

Graduate Jewellery Exhibition opens at the National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny

- **90% employment rate for former graduates**

A former Montessori teacher from Dun Laoghaire who followed her dream to become a jeweller has been named Student of the Course 2011 of the prestigious Crafts Council of Ireland Jewellery & Goldsmithing Course.

Sorcha O’Horain is one of 12 course graduates whose exquisite pieces of handcrafted jewellery made from gold, silver and precious stones feature in an exhibition which opened today (Friday 15th July) in the National Craft Gallery in Kilkenny.

The exhibition – officially opened by **Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan TD** - features the work of 12 graduates of the renowned Jewellery & Goldsmithing Course, many who have made dramatic career changes to become jewellery makers.

The Graduate Exhibition runs for two weeks only. The twelve students emerging from the internationally-renowned, intensive, two-year full time programme have honed their expertise and craft with some of Ireland’s and Europe's most highly skilled silversmiths and goldsmiths.

The graduates feature a former archaeologist, a chef, a Montessori teacher and a court clerk. The group also includes a young woman from Estonia who moved to Blanchardstown in Dublin with her mother nine years ago. (Bios on the 12 graduates at the end of the release)

Unique to the Kilkenny programme is the fact that students work solely in precious metals and have been encouraged to push boundaries in technique and innovative designs. **The course has a 90 per cent employment rate.**

The beautiful creations on display at the exhibition include:

- An exquisite collection of twelve miniature solid silver teapots showcasing each student's technical ability and individual design aesthetics. They range from minimalist geometric hollow forms to a decorative teapot entitled "T Time" which has a clock movement house within it
- Hinged bracelets with handmade box catches, which had to be completed to a strict deadline for exams.
- Twelve brooches produced using advanced fine jewellery techniques. Each piece drew its inspiration from 20th Century paintings by well-known artists such as Stanley Spencer, Wassily Kandinsky, Barbara Hepworth and others.
- Twelve 18 carat gold ring sets with a single, coloured gemstone.

Sorcha O'Horain was named as Student of the Course 2011 at the opening of the exhibition. Previously she trained and worked as a Montessori teacher, and was based in the U.S for 12 years.

The Crafts Council of Ireland CEO prize was awarded to **Natasha Rollinson** from Holywood, Co, Down, while the Crafts Council of Ireland Chairman's Purchase went to **Christina Keogh** from Dublin.

Opening the exhibition, **Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan TD**, congratulated the 12 students and award winners on completing the unique programme designed to equip them with the practical skills needed to develop careers in the jewellery industry in Ireland and internationally. "I note that this course is the only one of its kind in Ireland and is comparable to leading Goldsmithing courses in Europe. The combination of traditional skills, craftsmanship and innovative thinking in design are key to commercial success. The unique aspect of the course is the development of skills in areas that have significant practical application to the jewellery industry."

Minister Hogan said it was encouraging to note in the current climate the course has a high employment success rate, with 90% of former graduates getting jobs in this area.

Karen Hennessy, Chief Executive of the Crafts Council of Ireland, said the exhibition is a culmination of an intensive two-year programme resulting in a high standard of craftsmanship.

"The calibre of work from the graduates of the programme and its previous record of 90% employment rate highlights the importance of craft at both an aesthetic and economic level. Last month in Dublin at our public conference on craft, Edna dos Santos-Duisenberg from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development told attendees that trade in products of creativity continued to register an annual

average growth of 14 per cent; this is encouraging to all involved in the craft sector, from students to practitioners, especially in celebrating this year 2011 as Year of Craft”.

Eimear Conyard, Jewellery & Goldsmithing Course Manager/Tutor, said the course was very challenging, and disciplined students into working to deadlines and commission budgets, a critical skill required in the industry:

“Our students work solely with precious metals as we aim to mimic the traditional jewellery and goldsmithing practices within the industry. The Jewellery & Goldsmithing Course requires passion and commitment. It’s not for the faint-hearted.”

Throughout the intensive, two-year programme students worked directly with leading Irish and European silversmiths and goldsmiths. The work placements undertaken in the second year gave students a unique insight into practices at the top end of their chosen profession.

