

Crafts Council of Ireland National Craft Gallery Programming Policy

Summary

The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCol) National Craft Gallery (NCG) Programming Policy takes its direction from the CCol Strategic Objectives:

CCol Strategic Objectives 2013 - 2015

- Developing the market for Irish craft
- Developing the knowledge and skills of craft makers
- Raising awareness, understanding and appreciation of Irish craft
- Supporting membership organisations in the development of the crafts sector
- Developing the innovation, enterprise and design capability of the crafts sector

About the National Craft Gallery:

Established by the Crafts Council of Ireland in December 2000, the National Craft Gallery is Ireland's leading centre for contemporary craft and design. It plays a critical role in building understanding of material culture and of craft as a vehicle for economic growth. It exhibits Irish and international designers, artists and makers who push boundaries in their engagement with the making process. It inspires appreciation, creativity and innovation through its exhibition and education programmes, reaching an audience of over 120,000 annually.

The aims of the National Craft Gallery:

- To be an integrated and important element of the CCol strategy
- To develop the understanding and appreciation of craft as a vehicle for enterprise, innovation, creativity and cultural identity
- To contribute to the ongoing reputational development of Irish craft and its critical and commercial success
- To develop the National Craft Gallery as a critically-recognised authority on contemporary material culture
- To create opportunities for the public to meaningfully engage with craft in a way that develops audiences and changes mindsets

National Craft Gallery management:

- The National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator is responsible for devising the strategic direction of the gallery's exhibition, touring, and marketing programmes; developing awareness, access and footfall; and day to day management of the venue and programmes.
- The National Craft Gallery budget is proposed by National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator and agreed by the CCol executive and board.

- The strategic aims of the exhibition programme are agreed at a top level every three years in line with the CCol strategy. The annual objectives are set each year on a rolling basis after evaluation of previous years exhibition performances versus objectives.
- The annual National Craft Gallery exhibition programme is developed by the National Craft Gallery Programme Committee led by the National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator and comprised of suitably qualified internal and external people
- The National Craft Gallery Education and Outreach Programme is managed by the Education and Innovation Manager and implemented by the Education and Outreach Officer.

National Craft Gallery activities:

The National Craft Gallery's three main areas of activity comprise the Exhibition Programme, the Touring Programme and the Education and Outreach Programme. The National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator also manages the External Exhibition Fund.

1. National Craft Gallery Exhibition Programme

The National Craft Gallery programme is developed from a number of sources:

1. Internally-devised exhibitions developed in response to specific programmes, objectives or themes
2. Commissioned or existing exhibitions of exceptional quality from Ireland or abroad
3. External Exhibitions Fund applications
4. Proposals submitted by external individuals or groups
5. The two CCol schools (jewellery and ceramics), whose graduate exhibitions are automatically included in the National Craft Gallery Programme.

External Proposals

- Submissions can be made at any time for consideration.
- They must clearly and compellingly demonstrate their fit to the programming criteria below using a written statement and visuals.
- All submissions will be acknowledged and presented at the subsequent Programme Committee meeting, and notified of their response.
- Dates of the Programme Committee meetings are subject to individual availability; applicants will be notified of the next date on receipt of their exhibition submission.
- This is not an open call or competitive/scored process. Programming is developed with very clear aims and criteria in a way that makes best use of CCol resources.

National Craft Gallery Programming criteria:

- **Exceptional** quality and a focused curatorial theme and direction
- Engagement with, or critical response to, contemporary craft issues
- Furthering or developing understanding of a specific area or idea through original research and critical investigation
- Exploration and development of the creative and technical processes of craft in a way that substantially adds to knowledge and understanding
- The originality of the idea

Other programming criteria include:

- A fit with CCol's strategic objectives
- A fit with National Craft Gallery's aims
- A fit with CCol Education and Outreach aims
- Relationship to overall programme and coverage of disciplines
- Suitability of exhibition to tour
- Cost and logistics of putting on the exhibition
- Potential for partnership building
- Potential for audience development

Programming criteria are based on international best practice in terms of developing a venue of international standing.

