

Craft Master with a twist

Last night the winning apprentice was revealed on RTÉ One's television series 'Craft Master'. The finale of the six part series culminated in a dramatic twist when not one but two apprentices were crowned 'Craft Master' 2011. The winning apprentices Edward Cook (Metal) and Caoimhe Woods (Ceramics) were chosen by a panel, which included Ireland's top designers, Louise Kennedy and Paul Costelloe.

In speaking to Brian McGee (Head of Market Development at the Crafts Council of Ireland) Paul Costello described Edward Cook's iron chair as *"So important for Irish creativity, you could show it anywhere in the world and people would say "fantastic". This is unique and this should be what you're encouraging as the halo, for everybody else to follow"*. While Louise Kennedy commended Caoimhe Wood's ceramic heart for following the brief commenting *"She could write orders tomorrow, it's a great piece and the price point is great."*

Both Edward and Caoimhe will have a stand at 'Showcase Ireland 2012' at the RDS in January, an international trade fair which will attract more than 5,500 retail buyers from Ireland and over 17 countries around the world including North America, continental Europe and Japan, who are seeking out the best of Irish fashion, jewellery, giftware and interiors products.

They will join 350 of the country's leading designers, manufacturers and craftspeople will be taking part in their most important sales event of the year. These are Ireland's talented designers and craftspeople who will unveil their latest innovative products and will be hoping to sign new lucrative contracts for 2012. More than €22 million in sales orders are expected over the four days of Showcase 2012, 'Ireland's Creative Expo' with the Irish craft industry being worth almost half a billion euro annually.

The Crafts Council of Ireland is the main driver behind Showcase, which has become an important means of developing market opportunities for Irish business. Enterprise Ireland markets the show overseas and brings huge skills and experience in this area.

Craft Master is an original format produced by Big Mountain Productions for both the Broadcast Authority of Ireland (BAI) and RTÉ. The series was produced in collaboration with the Crafts Council of Ireland to celebrate Ireland's Year of Craft 2011.

View the finale here: <http://www.rte.ie/player/#!v=1116471>

About Big Mountain Productions:

Big Mountain Productions is a high quality content creation company with a specific focus on factual, and original factual entertainment programmes and formats for national and international broadcast platforms. The company has a proven track record in talent development and management and their portfolio of recent work includes shows such as Who Knows Ireland Best, The Tenements and The Genealogy Roadshow. www.bigmountainproductions.com

About the Crafts Council of Ireland:

The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCol), which is headquartered in Kilkenny, is the main champion of the craft industry in Ireland, fostering its growth and commercial strength, communicating its unique identity and stimulating quality design, innovation and competitiveness. CCol's activities are funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation via Enterprise Ireland. CCol currently has over 70 member organisations and over 2,400 registered clients. www.ccoi.ie

About the craft sector in Ireland:

Irish craft businesses are characteristically small in scale and are geographically widespread, but taken nationally the industry is a significant employer, while also providing viable, sustainable enterprises in all areas, including those isolated rural communities ignored as unsuitable by other manufacturing sectors. According to research conducted by Indecon International Economic Consultants on behalf of CCol, the craft industry in Ireland is worth almost half a billion Euros to the Irish economy. The sector employs an estimated 5,771 people generating domestic sales of €373.5m and exports worth over €124.5m, with significant potential for growth in the industry.

About Year of Craft 2011:

The Crafts Council of Ireland and Craft Northern Ireland have designated 2011 as Year of Craft. The year also marks the 40th anniversary of the Crafts Council of Ireland and is celebrated through a diverse range of dynamic events and programmes to showcase the very best of craft made on the island of Ireland. www.craftinireland.com

About Showcase Ireland:

Showcase Ireland is the country's premier craft, gift, fashion and interiors trade fair featuring quality design products from Ireland's leading craft makers and designers. The initiative which takes place at the RDS each January attracts up to 350 exhibitors and 5,500 buyers from over 17 countries around the world and generates sales orders in the region of €20 million over the four days of the show. The winner of Craft Master will have a stand in Creative Island, a space dedicated to beautifully crafted products exclusively Imagined, Designed and Made in Ireland. Showcase Ireland is organised by Showcase Ireland Events Ltd. on behalf of the Crafts Council of Ireland and is promoted internationally by Enterprise Ireland. www.showcaseireland.com