The National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

She is returning to Northern Ireland to specialise in costume and jewellery designs that combine alternative materials and traditional fabrics.

Her one-off pieces have proved sufficiently distinctive to appeal to the higher end of the market.

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

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

***“The making it programme will assist me in fully exploiting my business potential to develop craft markets both here at home and internationally.”***

Sharon will be taking up a place on *making it 07* at the Southern Regional College.

The programme was launched yesterday at Interface, an art and design technology centre at University of Ulster.

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