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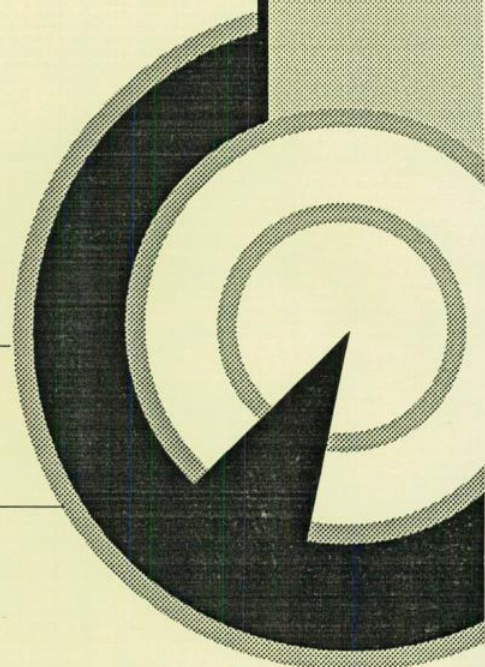
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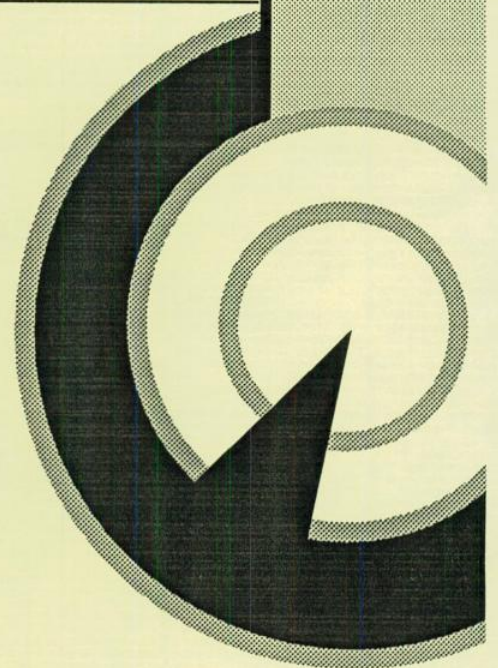
Title:
THE ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE CONTEMPORARY CRAFT
INDUSTRY IN IRELAND

by Briega Wills

Submitted to the faculty of Art and Design and
complementary studies in candidacy for the Degree
of Bachelor of Design in Woven Design B.des.



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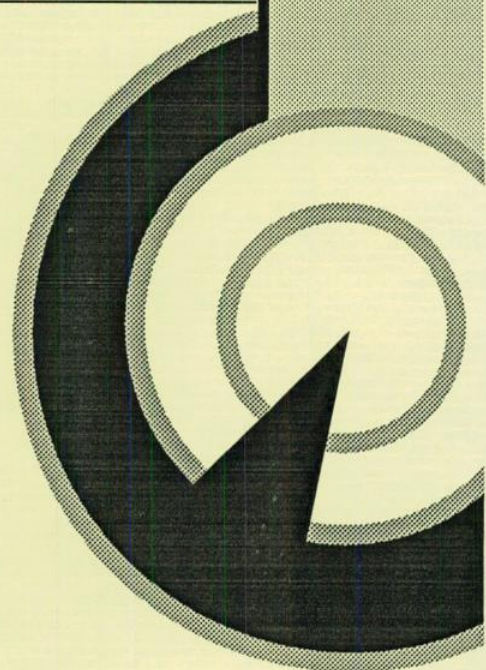
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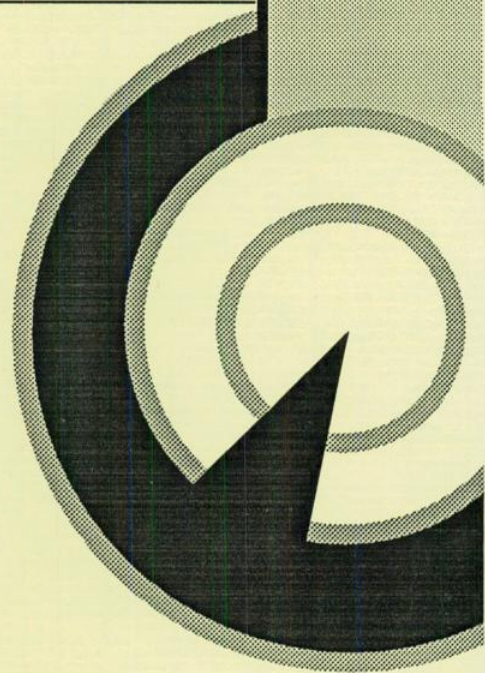
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introduction



INTRODUCTION

The Irish Craft industry is a serious and competitive business sector, catering to a critical public who expect the same quality from a hand-made product as from an industrialised one. In an industrial society, craft work provides a welcome contrast to the mass-produced functional item. This thesis aims to analyse the role of the craft industry in Ireland, in not only proving this contrast but to show craft as an alternative form of industry and employment.