Several of this year’s graduates are about to set up their own businesses while others will progress to further training or gain further experience working with jewellers in Ireland and abroad.

Over 70 applications were received from across Europe for the forthcoming programme, which runs from 2011 until 2013. The lucky dozen have already been offered their places on the programme which resumes in September 2011.

The Graduate Exhibition runs at the National Craft Gallery, Castle Yard, Kilkenny, July 15 – 28. Opening times: Tuesday - Saturday: 10am - 5.30pm, Sunday: 11am - 5.30pm. Admission is free.

For further details visit www.nationalcraftgallery.ie

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This year’s graduates include:

Aaron O’Sullivan

Aaron O’Sullivan from Naas, County Kildare started work with Kneisel Jewellers in Waterford when he left school. He then went on to complete the FAS Jewellery Manufacturing Course in Baldoyle, a programme which included a work placement with Alan Ardiffe Jewellery. He knew then where his future lay.

The talented artist’s work was selected last year for the RDS National Crafts Competition and Aaron later completed his work experience placement with Theo Fennell in London. He now goes on to study Design for Industry at the Birmingham City University School of Jewellery, starting in September.

Anne-Marie Killeen

Anne-Marie Killeen from Monard, just outside Tipperary town graduated from UCC with a BA Honours Degree in Languages & Cultural Studies, specialising in French and Spanish. She always had a creative flare and went on to do a two year Jewellery & Art Metalcraft programme at St John's College in Cork before being accepted to the Crafts Council of Ireland course.

She did her work placement with Rory Donohoe in Clonmel, County Tipperary which was a huge learning experience. She now wants to gain experience with a goldsmith on a part-time basis with the intention of setting up her own business. She has a keen interest in alternative materials and would enjoy working more with plastics and resin, she says.

Ariane Tobin

Ariane Tobin from Kellistown in Carlow comes from a family of entrepreneurs and self-employed business people. She graduated from the National College of Art and Design in 2002 with a 1st Class Honours Degree in Metals and worked as a craft buyer for a number of years with the Meadows and Byrne group before returning home to Carlow and working as a buyer and sales manager with Always Natural, her family business.

Ariane recently travelled to San Francisco where she completed her work placement in two different workshops. She's thoroughly enjoyed the two year programme, its challenges and the new opportunities it gave her and now looks forward to setting up in her new venture in Carlow.

Brian Miller

California-born Brian Miller has won scholarships and service awards, made Deans' lists and scooped medals for his culinary genius all his life. But the passionate chef has abandoned the kitchen for a workshop and has achieved his lifelong ambition of becoming a professional jeweller.

Brian has previously been shortlisted for a Crafts Council of Ireland Future Maker award and completed a work placement with renowned Master Goldsmith Rudolf Heltzel and his son, Christopher. He also worked with JMK Goldsmiths in Kilkenny over the last two years. He hopes to now set up his own studio in Ireland and specialise in traditional jewellery techniques to create contemporary jewellery.

Christina Keogh

Blackrock-born Christina Keogh now lives in Donnybrook and is an Archaeology and Art History graduate of University College Dublin. She worked as an archaeologist for four years and later in event management before swapping it all for two years in Kilkenny working with precious metals and crafting magnificent jewellery as part of the Crafts Council of Ireland Jewellery & Goldsmithing Skills & Design Course.

Christina recently completed a work placement with jewelers Platinum Inc in Toronto, who specialize in fine diamond and platinum jewellery. Christina now hopes to gain further jewellery experience both in Ireland and France, with a view to setting up her own business.

Gayle Anderson

Gayle Anderson from Killiney has already won two awards at last year's RDS National Crafts Competition and worked on placement with James Newman Jewellery in Birmingham and completed a Diamond Grading Practical Diploma from the Gemmological Association of Great Britain.

The gifted jeweller came to the two year Crafts Council of Ireland programme with a 1st Class Honours Degree in Fine Art from the Dublin Institute of Technology and having worked with her cousin, a jeweller who specialises in pearls.

She now goes on to study design for Industry at Birmingham City University School of Jewellery, starting in September. There she will specialize in the use of new technologies and design in the jewellery industry.