National Craft Gallery Programme Committee:

Programming decisions are made on an annual basis by a Programme Committee led by the National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator, comprised of suitably qualified CCol staff, which may include:

- Head of Market Development
- Education and Innovation Manager
- Head of Innovation and Development

And external individuals with acknowledged expertise in curation/exhibition/cultural venue management at an appropriate level.

- The Programme Committee will meet once a year to consider and approve annual programming.
- The Programme Committees' names and biographies will be published on an annual basis on the National Craft Gallery website.

- The planning horizon will be 18 – 24 months.
- In the event of unforeseen changes to programming, the National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator will develop suitable alternative programming in line with the above criteria.

2. National Craft Gallery Touring Programme

The National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator is responsible for developing and managing this programme. The aim is to encourage other institutions and venues to include craft exhibitions in their programmes, and to increase opportunities for the public to engage with contemporary craft.

Programming criteria:

- Touring/storage costs
- Partnership development
- Audience development

3. The National Craft Gallery Education and Outreach Programme

An Education and Outreach Policy will be developed to underpin the important role that education plays in the CCol exhibition strands.

4. The External Exhibitions Fund

The National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator manages the External Exhibitions Fund, and exhibitions proposed for this fund are automatically considered for the National Craft Gallery programme.

This fund aims to encourage high-quality, independent exhibitions run by individuals, organisations or groups including CCol Guilds, Associations, Networks & Societies (GANS).

External Exhibition Fund aims:

- To stimulate and reward the development of professional exhibition skills in makers and curators of Irish craft
- To develop commercial opportunities for Irish makers
- To encourage further exhibition of craft and development of venues
- To increase understanding and awareness of craft and design
- To develop markets with international galleries and collectors
- To enhance the reputation of Irish craft and design abroad
- To develop the professional skills of makers and curators of craft

External Exhibition Fund Selection:

Selection for funding will be through an annual Open Call, by a panel led by the National Craft Gallery Manager and Curator and comprised of suitably qualified CCol staff, which may include:

- Head of Market Development
- Education and Innovation Manager
- Head of Innovation and Development Programmes

Alongside two suitably qualified external selectors.

External Exhibition Fund Timeline:

- July - announcement of Open Call
- July - Application Forms available
- August - Deadline for applications
- September - Announcement of funding decisions
- (Note – the call for applications in any year will be to fund exhibitions happening in the following year. This is to allow adequate planning time for applicants.)

Applications:

- The Open Call will be publicised through the CCol website and ezine, and the Visual Arts Ireland's e-bulletin.
- Application forms will be available online and in hard copy.
- We recommend reading the CCol publication "*Exposing Craft - A practical guide to organising and running craft exhibitions*", available as an online publication on the CCol website, before applying.
- All applications will be scored and their scores and panel comments will be recorded.
- Decisions will be made and communicated within 10 weeks of the application deadline.
- Unsuccessful applicants can request their individual scores and panel comments in written format, but please note that panel decisions are final.
- Successful applicants will be required to submit a report on their project.

All applications **must**:

- Demonstrate developmental benefit to the makers involved
- Have clearly-defined and measurable goals

- Have a realistic and achievable timeline
- Have a realistic budget, including other sources of funding
- Outline how success will be measured

In addition, they will be assessed and scored on the following:

- Impact on the sector
- Quality of making
- Quality and development of ideas/concept
- Integrity/consistency of voice

How do we define quality?

A clear definition of quality is essential to underpin the CCol's selection procedures. The understanding of 'quality' can appear subjective, unless clearly defined; by 'quality' we mean a high measure of excellence, in the following three areas:

idea or concept behind the work

practice - the physical execution and impact of the work

development - the contribution the work makes to the development of the maker, the discipline or wider cultural understanding.

Excellence will be relative to the specific arena that a maker's work aspires to, and will be articulated and measured against best practice in a transparent manner by the **consensus of suitably qualified** authorities in that arena. By 'suitably qualified', we mean individuals whose professional practice clearly and unarguably demonstrates specific expertise in academic, curatorial and/or making of craft at a level appropriate to the area being judged.