

Media Source Press Page 2
 Circulation 60.352
 Topic DCCoI



Home Front

Brexit subtext woven into Kilkenny craft show

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It sometimes seems the subtext of just about *everything* is Brexit. An impressive craft exhibition set to open in Kilkenny this month, on the theme of "Monumentality/Fragility", initially looks like a sort of side-long glance at the B-word.

The multi-venue European exhibition of contemporary crafts in two Kilkenny locations features 74 makers from 19 European countries, including seven Irish craftmakers.

For the 2018 edition of the European Prize for Applied Arts, artists were invited to draw inspiration from the paradoxical nature of a dual theme of monumentality and fragility, proposed by BeCraft (previously World Crafts Council - Belgique Francophone), WCC-Europe president Louise Allen observes: "As we navigate our way through uncertain times, this exhibition seeks to remind us of the fragility of our shared European community," and exhibiting in Kilkenny "provides an environment for exchange and dialogue that contributes to our shared understanding of how culture can help to build community and bring cohesion".

Brexit, right? Of the seven Irish participants, we're tempted to see Clonbur basketmaker Joe Hogan's gorgeous work as a reflection of the basketcase next door but, more accurately, he's making a form with monumentality from humble material. "The ash wood could have been burned for fuel wood if it had not made its way to me. Now it has a second life for a while - but nothing is permanent."

Hmmm. Perhaps the Brexit fragility theme is tenuous. But the work still looks wonderful.

Textile artist Niki Collier exhibits textile sculptures inspired by microscopic photos of viruses - they may look cute and colourful, even cuddly, but can cause discomfort, ill health and even death.

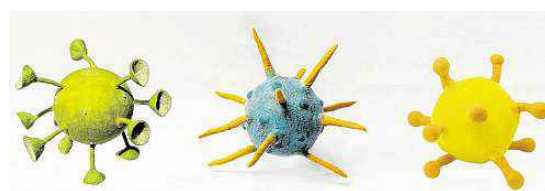
Jeweller Eimear Conyard is influenced by Bronze Age gold, depicting "remarkable survival" as fragile treasures from the past, and an imagined continuity between the Bronze Age and the present.

Ceramicist Nicola Kelly uses monumentality and fragility to explore loss and death, here showing a monument of 512 perilously stacked porcelain objects, corresponding to the number of days her partner survived from diagnosis to death.

Silversmith Cólín Ó Dubhghaill uses the form of a tulipiere vase, which originated in the 17th-century Dutch tulip mania, "monuments to excess from a time that parallels more recent fragile economic bubbles".



■ From the 'Monumentality/Fragility' exhibition in Kilkenny (clockwise from main): Textile artist Caroline Schofield's materials form a meditation on memory; a work by Claudia Biehne; a tulipiere vase from Silversmith Cólín Ó Dubhghaill; a piece from basketmaker Joe Hogan; Niki Collier exhibits textile sculptures inspired by microscopic photos of viruses.



Annemarie Reinhold's silver jewellery uses the durable qualities of the metal to capture the constant flux in nature, and to treasure these fragile moments.

Textile artist Caroline Schofield's materials form a meditation on memory, here inspired by the notion that we're "living in the age of humanity - a powerful race walks on earth - but time and nature are unkind and temporary". The showcase of over 170 exceptional objects, in partnership with the Office of Public Works, will be displayed at the National Design & Craft Gallery, Castle Yard and Kilkenny Castle.

Monumentality/Fragility: European prize for Applied Arts is at the National Design & Craft Gallery and Kilkenny Castle, February 9th to June 23rd

Kitchens sink dramatic
If contemplating a kitchen upgrade, you can add drama to new countertops with an on-trend kitchen sink set-up featuring one of the new electroplated metal finishes from Reginox's latest range.

While over time the sink may scratch, the colour will stay consistent because of its electroplated finish which carries through the metal rather than being a superficial finish. Choose from warm rose gold, pictured, or moody gunmetal, both from €380 for a 40cm square design. The matching tap, pictured, costs an additional €100. Both prices are ex VAT and can be seen at Kitchen and Bedroom Fittings at Beechmount Home Park, Navan.

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beechmounthomepark.com

Join the club
Not all club chairs are created equal.

Too small and there's a tendency to slide off the seat; too large and it can dominate a room.

This Caspar armchair is both neat and accommodating, with a soft leather seat that won't let you slide, but that's deep enough to be really comfortable.

The handstitched South American ox leather is in a pleasing latte colour that will sit well in a contemporary room or bring a sense of ease to a more formal setting. It costs €2,120 from Neptune, and it's seen here with a Sefton throw in cobble for €225. See neptune.com for Irish stockists.

■ Below: a kitchen sink set-up featuring one of the electroplated metal finishes from Reginox (€380 for a 40cm sq design); the Caspar armchair from Neptune (€2,120)

