



## ***Folk Fiction - Translations in Material Cultures*** **opens at the National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny**

An exhibition highlighting material cultures both traditional and contemporary opens at the National Craft Gallery in Kilkenny on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> July and runs until Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2013. **Folk Fiction - Translations in Material Cultures** explores ideas around craft and social values, landscape and invented traditions.

This multi-media exhibition by visual artist Gareth Kennedy, features film, photographs and objects. With the support of the Arts Council, it has previously toured to the National Museum of Ireland – Country Life in Mayo, and Kerry County Museum.

Folk Fiction will display work created over the past two years with the residents of Gneeveguilla, Co. Kerry; Islanders from Inís Óírr, on the Aran Islands; and a new project created during the exhibition's previous run in Turlough Park, Mayo at the National Museum of Ireland – Country Life.

The exhibition's themes and ideas are explored in **three short films**, shot on super8 film in Inís Óírr, Gneeveguilla and at the National Museum of Ireland – Country Life in Mayo. Key to these works was the use of IKEA furniture which was brought to each locale where it was used as raw material by locally sourced tradesmen and craftsmen to generate new socio-economic folk forms and functions.

The three short films include:

- **IKEA Lobster Pots** (12 mins) which charts the transformation of an IKEA lampshade handmade by workers in Vietnam into a functioning lobster pot by basket weavers on Inís Óírr.
- **IKEA Butter Churn for Gneeveguilla** (32 mins) which records how two wooden tables from IKEA were crafted into a butter churn and a firkin by local craftsmen and celebrates the wealth of local lore surrounding butter and its social, cultural and economic history.
- **The Great Wheel of Mayo** (14 mins) which documents a collaborative project in which a large IKEA table was used to create a replica Great Spinning Wheel of Mayo and was tested with wool shorn from an IKEA sheepskin rug.

These three bodies of work including the films, photographs and objects will be presented together at the

National Craft Gallery.

A **special gallery talk** to accompany the exhibition takes place on **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July at 6.30pm**. Documentary filmmaker and photographer David Shaw-Smith and his wife Sally created the iconic 'Hands' documentary series for RTÉ in the 1970s and 1980s which has been referenced by Gareth Kennedy in his work. In an informal gallery talk both David and Gareth will discuss their processes and experiences of documenting craft traditions, and Gareth will outline an upcoming residency with Commonage in Callan, Co Kilkenny.

Folk Fiction - Translations in Material Cultures is funded by an Arts Council Touring and Dissemination Award.

**Ends**

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**About the films:**

The film ***IKEA Lobster Pots*** (12 min) charts the purchase, in Dublin, of an IKEA lampshade which was handmade by workers in Vietnam for global distribution by the Swedish multinational. The lamp was brought to Inís Oírr where it was rewoven by Island caoladoirí (basket weavers) into a lobster pot in a local style. The pot was successfully tested in the cold waters of the Atlantic by an Island fisherman.

***IKEA Butter Churn for Gneeveguilla*** (32 min) saw the creation of a new "custom" for Gneeveguilla, Co. Kerry, as a Kerry County Council public art commission for the village. In July 2011, two wooden tables were purchased in IKEA. These were brought to the village, where they were crafted into a butter churn and a firkin by local craftsmen. The wealth of local lore surrounding butter and its social, cultural and economic history was celebrated. Every inhabitant of Gneeveguilla was invited to spin the churn to help produce butter which was then packed into the firkin and paraded down the only street in the village. It was then brought to the local bog where it was buried to become Bog Butter.

***The Great Wheel of Mayo*** (14 min) documents a collaborative project between Castlebar Mens Shed, Mayo Arts Squad and Willie Creighton of Craobh Eo Woodturners. Shot on location at the National Museum in Turlough Park, the combined group gathered around a large IKEA table where they were introduced to material relating to the Swedish Ethnographic missions to Ireland from the 1930s. The group then set out to

create a replica Great Spinning Wheel of Mayo from this table. The final article being tested with wool shorn from an IKEA sheepskin rug.

### **About Gareth Kennedy**

Gareth Kennedy's work is invested in a socially engaged practice which addresses specific environmental, social, aesthetic and economic concerns within located contexts. Over the last two years, Kennedy has been developing an anthropological aesthetic to generate 'folk fictions'. These works draw on the social, cultural and economic history of a people and a place to craft work that is a meaningful and contemporary composite of these histories. This method has entailed working with such diverse professionals as archaeologists, anthropologists, film archivists, museum directors, folklorists and scientists as well as festival organizers, craftspeople, fishermen park rangers and broad based publics. He envisages contemporary art as a unique mode of generating meaningful new associations within contexts as well as producing new knowledge through its processes.

Kennedy has produced and shown work both nationally and internationally. His practice to date includes public art work, educational projects, exhibitions, residencies and collaborations. In 2009, he co-represented Ireland at the 53<sup>rd</sup> *Venice Biennale* along with artist Sarah Browne. Throughout 2011 and 2012 Kennedy worked on a significant body of new work investigating landscape, craft and social values against the backdrop of the recent arrival of the IKEA global phenomenon in Ireland. This work is now on a national tour to ethnological and craft museums of Ireland in 2013. Earlier in 2013 Kennedy created a public projects in Saint Petersburg, Russia, as part of *Critical Mass 2013*. In August 2013, on the invitation of Commonage, he will lead a workshop as part of *Workhouse Assembly* in Callan, Co. Kilkenny.

Kennedy also works collaboratively with artist Sarah Browne as Kennedy Browne.

For further information see: [www.gkennedy.info](http://www.gkennedy.info) / [www.kennedybrowne.com](http://www.kennedybrowne.com) / [www.commonagecallan.com](http://www.commonagecallan.com)

### **About the National Craft Gallery:**

- We are Ireland's leading centre for contemporary craft and design.
- We play a critical role in building understanding of craft and material culture.
- We exhibit Irish and international designers, artists and makers who push boundaries in their engagement with the making process.
- We inspire appreciation, creativity and innovation through our exhibition and education programme, and along with our touring programme we reach an audience of over 100,000 people annually.

For further information, please visit [www.nationalcraftgallery.ie](http://www.nationalcraftgallery.ie)

**About the Crafts Council of Ireland:**

The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCol), which is headquartered in Kilkenny, 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. CCol's activities are funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation via Enterprise Ireland. CCol currently has over 75 member organisations and over 2,700 registered clients. For further information, please visit [www.ccol.ie](http://www.ccol.ie)