

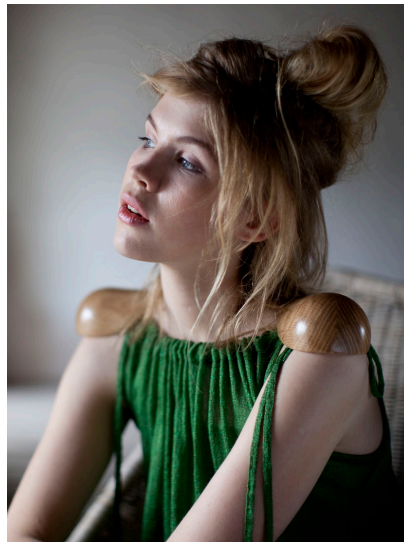
## Second Skin

An exhibition exploring the potential of  
living, designing and producing clothing and textiles in Ireland

Jennifer Rothwell | Joanne Hynes |  
NATALIEBCOLEMAN | Lennon Courtney

*“As a child, almost every mother I knew could knit at the speed of light, owned a sewing machine, regularly made, fixed, adapted or customised clothes...Today we have become used to fast fashion. It is cheap, new and disposable. We buy without thinking. A top for €19.99, a dress for €59.99, the quick win, the instant gratification, the ‘bargain’ has become our norm.”*

**Second Skin curator Louise Allen**



*Lennon Courtney*

**National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny**  
**Friday 7 November 2014 – Sunday 25 January 2015**  
**Curated by Louise Allen**

**Second Skin** commissioned four of Ireland’s leading fashion labels - *Jennifer Rothwell*, *Joanne Hynes*, *NATALIEBCOLEMAN* and *Lennon Courtney* - to design, source and produce a garment or range of clothing on the island of Ireland and to document the opportunities and challenges which the process presented. The commission may sound like a simple proposition, but the reality of sourcing and making clothing in Ireland is not straightforward. Their journey, which brings to life their inspiration and process through to the finished pieces, forms the basis of **Second Skin** which opens at the National Craft Gallery in Kilkenny on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

The featured designers were encouraged to work collaboratively and a number of partnerships were forged with producers Fisherman Out of Ireland and Magee Weaving and with the Northwest Regional College in the North West; with DMS Knitwear Solutions in the Mid East and with the National College of Art and Design in Dublin. Several individual designers, pattern cutters, machinists and suppliers were also involved, resulting in works that fuse skills, creativity and process.

**Joanne Hynes'** vibrant knitted capes in partnership with Fisherman Out of Ireland and 3D Dave set certain parameters around what was feasible from a production point of view. *'I was more than happy to work in this manner,'* says Hynes. *'The knit machines and the 3D printer allowed a certain look and feel, so we worked within these parameters for all four pieces. From a production viewpoint, the limitations became the guide to my designs.'*

**Jennifer Rothwell**, who for many years has designed and produced her collections in Ireland, collaborated extensively utilising the expertise of Magee Weaving Donegal, three textile designers, pattern cutters and the digital print facility at the Northwest Regional College to create a stunning range inspired by Harry Clarke's iconic stained glass windows and artwork. In Jennifer's experience, finding skilled labour can be a challenge. *'The skill of technical sewing, cutting and manufacturing training in Ireland needs to be reignited once again,'* she says. *'We need to promote and support manufacturing on the island of Ireland, to help maintain and create new employment growth in this sector.'*

In many cases, collaboration was the only way to produce required elements and for certain processes there was no commercially viable option but to outsource abroad. This was the case for **NATALIEBCOLEMAN**, whose work is inspired by the characters from Enid Blyton's "The Magic Faraway Tree". *'When digital printing is involved, it is not possible to do it in Ireland,'* explains Coleman. *'There is no facility available here. This raises production costs especially if dependent on Euro against Sterling variables and you need to factor in courier fees with each delivery. Costs are high for small runs. Cheaper printing is dependent on minimum orders of 300 metres.'*

In developing their signature piece, **Lennon Courtney** teamed up with DMS Knitwear Solutions, designer Andrew Burdock and wood turner Michael Fay to create unique evening wear with wood turned shoulder pads. The nature of the collaborations and proximity of producers was a huge asset according to Sonya Lennon. *'It's a very different experience, picking up the phone to someone down the road than it is being a faceless enquiry in a big facility,'* she says.

