

Fabulous Figures on Display

Beauty is the First Test: a new exhibition exploring the relationship between craft and mathematics



Oscillator R 2 by Suresh Dutt

National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny 16th May – 9th July, 2014

Opening Event: Friday 16th May, 7pm (preceded by Curator's Talk at 6pm)

Curated by Liz Cooper

'The mathematician's patterns, like the painter's or the poet's, must be beautiful; the ideas, like the colours or the words, must fit together in a harmonious way. Beauty is the first test; there is no permanent place in the world for ugly mathematics.' – *A Mathematician's Apology* by British mathematician G.H. Hardy, 1941

Beauty is the First Test sets out to show that art and mathematics are more closely bound together than many perceive and that the enjoyment of one can enhance the understanding of the other.

This exhibition's intention is to unlock and demystify maths by showing unique and stimulating works of art. Mathematical concepts underpin many craft techniques and can be key tools for artistic development. This project also stems from an educational perspective, with debates around arts and sciences being pitted against

each other in school curricula (a situation highlighted by the 2012 Henley Report). A significant link between craft and maths happened in the 19th Century when the weaving industry inspired Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage, early investigators of mechanical counting machines. Their experiments are the direct forerunners of today's computer industry.

In the craft world, the loom is a physical embodiment of mathematical theory - weavers count threads, measure warps, and record repeating patterns on graph paper - while one of the simplest textile applications for Euclidean geometry is the patchwork quilt, a means of reconstructing scraps of fabric to form pleasing patterns and shapes.

The works on display in this exhibition are created from a wide range of materials including wool, silk, bronze, wire, and acrylic; and tools used include needles, bobbins, chisels, saws, pencils, lasers, scissors or simply the human hand.

Curator Liz Cooper said, *"All of the artists here embrace mathematical concepts, both explicitly and implicitly. The resulting artworks are in turns dramatic, subtle, playful, thought-provoking and, dare I say it, sometimes even beautiful."*

Supporters

Beauty is the First Test, curated by Liz Cooper, was developed with the support of the Arts Council England, Crafts Council UK, Pump House Gallery, Wandsworth Arts, Wandsworth Children's Services and The National Centre for Craft & Design. The exhibition has been further supported by Arts Council Northern Ireland, R-Space at the Linen Rooms, The National Centre for Craft & Design, Bilston Craft Gallery, Platform Gallery and the National Craft Gallery.

Images for Beauty is the First Test can be supplied on request.

Education & Outreach Events

EVENTS

Gallery Talk: Friday 16th May, 6pm with curator Liz Cooper

National Drawing Day: Saturday 17th May, 12noon – 4pm
Workshops & Free Drawing for All Ages

Bealtaine Event: Friday 23rd May, 2pm
Crafternoon Tea as part of Bealtaine Festival - celebrating creativity as we age

Family Day: Saturday 14th June, 10.30am and 12noon
Origami & Geometry with Gina Faustino

Late Date: Thursday 26th June, 6.30pm
Spiro-Stitch Textile Workshops

Gallery Tours

Crafternoon Tour at National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny, Saturdays at 3pm
Booking required (early booking recommended)

Media Information:

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Notes for editors

Makers:

Michael Brennand-Wood

Inspired by real fresh flowers in an extended photographic examination ranging from subtle pattern to eye-popping colour.

Suresh Dutt

In sculptor Dutt's hands, glass becomes a way of expressing eye-baffling geometry, using mirrored planes to throw our surroundings back at us.

Janice Gunner

Patchwork quilts have their own long traditions of geometry, but Gunner moves into more abstract territories, laden with history through her deployment of ancient techniques, vintage fabrics and 21st Century technology.

Lesley Halliwell

The Spirograph was a popular child's toy in the 1960s and 70s, the descendant of a mathematical drawing tool. Halliwell uses these drawing tools to create work of great impact. Encountering a massive multi-coloured drawing seven metres long and made only with everyday ballpoint pens can be a dazzling moment.

Lucy McMullen

Belfast-born McMullen has worked with the beautiful but somewhat unlikely medium of Shetland wool and copper thread to brilliantly realise the technically and physically demanding weaving of quadruple cloth.

Janette Matthews

Uses digital technology to make polished designs in silk, maximising the potential of fine layers of laser-cut cloth.

Peter Randall-Page

Maquette for Seed is a small-scale representation of a commission for the Eden Project in Cornwall, a massive sculpture carved of the local granite. His assistant has described how he can sit or lie for the greater part of a day, executing repeated close studies of dried-up leaves or insects with patience and care.

Ann Sutton

Sutton has produced a series of linen banners that both demonstrate and question weaving's very structure.

Laura Thomas

Trademark acrylic artworks build up subtle layers of crisscrossing cotton threads, encased seamlessly in a block of acrylic and shaping weaving into sculpture.

Gail Baxter

The term 'lace' is best summed up as a pattern of constructed holes, random or geometric and constructed in whatever medium is most appropriate. This linen thread work comes from Gail's M.A. in 2009 where she researched the archives at Spitalfields church in London.

Electric Egg

Electric Egg was formed by Neil Baker and Steven Hatton in 2005, who have made a short film exploring the five 'case study' artists in 'Beauty is the First Test'.

David Gates

Carefully-made bespoke furniture, cabinet-work and tables sit alongside rapidly made, seemingly functionless pieces.

Stella Harding

Loving the life and energy in natural materials Harding seeks to re-nature them using paint and pigment, mark making and surface texturing. Recently she's begun to explore the natural mathematics underlying and revealed by traditional basketry techniques.

Carol Quarini

A lacemaker, Quarini creates works that re-reads the domestic, exploring terror and imprisonment. This is exemplified by the work shown here: a delicate lace collar or table mat edging that on closer inspection reads "Get Off Me".

Margo Selby

Margo has rapidly become recognised as a pioneer in contemporary textiles. Her trademark patterns and textures are now sold in many shops and galleries internationally and are fast becoming coveted contemporary classics.

National Craft Gallery

Established by the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland in 2000, the National Craft Gallery is Ireland's leading centre for contemporary craft and design. It exhibits Irish and international designers, artists and makers who push boundaries in their engagement with the making process. Its mission is to inspire appreciation, creativity and innovation and it plays a critical role in building understanding of craft and material culture in Ireland. www.nationalcraftgallery.ie

Design & Crafts Council of Ireland

The Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) is the main champion of the craft industry in Ireland, fostering its growth and commercial strength, communicating its unique identity and stimulating quality design, innovation and competitiveness. DCCol's activities are funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation via Enterprise Ireland. DCCol currently has over 70 member organisations and over 2,850 registered clients. www.dccoi.ie