

Significant Irish design and craft presence at cultural exhibition Homo Faber, Venice in September



Images l to r: work by basket maker Joe Hogan, glass artist Alison Lowry and silversmith Cara Murphy

- Homo Faber is the first major cultural exhibition dedicated to the best in European craftsmanship and takes place in Venice, Italy in September 2018
- The Irish designers and craftspeople selected will be the largest representation from one country to participate in Homo Faber
- Seven leading Irish craftspeople selected to exhibit in the 'Best of Europe' pavilion
- 12 recent graduates or current students of the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland *Centres of Excellence in Ceramics* and *in Jewellery & Goldsmithing* to participate in the Young Ambassadors programme

Ireland will have significant representation at major cultural exhibition Homo Faber which takes place in Venice, Italy from 14th to 30th September 2018. Seven leading Irish designers and makers have been selected to participate in this landmark exhibition and 12 graduates and students from the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) *Centres of Excellence in Ceramics* and *in Jewellery & Goldsmithing* have been chosen for the Young Ambassadors programme, a unique joint educational and cultural initiative as part of Homo Faber.

Organised by the Michelangelo Foundation for Creativity and Craftsmanship, Homo Faber aims to put fine craftsmanship on the global map and increase recognition and visibility for master artisans. The exhibition will bring together a vast range of materials and disciplines and will offer an immersive experience; visitors will be able to meet master artisans or virtually enter their workshops, to observe conservators at work and wander through worlds of fine craftsmanship. Covering nearly 4,000 square metres, on San Giorgio Maggiore Island, Homo Faber will offer the public a rare opportunity to explore the island and the magnificent complex of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, including areas that are generally not accessible to the public.

The seven Irish craftspeople participating are: glass artist Róisín de Buitléar; basket maker Joe Hogan; ceramicist Jennifer Hickey; glass artist Alison Lowry; silversmith Cara Murphy; sculptor Nuala O'Donovan; and artist and sculptural furniture maker Sasha Sykes. All are members of DCCol's *PORTFOLIO* programme which actively works to grow the reputations and potential of designer-makers across all major disciplines of contemporary craft.

The exhibiting craftspeople were selected for Homo Faber by the Michelangelo Exhibitions Committee having been shortlisted for consideration by Jean Blanchaert, curator of the Best of Europe pavilion for Homo Faber. Criteria for selection was based on a series of principles as set out by Alberto Cavalli, director of Fondazione Cologni, Italy, in his book *The Master's Touch: Essential Elements of Artisanal Excellence*, published in May 2017. The book identifies 11 attributes, including authenticity, competence, creativity, originality, innovation and tradition that signify mastery of material and craftsmanship. The Irish makers will be part of a group of 150 master craftspeople who will exhibit 300 works in the Best of Europe pavilion, one of a total of 13 pavilions on Cini Giorgio.

In addition to the exhibiting craftspeople, **five recent graduates of the DCCol Centre of Excellence in Ceramics and seven current students of the DCCol Centre of Excellence in Jewellery & Goldsmithing** have been selected to participate in the Young Ambassadors programme and will form the largest representation from a single educational institution at Homo Faber. Following a rigorous selection process, 105 talented students of applied arts and design from 26 education institutions in 15 European countries were chosen to bring Homo Faber to life for visitors in the Young Ambassadors programme which is an initiative of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in partnership with the Michelangelo Foundation.

The Young Ambassadors will be present throughout Homo Faber to interact with visitors to exhibition spaces, explaining the many fascinating objects on display and imparting their own knowledge of the skills and techniques being used by master artisans right before their eyes. Participation in this one-of-a-kind programme offers the Young Ambassadors a unique opportunity to meet some of Europe's finest artisans, designers, institutions and luxury houses, as well as to interact with their peers and to form a network to carry with them into their future careers.

Connections between DCCol and the Michelangelo Foundation were developed through the World Crafts Council Europe, an international organisation of which Ireland hosts the Presidency up to 2021, facilitating Ireland's significant presence at Homo Faber. Karen Hennessy, Chief Executive of the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland, said: *"I congratulate all of the participants from Ireland who have been selected for such a unique and high-profile cultural exhibition. Homo Faber will showcase the finest of European craftsmanship across multiple sites in the glorious city of Venice, and it is testament to Ireland's reputation and high standing among its peers in design and craft that such a large group has been chosen to take part. The selection of our graduates and students as Young Ambassadors is also a reflection of the enormous talent, skill and dedication of these young craftspeople as well as the highly respected reputation of the DCCol Centres of Excellence in Europe."*

She continued: *"To be chosen to partake in such a prestigious cultural event is a huge opportunity for both our established and emerging makers to not only demonstrate their abilities, innovation and imagination on a world stage, but to meet other creatives from all over Europe, make connections and soak up all that an important exhibition such as Homo Faber has to offer. We wish all participants well in their adventure."*

Homo Faber takes place at Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, 14 – 30 September and admission is free.

