

ABOUT: 'THIRTY'



'Thirty', an elegant exhibition of craft makers which viewed daily during August 2011 at Flowerfield Arts Centre in Portstewart, celebrated the talents of some twenty craft makers from the island of Ireland and gave hearty support to August Craft Month, Craft NI's annual celebration of making. The exhibition was opened by special guest, Kim Mawhinney, Head of Art at National Museums N.I. and marked the curatorial debut for ceramicist Adam Frew and glass artists Pia Raeymaekers and Catherine Keenan, all once, present and future to be found at Flowerfield Arts Centre. Under their management, an exciting assemblage of young craft makers gathered to produce a stunning show. All together, the exhibition was a bright litany of talent in Flowerfield's Main Gallery, where spacious white



Above / Lesley Frew 'Lime Green and Pink Knotted Neckpiece'

Right / Cara Murphy 'Disperse'

Far Right / Michael McCrory 'Prickly Pear' Teapot

"All together, the exhibition was a bright litany of talent in Flowerfield's Main Gallery, where spacious white and grey walls bathed in pearlescent light created the right ambience to bond together work of excellent design and construction."



Above / Rachel McKnight 'Ruffle Bracelet'

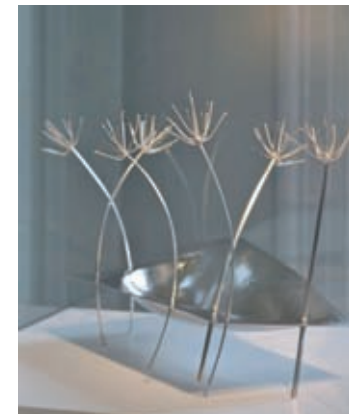
Right / Claire McAllister 'Silver Triangles'



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On the opening night a pottery 'Throw-off' between Adam Frew and Stephen Farnan took place with each potter contributing to a full table setting. Catherine Keenan gave a demonstration of glass lampworking to a receptive audience. Within the gallery a film specially made by Adam recorded some of the craft-makers at work in their studios. The film was shown in the gallery as part of the exhibition, bringing the makers closer to their audiences.

The show's energy was immediately set by Lesley Frew and Rachel McKnight



whose work breaks with traditional concepts of jewellery design. Radical and desirable is a good description of their work. Lesley describes herself as "innovative and contemporary", using recycled plastic bags to make opulent pieces like the 'Lime Green and Pink Knotted Neckpiece'. Rachel has elevated polypropylene and nylon-coated wire from industrial use to construct her luxurious pieces. Her white twisted-ruffle necklace and bracelet were redolent of an Elizabethan ruff; a fabulous statement. The strong designs of cleverly constructed kinetic jewellery in silver and rare woods by Claire McAllister are juxtaposed with the nano-engineered jewellery in paper, silver and seedpods by Sabrina Meyns.



Above / Lotus de Wit 'Bug Tea Infuser'

► The best of silversmiths, Cara Murphy and Michael McCrory produced diverse masterpieces: excellent in form and design. Cara's sculptural dish 'Disperse', is a challenging design defined by function and Michael's 'Prickly Pear' teapot is a strong organic shape that is rich in surface texture. Lotus de Wit's silver 'Bug Tea Infuser' brought both narrative and function to a witty creation: it will make you smile and then it will make you want to own it!



Above top line / Steven Murphy 'Phoenix' / John Piekaar 'Sycamore Low Table' / Alison Fitzgerald 'Round Sciathog'

Above / Penny Shipley Ramalho 'Man on an Island'

Right / Catherine Keenan 'Eye Candy, Turquoise and Orange Striped'

From silver to iron and Steven Murphy's dynamic wrought iron sculpture 'Phoenix', brought bass notes and monumental presence to the show.

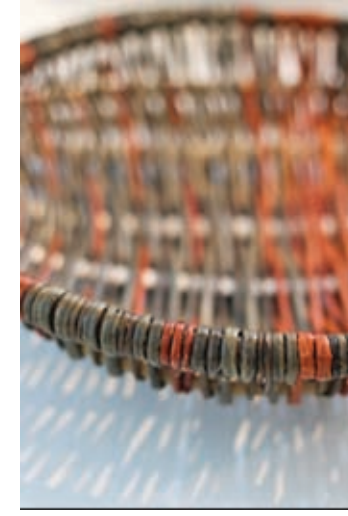
A favourite piece was John Piekaar's pale sycamore circular table inset with a polished granite bowl. The speckled sheen of the polished stone accented the pale sycamore graining but the precision cut of the dovetail joints, whilst crucial to the table's construction, was a masterpiece of surface decoration.

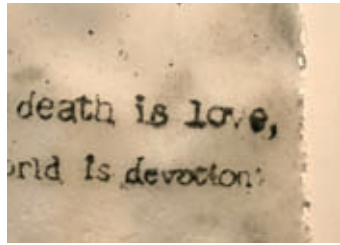
Willow weaver Alison Fitzgerald's functional frame-baskets echoed nature's flowing curves and rhythmic patterns. Her subtle use of natural colours showed empathy for the organic world which furnishes her with materials and inspiration. Meanwhile, Penny Ramalho offered

the viewer a series of bucolic themed woodcut prints.

The exhibition's showcase of 'hot crafts' featured Catherine Keenan's funky 'Eye Candy' sculpture: juicy, colourful layers of blown glass. Catherine's robust exploration of pure pattern and colour is offset by Alison Lowry's ghostly pale pate de verre relief pieces of morphed heirloom fabrics into glass forms. Pia Raeymaeker rounded out the glassmaking trio with a series of beautifully abstract kiln-formed sculptures. Pia draws on marine life for inspiration, her designs are full of gravitas and develop almost organically in the making.

The ceramicists also provided a broad spectrum of concept designs. Adam Frew sets up a dialogue with his pots using what he terms 'expressive ►





Above top line / Alison Lowry 'Set me as a seal on your heart' / Pia Raeymaekers 'Untitled' / Adam Frew 'Weather Pot'

Above / Stephen Farnan 'Tory'

Below / Derek Wilson 'Void'



► physicality'. Responding to instant impulses for decoration his designs are always fresh and utterly unique. Likewise, Stephen Farnan using a simple red clay with slips and sgraffito decoration. He liberates his pots by making them personal with what could be called 'tattoos for pottery'. Derek Wilson's ceramics blended the abstract with the familiar; the two bowls exhibited were deceptive - at once brutal ethnic sculpture and functional minimalist tableware, the



dense engobi slip belied their lightness of being.

Gail Mahon's 'Disperse' series linked together small ceramic components coloured with ivory, blue/black and grey glazes to create a dramatic multiform conceptual installation. Francis Lambe however, produced a more gently static moment with 'Undulating Perforated Form', reflecting the natural world she



Above / Deirdre Hawthorne 'The Shadows'



Above / Francis Lambe 'Undulating Perforated Form'



Above / Gail Mahon 'Continuum' and 'Cluster'

observes around her. Francis' hand-built clay pieces are pinched and coiled to produce their serene shapes. Retaining the natural colour of the clay the forms are textured, carved and recumbent.

Deirdre Hawthorne exhibited her one-off sculptural vessels constructed of paper-thin earthenware and porcelain. Deirdre pushes the clay to its limits and though many pots are lost in the firing process, the pieces which survive are delicate, idiosyncratic and beguiling.

Thirty, an exhibition celebrating thirty years of Flowerfield Arts Centre took place from 6th-31st August in the Art Centre's gallery. ●

To view contributions from the artists, exhibition images and a selection of videos diaries visit:

<http://thirtyexhibition.b>

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Craft NI