For all of the designers there were common challenges - the lack of a skilled labour force, in particular highly skilled seamstresses and pattern cutters, makes it difficult and costly to prototype, sample and produce here in Ireland. Labour costs are significantly higher than in other EU countries. The range of fabrics and yarns produced in Ireland is limited, resulting in sourcing of materials from other countries. However, there are also many benefits to producing in Ireland. These include reduced lead times, quality control and significant savings on transport which can offset much of the costs.

*'Many of the challenges to manufacturing and production in terms of cost competitiveness and skills are mirrored in high earning European countries,'* says Louise Allen, curator of Second Skin. *'Other countries campaign to bring manufacturing back, recognising the value of production in terms of job creation and the development of local economies. In Ireland much can be done to redevelop the skills base that will allow a level of production to re-emerge.'*

The work of Irish organisations such as Re-dress, the Council of Irish Fashion Designers and the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland plays a pivotal role in raising awareness and offering a level of support to Ireland's highly talented fashion designers who have gained, or are seeking to gain, international recognition and who wish to work, live and produce in Ireland. **Second Skin** aims to create a dialogue and to increase awareness around the potential of living, designing and producing clothing and textiles in Ireland in order to encourage investment in the sector and in the fashion industry. The exhibition runs at the National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny from 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

**Event in partnership with Kilkenomics:****[Second Skin, the economics of fashion](#)**

Saturday 8 November 2014 from 4:15pm - 5:30pm

€15/€13 at Cleere's, 28 Parliament Street, Kilkenny,

The global fashion industry is one of the biggest industries and employers in developing countries. It consumes an unimaginable and unsustainable amount of natural resources on an annual basis. It is addictive, sexy and subject to enormous advertising spending. Fashion gets into heads as well as into pockets, but do ethics have a place in fashion economics? Is it ultimately the symbol of the gap between the rich and poor or is it a force for good? For everyone, not just fashionistas. Contributors: Joanne Hynes, Jennifer Rothwell, Margot Wasz, Eleanor Tiernan and Peter Antoniono. [www.kilkenomics.com](http://www.kilkenomics.com)

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**NOTES FOR EDITORS:****About the Designers**

[www.nataliecoleman.com](http://www.nataliecoleman.com)

[www.lennoncourtney.com](http://www.lennoncourtney.com)

[www.jrothwell.net](http://www.jrothwell.net)

[www.joannehynes.com](http://www.joannehynes.com)

**About the Curator**

Louise is Head of Innovation & Development Programmes at the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland and Head of International Programmes for Irish Design 2015. She has worked in a range of contemporary arts, education and innovation fields. She holds a joint honours degree in Art History and Fine Art Print from the National College of Art and Design and a postgraduate diploma in European Cultural Project Management. [www.irishdesign2015.ie](http://www.irishdesign2015.ie)

**About the 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](http://www.nationalcraftgallery.ie)

**About the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland**

The Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) is the main champion of the design and 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 75 member organisations and over 2,800 registered clients. In collaboration with partner organisations, DCCol is convening **Irish Design 2015** (ID2015) on behalf of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Enterprise Ireland. Ambitious, wide-reaching and innovative, ID2015 is a year-long programme exploring, promoting and celebrating Irish design through signature events on the island of Ireland as well as in prestigious partner venues in international capitals of design and commerce. Second Skin is one of the core touring exhibitions that will highlight the calibre of Irish design across a broad range of disciplines. [www.dccoi.ie](http://www.dccoi.ie)