

## Ceramics Graduate Exhibition Opens At The National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny

23rd July 2012

Through the Mill showcases ceramic work by emerging craftspeople.

An exhibition of work by the 12 graduates of the Crafts Council of Ireland's renowned Ceramics Skills and Design Course has officially opened at the National Craft Gallery in Kilkenny.

**Through the Mill** runs until July 31st and offers visitors to the gallery an opportunity to admire the craftsmanship and invest in pieces by these emerging ceramicists. The display of final project work in each graduate's signature style reflects their individual technical ability and design aesthetic.

The exhibition covers a wide variety of ideas and techniques and includes:

- vessels incorporating sawdust, seaweed and horsehair, used to achieve surfaces of great subtlety and beauty
- functional tableware in vibrant colours inspired by traditional country slipware or decorated with ceramic transfers
- sculptural forms in subtle hues or delicate, paper-thin porcelain
- earthenware tiles and platters and robust stoneware pots
- a set of 12 teapots that were produced for one of the course's numerous practical projects.

The Ceramics Skills & Design Course, which is based at Island Mill in Thomastown, County Kilkenny, is designed to equip graduates with the practical skills to develop careers in the ceramics industry. The two-year, intensive programme sets out to give the students a common set of skills, knowledge and understanding from which they develop their own individual work and progress their technical competence.

Throughout the two-year programme, students work directly with established potters in Ireland and abroad. The work placements undertaken in the second year give students an invaluable insight into the day-to-day running of a professional pottery, while allowing them to hone their skills and expertise.

**Karen Hennessy, Chief Executive of the Crafts Council of Ireland**, said the exhibition is the culmination of two years of hard work, resulting in a very high standard of craftsmanship: *"Commencing a successful career in the craft sector requires both skill and business acumen, and our course is designed to equip students with both. Having developed their individual creativity through dynamic work practice and the technical knowledge and skills required to support quality*



*and innovation in design and production, these graduates now have the confidence and competence to enter the ceramics industry. Their experience over the last two years will stand to each graduate as they establish themselves as makers and we look forward to continuing to support them through the Crafts Council of Ireland programmes. I wish them every success in the future."*

Through the Mill was officially launched by Mary Gallagher, collector and owner of the Blue Egg Gallery, Wexford, who hosted an exhibition of the students' work during their second year.

**Martha Williamson** was named **Student of the Year 2012** at the opening of Through the Mill. Martha is from Spiddal in County Galway and her interest in ceramics started when she worked at the Sliding Rock Pottery in Spiddal, where she will now continue her ceramic practice.

The Crafts Council of Ireland **Chief Executive Prize** was awarded to **Andrew Whitelaw** from Killaloe, County Clare, while the Crafts Council of Ireland Chairman's Purchase went to Gideon Cumming, a native of the UK for his pair of stoneware roundels.

The graduates come from diverse backgrounds and include a former civil engineer, a science and biology graduate from Poland, a breeder and trainer of horses, and a former health service employee. Many of them will progress to further training or will travel to gain additional experience abroad while others plan to work with leading potters in Ireland.

**The Ceramics Skills and Design Course Manager, Gus Mabelson**, said the two-year programme is challenging but through their attitude, effort and dedication, the graduates have produced some outstanding work: *"From when they first joined the course, the students were a very pro-active group, developing and growing individually and collectively. Each one has developed their own unique way of working, using their talent and skills to produce pieces of real quality. These graduates should feel very proud of what they have achieved. They have set the bar very high for the next group."*

**John Tynan, Head of Education, Training and Development at the Crafts Council of Ireland**, said the course has established an excellent reputation both nationally and internationally: *"This course promotes self-directed learning and development with open access to fully equipped workshops to industry standard. The combination of environment, facilities and expertise in training and the relevance of the course curriculum to the ceramics industry makes this course unique within ceramics training in Ireland."*

Applications were received from across Europe for the next two-year programme which commences in September 2012 and the 12 places have now been filled.

• Through the Mill runs at the National Craft Gallery, Castle Yard, Kilkenny, until July 31st and a **Meet the Makers** evening will take place on Wednesday July 25th at 6.30pm. Opening times: Tuesday - Saturday: 10am - 5.30pm, Sunday: 11am - 5.30pm. Admission is free. For further details visit [www.nationalcraftgallery.ie](http://www.nationalcraftgallery.ie)

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## **About the 2012 Graduates:**

### **The 2012 Graduates:**

#### **Andrew Whitelaw**

Born in Limerick in 1989, Andrew comes from a family with a background in ceramics. His father is a practicing maker and throughout Andrew's upbringing he has been surrounded by the family's collection of contemporary pots. After second level education, he spent a year travelling through Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia. He began his third level education in 2009 at the Limerick School of Art and Design, completing the first year foundation course. In 2010 he was successful in obtaining a place on the Ceramics Skills and Design Course. Andrew has worked in Kylemore Abbey Pottery producing a range of functional tableware.

#### **Adriana Grochal**

Adriana comes from Boleslawiec in Poland, a town famous for its traditional ceramic production since the 15th century. She has lived in Thomastown, Kilkenny, for the past two years and hopes to stay living there. She has a degree in Science and Biology from University of Wroclaw and since childhood has always been interested in nature and art. Adriana started making pots at Lisa Hammond's Maze Hill Pottery in London where she was taught by Michaela Hoesch, a graduate from the Ceramics Skills and Design Course in Thomastown. In 2010 she herself was selected for the same two-year course run by the Crafts Council of Ireland. For now, she plans to move back to UK and find a ceramic residency to get more experience. After that, she plans to set up her own ceramic studio.

