



Craft NI

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Graduate grabs top business award for Craft

Craft NI & Invest NI's award for promising young craft entrepreneurs

Date issued: 10 June 2008

Talented new graduate Natasha Rollinson picked up the top business award for Craft yesterday [09 June 2008] at University of Ulster's annual prize-giving ceremony.

Supported by Craft NI and Invest Northern Ireland, the Craft in Business Award recognises emerging craft-designers who are developing innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to their business.

Natasha is the second recipient of this annual award for final-year students at the School of Art & Design in Belfast.

Graham Davis, Invest NI's Director of Regional Economic Development, says:

"Creativity is key to the sustained success of businesses, especially in today's dynamic and highly competitive commercial environment.

Invest NI is dedicated to encouraging more people to use their talents to develop and commercialise innovative ideas that can make a contribution to economic growth."

Natasha who is originally from Edinburgh lives on Belfast's Ormeau Road. Her silver jewellery designs are simple yet striking. Each piece incorporates a series of circular patterns derived from nature.

Natasha has built up lots of experience in making and in business through her degree and as a jewellery assistant at Golddigger Gallery, an exclusive jewellery gallery in Hollywood, where she worked during her studies.

Natasha has already begun to think about how to put the award money to good use:

"It's often a difficult transition from college to the world of work and I'm delighted to get this level of support.

During my studies I was keen to get as much experience as possible and now the next step for me is to develop jewellery for the international market,” says Natasha,

“But coming up with the original idea is only half the battle – you have to develop work that is memorable and appealing and which will get noticed in the international marketplace”

“This financial support will help me identify the next steps in developing my business plans to make an impact on the international stage”

Research conducted by Craft NI highlights that setting up a craft business in Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly attractive to young graduates.

The Craft in Business award is just one of the ways in which Craft NI is recognizing the entrepreneurial spirit of the craft sector.

“Building an entrepreneurial and vibrant contemporary crafts sector involves recognizing and nurturing Natasha’s creative talent and that of other young graduates,” says Brian McClelland, Chairman of Craft NI.

Craft NI’s business incubation programme, *making it*, both actively retains graduates and attracts returning craftspeople to establish craft businesses in Northern Ireland.

Craft NI director, Joe Kelly, says:

“As champion for the Craft sector in Northern Ireland we are delighted to formally recognise the potential of young designer-makers who are the future entrepreneurs of the craft sector.”

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