



Craft NI

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Culture Minister unearths design talent at August Craft Month launch

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STORY BEGINS...

THE MINISTER for Culture Arts and leisure, Gregory Campbell, joined craftspeople, artists and members of the public today [30 June 2009] to create a mosaic made of individually hand-crafted clay tiles in the gardens of Belfast City Hall.

The artwork was created together with local potter Diane McCormick to celebrate the launch of the listings guide to August Craft Month 09, the annual festival of craft in Northern Ireland.

Speaking during the launch the Minister said: ***“The creative sector in Northern Ireland is extremely important, not only to economic growth, but also in attracting tourism and helping to create a culture which inspires people from all walks of life.***

“Last year I launched the Creative Industries Innovation Fund, which is providing funding of £5 million over a three year period to the creative sector. At the launch I had first hand experience of the work of Craft NI and saw for myself how they contribute to the creative sector and Northern Ireland as a whole.

“I hope, that the 2009 August Craft Month programme, like the creative event taking place here today, will inspire people to learn more about the craft tradition and the many talented makers that we have here in Northern Ireland.”

Composed of individually designed hand-printed tiles, the clay mosaic was skilfully assembled by Diane on a large canvas.

Over the next few weeks the mosaic tiles will be fired at high temperatures in a kiln to create the final artwork which will be donated in August by Craft NI for public display.

“As the theme of this year’s August Craft Month festival is ceramics, pottery and everything to do with clay, we challenged the public to help create something different” explained Chairman of Craft NI, Martin Bradley.

During a morning's intensive working with clay, we created an artwork measuring over 3 square meters which pays tribute to a tradition of quality ceramic making here in Northern Ireland", he said.

"Over the course of August Craft Month there will be plenty of opportunities to see craft skills like Diane's in action at over 40 craft events that includes exhibitions, demonstrations, workshops and talks.

The mosaic design was inspired by potter Diane McCormick's own individual and striking designs including teapots, lighting clocks, mirrors and pictures.

As Diane explains, "My work is inspired by natural patterns and motifs like animals, birds and insects to create my signature ranges".

"It is important to demonstrate the skills and techniques involved in the craft making process."

"But it is also exciting to get involved in a challenging and creative project that helps raise awareness of the skilled craftspeople working in Northern Ireland", says Diane.

Diane McCormick is creating a range of exciting new work for August Craft Month which will be on display at Hillsborough Courthouse, The Naughton Gallery at Queens and The Merchant Hotel and Craft NI in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter throughout August.

More information about Diane's work and a full listings guide to all the events taking place during August Craft Month will be available from the beginning of July at tourist offices, libraries and other cultural hotspots across Northern Ireland.

Attending the launch event, Director of Arts Development, Noirin McKinney, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, supported the August Craft Month programme saying ***"We are delighted that 'August Craft Month', taking place across Northern Ireland, is supporting professional artists whilst allowing more people to become involved in and enjoy the arts.***

"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 development."

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Editor's notes:

- August Craft Month 09 is Northern Ireland's annual celebration of craft. A copy of the listings guide to August Craft Month 09 is available to download here or by visiting Craft NI's website, www.craftnidirectory.org.
- This year, the 3rd year of August Craft Month, the focus is on ceramics and there are 5 major ceramics exhibitions and a full programme of over 40 events across Northern Ireland.
- Joe Kelly, Director of Craft Northern Ireland and craft maker Diane McCormick are available for interviews by telephone at any time and in person at the launch of August Craft Month at Belfast City Hall.
- More information on Diane McCormick is available from www.dianemccormick.co.uk
- Please contact Emma Duggan if you would like to arrange an interview. t: +44 (0) 28 9032 3059, m: +44 (0)7708 178667, emma@craftni.org
- August CRAFT MONTH 09 and Craft NI are supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Invest Northern Ireland.
- There are more than 300 craft businesses and 500 people working in the crafts sector in Northern Ireland with a combined turnover of some £8m. These are some of the findings of Craft NI's survey of the craft sector, commissioned in 2006. The executive summary is available to download here.
- Recognising that over 68% of craftspeople are living and working in rural locations, Craft NI has recently published a document highlighting the opportunities for the craft sector to develop business and tourism activities within the framework of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme for 2007-13. Click here to download a copy of this document.
- In championing the craft sector in Northern Ireland Craft NI prioritises quality practice among makers whose work is linked to lifestyle, fashion and critiques of contemporary arts practice, along with those working within a traditional and vernacular style associated with heritage.
- More information about Northern Ireland's craft sector is contained in Craft NI's advocacy document for the craft sector, 'Why the crafts matter', available to download here.
- For further details and to arrange any interviews, please contact: Emma Duggan, Craft NI, E: emma@craftni.org, Tel: 0044 (0) 28 9032 3059, Mob: 07708 178667