#### **Oliver Fenwick**

Oliver comes from Bath, in the South West of England. He first studied for a National Diploma in Design Crafts at City of Bath College. He then went on to complete a BA (Hons) Degree in Sculpture from Camberwell College of Arts, London. He worked for a high-end picture framing business for over two years before a series of evening classes at the Morley College London led Oliver to turn his attentions toward ceramics. This led him to look for a full time course resulting in his successful application to the Crafts Council of Ireland's Ceramic Skills and Design Course in 2010. He worked at the Winchcombe Pottery, Gloucestershire, England in summer 2011.

#### **Caroline Sharkey**

Caroline was born in Wicklow on the east coast of Ireland. She started working with clay after having worked for the Health Service for 10 years. She embarked on her art education by studying photography, printmaking, painting and ceramics at the Bray Institute for Further Education. Caroline worked in the pottery studio of Geoffrey Healy before being accepted onto the Crafts Council of Ireland's Ceramics Skills and Design Course. She has also worked with Alec Good Ceramics and Kylemore Abbey Pottery. "I now plan on spending 3 months in Asia where I plan to research their rich ceramic history, in particular highly decorated porcelain. I hope to work with a potter while there. I then intend to return to Wicklow and set up my own studio," she said.

#### **Lucy Marie Spillane**

On completing an honours degree in product design, ceramics, at the Limerick School of Art and Design in 2007, Lucy spent a year teaching children Arts and Crafts through the Limerick Youth Service. She then spent a year travelling throughout Asia, China, Australia and North

America. Her exposure to different cultures has been influential in her approach to design and making. On returning home to her native Tipperary, she continued her studies by attending the Ceramic Skills and Design Course in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. Lucy has also worked in the studios of Mandy Parslow and Kylemore Abbey Pottery.

### **Vivien O'Malley**

Vivien is based in County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland. She first trained for four years at the Limerick School of Art and Design where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Ceramics before commencing a further two years at the Crafts Council of Ireland's Ceramics Skills and Design Course in Thomastown, Kilkenny. She has worked in the ceramics studios of Henri Hedou, Roger Harley and Kylemore Abbey. Vivien works solely in porcelain, producing simple forms with highly decorated surfaces. "My plan after I graduate is to acquire further knowledge about all elements of lighting. My plans involve travelling, gaining experience with ceramicists in South East Asia, Australia and primarily New Zealand."

### **Claire Molloy**

Claire Molloy has the best of both worlds, combining her love of ceramics with her passion for horses which she breeds. She was born in 1982 in Callan, Co Kilkenny. She grew up on a farm in Tipperary which kept horses and cattle. In 2004 she graduated with a BA Hons degree in Sculptural Ceramics from Galway Mayo Institute of Technology. Her life-long interest in horses led her to work for Coolmore Stud in Fethard, Co. Tipperary for a number of years. Claire owns and breeds her own horses which she then trains to a competitive level. She has worked in the South Tipperary County Museum and also for the South Tipperary Arts Officer. She is a regular tutor for the South Tipperary Art Group. Throughout this time she has continued to exhibit her own ceramic work. "My plan is to set up my own studio and develop my horsehair pottery."

### **Martha Williamson**

Martha comes from the small gaeltacht village of Spiddal in Co. Galway, an area known for its community of artists and musicians. This creative environment continues to have a strong influence on her as a maker. Martha has a BA degree in Interior Architecture from the Sligo Institute of Technology. Her interest in ceramics started when she worked at the Sliding Rock Pottery, Spiddal, run by Rob d'Eath. On completion of this course in July 2012 Martha intends to continue her ceramic practice at the Sliding Rock Pottery in Spiddal.

### **Elaine Harrington**

Elaine grew up in Rathmines in Dublin but is now based in coastal Wexford, just outside Rosslare. She draws on these contrasting environments, incorporating both natural and man-made found materials into her distinctive, individually crafted pieces. She turned to ceramics from a background in writing and graphic design and her influences are diverse, from art and literature to archaeological relics and the natural world.

### **Gideon Cumming:**

Gideon was born in London and brought up in Nottinghamshire. From an early age he built sandcastles on beaches and showed an interest in understanding and enhancing the natural world. He later went on to become a partner of a civil engineering consultancy. Gideon began his ceramic education at Derby University and Cardiff School of Art before moving to the Crafts Council of Ireland's Ceramics Skills and Design Course in Thomastown, County Kilkenny. Gideon has worked at the Leach Pottery, St. Ives, Cstandard tableware under the guidance of Jack Doherty. Gideon produces sculptural ceramics and domestic ware.

**Ciara Ni Chualain**

Ciara is from Inis Oírr, an island off the west coast of Ireland. From a young age, she was aware of the traditional crafts of the island through family involvement in pottery and basketmaking. Ciara studied ceramics at the Limerick School of Art and Design before undertaking the Crafts Council of Ireland's Ceramics Skills and Design Course in Thomastown, Kilkenny. On graduation from this course, she will return to complete the final year of her BA Honours Degree in Limerick. Ciara has worked in the studios of Mandy Parslow, Colm de Rís and Susan Boland.

**Kevin O'Kelly**

Kevin was born in Galway and is from a family of artists and craftsmen. His father runs pottery classes for adults and children. Kevin grew up attending and then eventually teaching these classes, getting great satisfaction from seeing the children's creativity flourish. At the same time he also developed his own personal work and continued his lifelong passion for drums and music. He later travelled to New Zealand where he worked as a production thrower for Neodorf Ceramics in Nelson. This repetition throwing vastly improved his skills as well as showing him how other potters worked with different styles and techniques.