



Craft NI

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# Creative Partnerships Support Northern Ireland's Craft Talent

*A major exhibition of craft is unveiled in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter*

**Date: Thursday 6th August 2009.**

**Contact: Emma Duggan, Craft NI Tel: 9032 3059 Mobile: 07708 178 667**  
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**[Story begins]** GIANT BEETLES, 'lipstick' pots, 'graffiti' plates and effigy Toby jugs are some of the intriguing works that go on show today [6th August 2009] in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter as part of a major exhibition of Northern Ireland Ceramics.

Throughout August this new collection, which has been created by five of Northern Ireland's leading potters, will be exhibited in the luxurious surroundings of The Merchant Hotel and at the Cathedral Quarter's historic Cotton Court building.

Among the potters who have made new work for the exhibition is Tyrone-based designer-maker Diane McCormick.

Diane has been producing her striking ranges of tableware including ceramic teapots and plates, clocks and mirrors for over 20 years.

She is also well-known for large-scale mosaics and wall-hangings that she has created for hospitals, hospices and other public buildings throughout Northern Ireland.

For the exhibition Diane has created a series of large, hand-crafted beetles that are made from clay, wax and briars and are housed in large wooden matchboxes.

These eye-catching pieces demonstrate Diane's individual and playful approach to making:

*"One of my earliest memories is trying to catch beetles in a matchbox",* Diane explains.

*"For this exhibition, using the skills and techniques that I've developed during my long career as a ceramicist, I wanted to recreate the large shiny insects that I remember so vividly from my childhood".*

The exhibition is one of forty events listed in the annual August Craft Month programme that aims to showcase the creativity and talent of Northern Ireland craftspeople.

Speaking at the preview of the exhibition, the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Nelson McCausland, highlighted the importance of a craft events programme, ***This exhibition and other events taking place during August Craft Month offer people an opportunity to experience first-hand the work of our finest craftspeople who are leading the way with their skill, creativity and innovation”.***

***August Craft Month also highlights the importance of developing creative partnerships between artists, designer-makers and their local resources including arts centres, galleries, hotels and other venues in order to showcase local talent”***, the Minister said.

***These kinds of partnerships provide unique opportunities to develop Northern Ireland’s creative and cultural offerings and enable us to take advantage of cultural tourism opportunities and to exploit the craft industry’s international potential”.***

Joe Kelly, Director of Craft NI, hopes the exhibition and other events taking place will capture the public’s imagination:

***“It’s through the support of local venues, and organisations such as The Merchant Hotel, that we’ve been able to bring together such an exciting programme of events in this the third year of August Craft Month”.***

***“Working together in creative partnerships helps us engage Northern Ireland’s cultural and artistic life for the benefit of the tourism industry and the wider economy”, says Joe.***

***We hope that people can get involved in the craft making process, learn more about the innovative skills and creativity of craftspeople and designer-makers and to be inspired by the rich seam of craft talent here in Northern Ireland”***,

The Northern Ireland Contemporary Ceramics exhibition continues until the end of August.

A full guide which lists the exhibition and over 40 other craft events and activities 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**

## **IMAGES**

**Craft NI 001:** Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Nelson McCausland gets a sneak preview of Tyrone-based Potter Diane McCormick's giant shiny beetles at the opening of

Northern Ireland Contemporary Ceramics exhibition in Belfast yesterday. Photography: Arthur Allison, Pacemaker.

**Craft NI 002:** Tyrone-based Potter Diane McCormick shows one of her Passerines made from porcelain paperclay, wire and wood to the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Nelson McCausland and Joe Kelly, Director of Craft NI at the opening of the Northern Ireland Contemporary Ceramics exhibition in Belfast yesterday. Photography: Arthur Allison, Pacemaker.

**Craft NI 003:** Potter Stephen Farnan and Director of Craft NI Joe Kelly put the finishing touches to Stephen's display at the Merchant Hotel in Belfast before the opening of the Northern Ireland Ceramics exhibition yesterday.

### **EDITORS NOTES**

- Northern Ireland Contemporary Ceramics exhibition takes place at Craft NI and The Merchant Hotel from 06 August – 05 September 2009 with a preview from 18:00 on 6 August.
- Joe Kelly, Director of Craft Northern Ireland and craft makers Diane McCormick, Adam Frew, Stephen Farnan and Derek Wilson are available for interviews by telephone at any time. 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](mailto:emma@craftni.org)
- More information on each maker from [www.craftnidirectory.org](http://www.craftnidirectory.org)
- The exhibition is part of August Craft Month 09 - 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](http://www.craftnidirectory.org).
- This year, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.
- 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](mailto:emma@craftni.org), Tel: 0044 (0) 28 9032 3059, Mob: 07708 178667