I intend to briefly discuss the craft industry from the 1960's but more extensively on the present craft / handmade industry and its development onwards.

I will profile the industry from the viewpoints of a cross section of individuals involved within craft. In an attempt to give a fully balanced opinion of the present situation of Irish craft, this thesis incorporates some of the opinions, observations and statements of individuals involved with both the economic and design aspects of the Irish Craft Industry.

My choice of subject for this thesis stems from the fact that my time as an Irish Textile student is drawing to a close. This prompted my study of what does exist of the Irish Craft Industry in an effort to realise the potential, if any, of my design skills within that industry.

In my first chapter, I discuss the different meanings of craft and the situation of the Irish Craft Industry, pre-design reports - "The Scandinavian Design Report, 1961" and "Report on Crafts in Ireland, 1985".

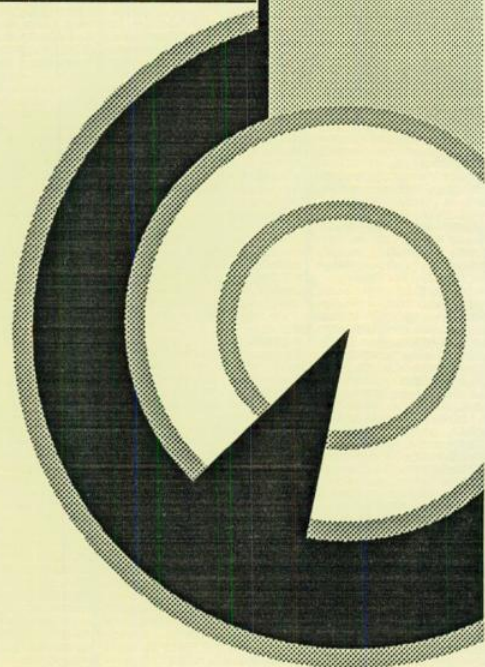
The second chapter is an examination of the role of the Craft Council of Ireland and the various government bodies in helping to develop the craft sector on the advice of "The Scandinavian Design Report" Group in

1961, up to the present day. I also mention the various sources of finance available in the form of cash grants and bank loans, and the availability of these for today's craft people.

The third chapter is a discussion on the role of the Trade Fairs - "The Annual Craft, Gift and Fashion Fair" - and the other craft shows. The craft shows help to promote Irish craft, in Ireland and to the international markets as advancing the economic element in the craft industry.

The last chapter is a look to the future for the Irish Craft Industry. I analyse the different definitions within the craft world - "Art-Craft", "Design-Craft", and "Traditional-Craft" - and the people that come under their different titles. Has the perception of craft changed with the developments in recent years and is Irish craft appreciated. The discussion in this chapter is also about the parallels between fine art and craft and if craft is maybe moving into the "fine crafts" forum, for some added recognition. I also discuss the future for craft in relation to the manufacturing industry, and to whether we will see craft and industry working together in the future, and if craft could benefit from the aid of computers and the technology in producing quicker, and more profitable craft products.

chapter 1



CHAPTER ONE

- 1) What is craft? - A brief analysis of the word craft and origins.
- 2) The Irish craft industry before the 1960's -
pre - Scandinavian design report 1961.
- 3) The decline and the consequent development of craft after
the 1960's in Ireland.

Until recently, there has been very little historical research into the origins and development of twentieth century crafts and even less information on that of the Irish craft scene. Within this chapter, I give a brief analysis of what the words 'craft' and 'craftsmanship' mean. I mention the situations which led to a neglect in most areas of craft in Ireland and the renewed development of craft later on, due to the help and advice of the Scandinavian Design group in 1961.

