



Craft NI

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Major Craft Celebration Set to Boost Cultural Tourism in Northern Ireland

Craft NI unveils August Craft Month 08, a month-long programme of craft activities

THIS August you can join a silver trail of world-class exhibitions, see Indian folk art 'as it happens' and produce your own designs using 'tie-dye' and 'raku' craft techniques.

Organised by Craft NI, this month-long celebration of craft opens today [01 August 2008] with a packed calendar of over 30 events taking place across Northern Ireland.

The festival, simply called 'August Craft Month', offers everyone an opportunity to experience craft and to join in and get some hands-on experience of craft making.

Featuring celebrated talent and emerging craftmakers from Northern Ireland and abroad, activities during August Craft Month include a 'Silver Trail' of 5 major silver exhibitions.

The trail kicks off with a display of cutting-edge silver - the CONNECT collection – opening today at Hillsborough Courthouse.

Across the square at Hillsborough Castle, the first ever display of the Silver Trust's collection in Northern Ireland will also be unveiled.

This lavish display of ornate tableware is used to entertain important guests and heads of state at 10 Downing Street.

At Queen's University in Belfast, The Naughton Gallery is hosting a ground-breaking exhibition, 'Silver Sounds', which promises to give visitors a high-tech experience with a difference.

Using a hand-held computer, visitors can trigger sounds and music relating to each of 22 objects from the University's collection of silver.

Other highlights of August Craft Month's will include visiting Indian artist Ranbir Kaur at this year's Belfast Mela on 24 August in the Botanic Gardens, Craft Fest at Strangford Lough, the Creative Peninsula throughout the Ards and Woodfest at Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh.

Expected to have particular appeal for tourists, this wide-ranging programme of events is supported by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

As Joe Kelly, Director of Craft NI explains, this partnership represents a major step in developing important links between craft and tourism:

“In light of the recent comments by Northern Ireland’s First Minister on the potential for cultural tourism in Northern Ireland, this partnership represents a very timely opportunity” says Joe.

“Craft NI is already aware of the potential for craft in attracting visitors to Northern Ireland and we are committed to building on this potential.”

“Over the next 3 years, we will be looking to strengthen this partnership with August Craft Month becoming a major event on Northern Ireland’s tourism calendar.”

The launch event is officially being opened by the Chief Executive of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Roisín McDonough.

She says the Arts Council fully supports the developing links between craft and tourism:

“The Arts Council of Northern Ireland established Craft NI and continues to be its main funder, seeing the potential for craft, creative industry and cultural tourism.” she says.

We are delighted that ‘August Craft Month’, taking place across Northern Ireland, will allow more people to become involved in and enjoy the arts.

We congratulate Craft NI for supporting professional artists and strengthening arts provision during this programme, helping the public see the value and significance of the arts, at the heart of our social, economic and creative life.

Tom McGrath, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board who will also launch August Craft Month says, ***“We are delighted to support a programme of cultural events that is helping to carve-out new tourism markets for Northern Ireland.***

“Nurturing the innovation and ambition of craftspeople is key to developing craft tourism as a major contributor to the region’s economy”

A full guide to the events taking place during August Craft Month is available from tourist offices, libraries and other cultural hotspots across Northern Ireland.

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Contact: Emma Duggan, Craft NI Tel: +44 (0)28 9032 3059 Mobile: +44 (0)7708 178 667