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For further press information, please contact Elevate PR on 01 662 5652
Tara Walsh – tara@elevate.ie / Emer Igbokwe – emer@elevate.ie

Notes for editors

About the exhibiting Irish craftspeople:

Róisín de Buitléar (glass artist)

Róisín de Buitléar describes herself as being fascinated by both the beauty glass affords as well as the challenge of working with it. Using a variety of techniques, her response to the making process is both personal and intuitive. Working in layers, she uses the inherent beauty of the material to draw the viewer into the objects through light, shadow and colour. She incorporates subtle, intricate patterns into many of her pieces with diamond point engraving. When light is cast through the glass, patterns emerge in the shadow, giving the works an added dimension. De Buitléar graduated from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin in 1983. She teaches and lectures on glass in Ireland and overseas. She is based in Dublin and works to commission and for exhibition. www.rdebutlear.com

Joe Hogan (basket maker)

Joe Hogan was initially attracted to basketmaking because he wanted to grow his own willow, the raw material for most of his baskets. His practice allows him the opportunity to live rurally and to be involved in the entire process, from growing the material to making the finished object. His home and landscape have had a profound influence on the style and diversity of his work, encouraging him to explore and develop new designs based on old traditions. Hogan makes functional baskets and values the repetition and the fluency it develops. Hogan works from his studio in Connemara, Co. Galway. He teaches basketmaking skills and has written two books on the craft, *Basketmaking in Ireland* (2001) and *Bare Branches, Blue Black Sky* (2011). www.joehoganbaskets.com

Jennifer Hickey (ceramicist)

Jennifer Hickey is drawn to the beauty and subtlety of the natural world. Themes of fragility, ephemerality and translucency are central to her work. Working with porcelain and bone china, her ceramic sculptural forms explore the discipline and delicacy demanded by those materials. The natural properties of clay are intrinsic to her completed pieces that often have an organic or sensual sense. Hickey graduated from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin in 2002 with a BDes in Ceramics. She is based in Dublin. www.jenniferhickey.com

Alison Lowry (glass artist)

Originally from a textile background, Alison Lowry won The Warm Glass Prize, a UK national competition, in 2009 and was awarded a place on a masterclass with Deborah Horrell, an American glass artist who specialised in pâte de verre. This technique subsequently became the focus of her career. Lowry graduated with a First Class Honours Degree from the University of Ulster in 2009. Working out of her studio in Co. Down, she regularly works to commission and has taught master classes, nationally and internationally. www.alisonlowry.co.uk

Cara Murphy (silversmith)

Cara Murphy utilises traditional silversmithing techniques to create innovative and sculptural tableware. Focusing on how pieces interact with their setting, she challenges the established knowledge of silverware by creating work that does not have an obvious purpose. Functionality becomes open to interpretation and is created through the users own participation and involvement. In 2016, she won the Rosy James Memorial Award which enabled her to learn the enamelling process of vitreous enamelling and to ensure the skill can be passed onto future generations. Murphy trained at The Glasgow School of Art, Scotland and the Royal College of Art, London. She is a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and works mainly to commission. She is an Associate Lecturer at

Belfast School of Art where she leads research in contemporary silversmithing at the Ulster University. www.caramurphy.com

Nuala O'Donovan (sculptor)

Nuala O'Donovan's ceramic sculptures explore patterns found in nature and fractal geometry. The ability of living organisms to respond to changes in their systems, and to subsequently recover, adapt and grow, is a central theme in her work. O'Donovan uses the characteristics of irregular fractal patterns in nature as constraints or guidelines when making decisions about her forms: patterns are regularly irregular, patterns and forms are self-similar; the pattern records a response to random events during the making process. Her pieces are constructed slowly over a period of weeks or months. O'Donovan completed a BA in Three Dimensional Design at Middlesex University, UK in 1994. In 2008, she received an MA in Ceramics from Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork. www.nualaodonovan.com

Sasha Sykes (artist and sculptural furniture maker)