It was said that the only craftwork worthy of mention before the 1960's in Ireland, was that of ancient Ireland before the Celtic tradition had been suppressed. Therefore, when the brilliant achievements of the early celtic and Christian Ireland are recalled it is not difficult to understand ~~as to~~ why so little attention was given to Irish Craftwork before the 1960's and before it had developed into its present state today.

WHAT IS CRAFT?

The word 'craft' according to 'David Pye' holds a whole intricate complex of different meanings, some of which, in this Thesis, I discuss. The story of craft is the story of what Man's hands and Man's ingenuity have been able to do with both organic and inorganic materials. In David Pye's opinion the word 'craft', '..... is a word to start an argument with". (*The Nature and Art of workmanship*, David Pye, 1968, p.53.)

The idea of handicraft and handmade was brought to our attention by "the Arts and Crafts movement"---A movement of protest against the workmanship and Aesthetics of the Industrial revolution. This idea still leaves most of society confused as to what constitutes craftsmanship, leaving them to make up their own minds hence the wide variety of objects which today are grouped under the words 'crafts' or 'handmade'.

The word 'craftsmanship' simply means 'workmanship' - which is using any kind of technique or apparatus in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on "the judgement, dexterity and cave" which the maker exercises as he works. The idea is that the quality of the result is continually at risk during the process of making, and so David Pye calls this kind of workmanship ---"The workmanship of risk". (*The Nature and Art of workmanship*, David Pye, 1968, p.53)

20. Landscape Draw

Thoma - "An examination of the
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(1903)

21. Crafts Council of Ireland - Newsletter

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Handicrafts

23. Handicrafts - Sunday Business Post

13-01-1991

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10-1-1992

25. Levin Road - The Irish Times

10-12-1992

26. Levin Road - The Irish Times

10-12-1992

27. Levin Road - The Irish Times

10-12-1992

28. Levin Road - The Irish Times

10-12-1992

29. Levin Road - The Irish Times

10-12-1992

Cunningham

Handicrafts

Sunday Business Post

12-12-1991

29. Crafts from isolation to
saturation

The Irish Times

10-01-1994

30. Crafts from isolation to
saturation

The Irish Times

10-01-1994

The workmanship of risk can be controlled with another kind of workmanship "The workmanship of certainty"--- which is to be found in industrial quantity production. In workmanship of this sort the quality of the result is exactly predetermined before a single product is made. (**The nature and Art of workmanship, David Pye, 1968 p.58**)

In the past there was little or no division of labour and what machinery was used was simply of the nature of a multiple tool, a help to the workman's hand labour. This could be described as a period of pure or true handicraft.

But true craftsmanship is more than just producing the complete finished article. The really essential element is not just manual skill and dexterity but 'the working of hand and mind together - of knowing the whole character and the uses of all tools materials and processes of the craft. (**The nature and Art of workmanship, David Pye, 1968, p.60**)

When in industry all this knowledge is scattered and spread out among a number of workmen who require only the knowledge needed for the performance of a particular minute task. This process evidently separates skill and knowledge---The worker is no longer a craftsman, in any sense, but is" an animated tool". (**David Pye - woodcarver and Turner, Christopher Frayling, 1986, p.21.**)

Today's various craftspeople may argue about the process-
Does craft skill involve mental or manual dexterity or both?
But they all seem to have in common a strong belief in the importance of exercising control over every aspect of the work they do.

Again, the "workmanship of certainty" has been in occasional use in undeveloped forms since the Middle ages, and probably much earlier times, but all the works of men, which have been most admired since the beginning of history, have been made by the "Workmanship of risk". "There is something about the workmanship of risk and its results, or something associated with it; which has been long and widely valued". (**David Pye - woodcarver and Turner, Christopher Frayling, 1986, p.27.**)

THE SEPARATION OF CRAFT

In the past, due to the re-organisation of society into different orders of class - class distinction and social divisions - craftworkers were also split to form two separate traditions - 'Fine crafts', producing for the elite and 'peasant crafts', producing less ornate and more functional goods for the poorer classes. It was also within this context that a further division occurred between artists and craftworkers.

With this split, between fine crafts and peasant crafts, in Europe, the same process then occurred in Ireland, but it took a more problematic form. The split represented not only the huge gap between the wealth of the aristocracy and the poverty of the peasants but also the introduction of a foreign culture. 1 'Feudalism was imposed on the ancient Brehan system. 2 Colonialism reduced the Irish peasantry to a state of poverty even worse than that of their European counterparts.