Lena Gratsova

Lena Gratsova moved from Estonia to Ireland with her mother nine years ago, setting up home in Blanchardstown. Her aunt is a jeweller and her uncle an artist but it wasn't until she started work in a bead shop in Dublin that she truly discovered her passion for jewellery.

After three years working in a beads shop, she did a FAS Jewellery Manufacturing Course in 2009 and continued her traineeship at Alan Ardiffe's studio. She visited Kilkenny and fell in love with the city, applied for the Crafts Council of Ireland Jewellery & Goldsmithing Skills & Design course and the rest is history.

Lena received the diamond Grading Practical Diploma from the Gemmological Association of Great Britain in 2010 and hopes to increase her skills in the industry with an aim to setting up her own business.

Natasha Rollinson

Natasha Rollinson from Holywood always loved making things with her hands. She graduated with a 1st Class Honours Degree in Fine & Applied Art in 2008 from the University of Ulster and went on to develop and exhibit her award-winning jewellery through a residency at the Bishopsland Workshops in the UK.

The talented maker's work was honoured and recognised earlier this year when she was awarded a Future Makers Grant from the Crafts Council of Ireland. Natasha's work was also chosen to highlight the very best in fresh, edgy design talent from Northern Ireland in the "West Coast Cooler Citra Showcase, and exhibition housed in Urban Outfitters, Victoria Square, Belfast in June.

Her plan now is to get employment; work at the bench with a goldsmith and eventually work under her own name. She says she would love to be part of a shared studio and finds the support and teamwork when working with others incredible.

Niamh Mulligan

Niamh Mulligan from Killare, Mullingar scooped a prestigious award earlier last year when she received the Crafts Council of Ireland Future Makers Student Award for 2010. Niamh previously graduated with honours from the National College of Art and Design, specialising in metals. Her work has been exhibited in galleries throughout the country, most recently at Rua Red in Dublin as part of the "Ornament" exhibition of brooches.

She recently spent a month at the Birmingham City University School of Jewellery,

gaining experience teaching at 3rd level.

Niamh hopes to travel to Australia to gain more experience of working within a professional goldsmithing workshop. She plans to return to Ireland to work as a self-employed jewellery designer/maker.

Sarajane Lynch

Clontarf-born Sarajane Lynch is a Fashion Design graduate of the Limerick School of Art & Design. She previously worked as a civil court clerk in New Zealand and Commonwealth Games organiser in Australia before returning home and completing the highly-regarded FÁS Jewellery Manufacturing Course in 2008. She went on to work with David Conway Jewellers and Alan Ardiffe Jewellers in Dublin but always wanted to learn more.

Her long-term goal is to set up my own jewellery workshop in Ireland. She's interested in combining precious metals, gemstones and alternative materials. She wants to gain further experience in jewellery workshops abroad, possibly in Canada and Iceland, to perfect the skills she has learned in the last two years.

Sorcha O'Horain

Dun Laoghaire-born Sorcha O'Horain's love of craft was fostered from an early age by her mother who was a talented needleworker and knitter. While she trained and worked as a Montessori teacher, working in the U.S for 12 years, she enjoyed the arts and crafts element of her work most.

Her love of metals began with jewellery courses at the National College of Art and Design and she left teaching to do the FÁS Jewellery Manufacturing Course, working with Geraldine Murphy of Saba Jewellery as part of that course.

She's gained valuable experience on work placement with Master Goldsmith Rudolf Heltzel and her work was among the pieces displayed at the RDS National Crafts Competition exhibition last year.

She now moves to Sligo to get further training within the industry with a view to being a self-employed designer/maker.

Yvonne Ross

Yvonne Ross from Grangecon near Baltinglass in Wicklow graduated from the Dublin Institute of Technology in 2004 with a Degree in Fine Art. She travelled for a while before returning home and setting up her own jewellery business operating from The Loft Market in Powerscourt Townhouse.

In conjunction with her jewellery studies, Yvonne has worked part-time with JMK Goldsmiths in Kilkenny and did a work placement with Da Capo Goldsmiths in Dublin. She has also successfully completed her Diamond Grading Practical Diploma and was one of the Future Makers 2011 grant recipients which allowed her pursue further gemmological studies in the UK.

Yvonne plans to re-launch her business after gaining more practical experience in the industry.