Sasha Sykes is influenced by the scale and aesthetic of the Irish landscape and its impact and relationship with social history and humanity. Using acrylics and hand-cast resins, she embeds found objects and collected organic materials such as wildflowers, thistles, mosses, lichens, seaweeds and shells. The resins heighten the colours, textures and forms of the material, highlighting their fragility and also their stage in the cycle of life. The final work is then sanded and polished giving it its translucency and emphasising the delicacy of the encased materials. Sykes received an MA in Architecture from Edinburgh University, Scotland in 1998. She subsequently worked in retail design in London and New York. In 2001 she established Farm21, designing and making contemporary hand crafted rural furniture. She lives and works in Dublin. www.sashasykes.com

About the recent graduates and current students participating in the Young Ambassadors Programme: Located in Co. Kilkenny, the DCCol *Centres of Excellence in Ceramics* and in *Jewellery & Goldsmithing* each deliver an intensive two-year skills-based programme which is renowned in their respective industries both nationally and internationally. Representing the DCCol Centres of Excellence at Homo Faber will be:

Five of the 2018 graduates of the DCCol Centre of Excellence in Ceramics:

- Chris Crawford
- Róisín O'Connor
- Etaoin O'Reilly
- Jin O'Sullivan
- Natasha Swan

Seven current students at the DCCol Centre of Excellence in Jewellery & Goldsmithing:

- Lydia Clayton
- Eve Doyle
- Noreen McGuire
- Deirdre Murphy
- Siobhan O'Sullivan
- Lily Read
- Annemarie Reinhold

About the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland

The Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) is the national agency for the commercial development of Irish designers and makers, stimulating innovation, championing design thinking and informing

Government policy. DCCol's activities are funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation via Enterprise Ireland. DCCol currently has 64 member organisations and over 2,500 registered clients. www.dccoi.ie

About DCCol's Centres of Excellence

DCCol's Centre of Excellence in Ceramics is located at Island Mill, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. It delivers an intensive two-year skills-based programme which is renowned in the industry both nationally and internationally (www.ceramicscourse.ie). *DCCol's Centre of Excellence in Jewellery & Goldsmithing* specialises in the tradition of working with precious metals and gemstones, equipping graduates with the practical skills needed to develop careers in the jewellery industry in Ireland and internationally. It delivers an intensive two-year programme and is located at DCCol's headquarters in Kilkenny (www.jewellerycourse.ie). DCCol's vision is to work with partner organisations in developing *Centres of Excellence* in other key disciplines to ensure industry needs are met through specialised training and access to facilities.

About the World Crafts Council

The World Crafts Council (WCC) was established by Aileen Vanderbilt Webb in 1964 as a non-profit membership organisation to promote international interest in crafts and encourage contact between craftspeople of different countries. World Crafts Council Europe was set up following a General Assembly in Florence as an independent secretariat funded by European members. The European branch of WCC (WCCE), aims to raise awareness and strengthen status of crafts in cultural, social and economic contexts and to provide opportunities for co-operation across Europe and in the broader international context. In October 2016, Louise Allen, Head of Innovation and Development programmes at the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland, was elected President of the World Crafts Council – Europe. www.wcc-europe.org

About Homo Faber

Homo Faber is the first major cultural exhibition dedicated to the very best in European craftsmanship. Organised by the Michelangelo Foundation, it aims to put fine craftsmanship on the global map and increase recognition and visibility for master artisans. The exhibition will bring together a vast range of materials and disciplines, from jewellery to bespoke bicycles, from the rarest artisanal techniques to some of the most iconic examples of the finest European workmanship. Created by a hand-picked team of world-class designers, curators and architects, the exhibition stretches over a number of magnificent spaces throughout the Fondazione Giorgio Cini. www.homofaberevent.com #HomoFaber2018

About the Michelangelo Foundation

The Michelangelo Foundation for Creativity and Craftsmanship is an international, non-profit institution based in Geneva, Switzerland, which celebrates and preserves master craftsmanship and strengthens its connection to the world of design. Rooted in a tradition of culture and excellence and in the realities and challenges of today's global economy, the Foundation seeks to support men and women who dedicate themselves to the pursuit of master craftsmanship and to foster a new cultural movement built around the values that are essential for their work. The Foundation focuses on Europe as a starting point for its activities, in recognition that craftsmanship has been a vital part of the economic and cultural fabric of the region for centuries. www.michelangelofoundation.org

About Fondazione Giorgio Cini

Created in 1951 by Italian entrepreneur, art collector and philanthropist Vittorio Cini in memory of his son, Giorgio, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini is an internationally recognized cultural institution and a centre for humanistic study. It acts as a meeting place for debate on current social, cultural and

economic issues, hosts cultural events, exhibitions and conferences, and supports academic activities and research projects. It also boasts an extraordinary library with 300,000 volumes and a vast art collection endowed by Vittorio Cini. www.cini.it