.-THE DECLINE OF CRAFT IN IRELAND.-

This was a disaster for the peasant (rural) crafts. Their craftwork was confined to being totally functional - poverty did not allow the luxury of ornamentation. Fine crafts and art, on other Land, found ready patrons in the colonists and the wealthy Irish who supported them.

In other countries, the fine crafts had developed out of the peasant traditions, in Ireland the peasant traditions came under severe pressure for many centuries while the fine crafts abandoned them to their fate and embraced a foreign aesthetic, losing the distinctive Irish traditional style. (The Arts and crafts movement in Ireland, Paul Larmour, 1992, p.23)

Therefore, throughout the early part of this century craftworkers were left to struggle forward on their own. Crafts became identified with the past, a backward relic from history.

Even the nationalist movement of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century failed to spark a revival. This perhaps, the best and only opportunity to bring about a genuine revival of peasant culture and craft was practically lost. (The Report on Crafts in Ireland, 1985, p.11).

In the nineteenth century, Irish men and women were doing no more than existing especially during the famine years. This was another reason why peasant craft was deteriorating, but it also had its advantage in promoting craft work in the future.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE U.S CRAFTS MARKET

"Perhaps the single, most important event to influence crafts this century took place in the last one. With the famine of the 1840's and the consequent mass emigration, much of it to the United States. The Circumstances under which these people left, their tendency to congregate together and their inability to adopt a specifically American identity; all encouraged the Irish Americans to look to their past to develop a sense of their own identity". (The report on crafts in Ireland, Sean O'Siochru, 1985, p.12).

These Irish - Americans believed that Ireland was a land of leprechauns and fairies, and of simple peasants living poorly off the land, Land - producing all their needs. All this has resulted in a huge area of crafts specifically catering to the U.S. market.

Undeniably, this market saved many a craft from total extinction and provided a living to many, but linked as it is to a rigid mythological past, it limits the craftpersons creativity, in that it forces the design of crafts to specifically cater for this market only. It is a market which is shaped by a large emigrant population orientated to souvenirs and tradition.

THE SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN REPORT

There has been no positive effort to track down a variety of Irish craftworkers to analyze their opinions on craft in Ireland today. "The Scandinavian Design in Ireland" report in 1961, was originally an analysis to help to develop the standard of Irish industrial design but there were many recommendations and criticisms which have helped to develop the state of craft right to the present day.

This report was compiled by a group of Scandinavian designers. The implementation of the report was given to the Irish Export trade board (Córas tráchtála) by the government. In confronting their assignment, Córas tráchtála felt that their first priority was to conduct a survey as to determine the existing situation of Irish design.

The Scandinavian countries were in fact demonstrating the Arts and crafts ideals in action, therefore, suitable candidates to try and improve Irish industry. By the 1950's, they had accomplished all that the Arts and Crafts movement had planned to achieve. Their industries, small in comparison to international standards, allowed them freedom to experiment. The designers in their industries worked as craftsmen and advisers, and if necessary, they supervised the production process so that they were part of the factory system but also retained their independence. Their Industries are craft-based, the Industrial revolution obviously did not effect them. (The report on crafts in Ireland, Sean O'Siochru, 1985, p.27).

Small workshops with small scale production can achieve greater, far-reaching effects. They cater for local needs while keeping money and work in an area. They help spread skill more evenly over the country, thus reducing the pressures of urban living. Job satisfaction is increased, being involved with the complete process has advantages for the individual. In Ireland a lot of these small workshops deteriorated as they found themselves unable to compete with the ever cheaper manufactured goods coming into the country.

The Irish public also wrongfully associated crafts and workshop production of crafts, as being specifically for the tourist market. The design report proposed that if Ireland was to be successful in its design (and production) of craft products it must increase the education of the public in standards of design, by better art and design education in schools and colleges and an overall interest and appreciation in our everyday lives. Design must be an "integral part of everyday living". This could also be achieved by the aid of the media and through a series of exhibitions of the best of Irish and international design to be held in easily accessible location, central to everyone. (The Scandinavian Design report, 1961, p.38).

This proposal has only been taken up and put into practice in the past twenty years with the launch in 1976, of the Annual Craft, Gift and Fashion Fair in Dublin, our main Craft Show each year and most important one. It may not have been around long enough to make an impact with the Irish public. The result being that there is still to a large extent; a lack of design appreciation in this country furthermore an over exposure to designs from other countries, through the various media, magazines, newspapers and television has not helped in developing our own specific Irish Style.

While many Irish designers/makers were perhaps willing to experiment with new products and designs, many were deterred from doing so by the existence of an unresponsive public. The Scandinavian design group suggested the establishing of a body of whose aims would be to promote public interest in matters of design. The result of which is the Craft Council of Ireland. (The Scandinavian report, 1961, p.35).

The group felt there was too much emphasis in Irish culture on ".... literature, theatre, the spoken word and abstract thinking, rather than creation by hand or machine and the visual arts". (Design report, 1961, p.1).

The Irish School child was not being helped to develop or appreciate good design and drawing skills so therefore how could we expect to have a "well-informed appreciative public" which is so necessary if we are to develop the craft industry in Ireland.

"good design is an undeniable necessity to the growth of our export trade, but standards cannot be raised for export goods only. The factors which determine the quality, good or bad, of the designs we produce are deeply rooted in our homes, our schools, our shops, our historical traditions and our whole way of living". (The Scandinavian design report, 1961, p.43)

However as long as this literary inclination and the preservation of the Irish Language takes precedence over the development of the Irish school child's design skills, we will continue to have generation after generation who are only partially visually aware.

The best-designed products they found in Ireland, were those based on traditional craft industries, for example - "David tweeds", probably the most valuable asset to Irish textiles. Hand-knitwear was another excellent craft industry and still is today. The production was based on Irish traditional patterns. The Scandinavian Design group sought to help us develop this traditional style by "putting on the market something out of the ordinary with distinct Irish quality". They felt it was essential for us to try and market what was our own Irish style and culture into our products instead of trying to produce something which was English or French in style. Irish tourists do not want to buy foreign-style Irish crafts. They suggested we develop what existed of the original Irish values and culture in our production work and not turn our backs on true, Irish tradition and certainly not adopt Scandinavian style. (Design report, 1961, p.3).

This was one of the problems to be found in Irish Textiles, especially where we were attempting to replace the foreign - manufactured and imported products by imitating and manufacturing a great many styles with a mixture of foreign styles, and production techniques. "Instead of being Irish, our textile goods appeared French, English or Japanese," which was a disastrous approach. We needed to produce unique design and quality which eventually would be more successful. **(Design report 1961, P.10)** Having discussed various aspects of Irish design and craft, they suggested that we develop our design skills by establishing proper educational facilities for designers and "improving the general public's perception of good design in Irish craft by encouraging small exhibitions from abroad which would have an educational value for the general public" and would also be an inspiration to the Irish Craft Industry. **(Design report 1961, P.26)**

They felt that the Department stores of Ireland could help in arousing general good design consciousness by pointing out the best of what the Irish Craft sector had to offer by having a wide range of Irish Crafts in stock.

Though their stay in Ireland was brief they were still able to form a critical impression on the situation of Irish Craft and design in Ireland and the degree of importance which our society attaches to it. In their opinion -

"Ireland by virtue of her lack of sophistication in matters of design, has a unique opportunity, denied by circumstances to many more developed countries, of making a great contribution not alone to her own prosperity and culture, but to the culture of western Europe. We believe that with courage and foresight the possibilities can be realised" **(Design report 1961, P.4)**

THE REPORT ON CRAFTS IN IRELAND

The Scandinavian group had mentioned the idea of making a survey of "all 'man-made' Ireland." This survey was actually completed in 1985 by the Industrial Development Authority (I.D.A.). The need for this report derived from the fact that there was no reliable statistics on the craft sector in Ireland, nothing that defined the meaning of craft or how craft had developed since the Scandinavian Design report in 1961. This report was needed for to provide information on the role, importance and current state of craftworkers in the 1980's and for recommendations on how craft could be developed for the future.

"The estimated out put in the craft sector for 1983 was £20 million. This figure represented 0.23% of personal consumer expenditure in Ireland." This shows that craft work then represented a tiny proportion of the market for goods. This was not always the case. In the distant past, craft products held the majority of the market and crafts people then had a relatively high standard of living. **(Report on Crafts in Ireland, Sean O'Siochru, 1985, P.1)**

The establishment of the Industrial Development Authority or the I.D.A. in the 1935 was instigated because the need to expand and encourage the export of Irish manufactured goods was recognised as essential to overcome Ireland's industrial difficulties but since 1967 the I.D.A. have been helping hand craft industries, including the weaving industry to secure finance, suitable buildings and equipment.

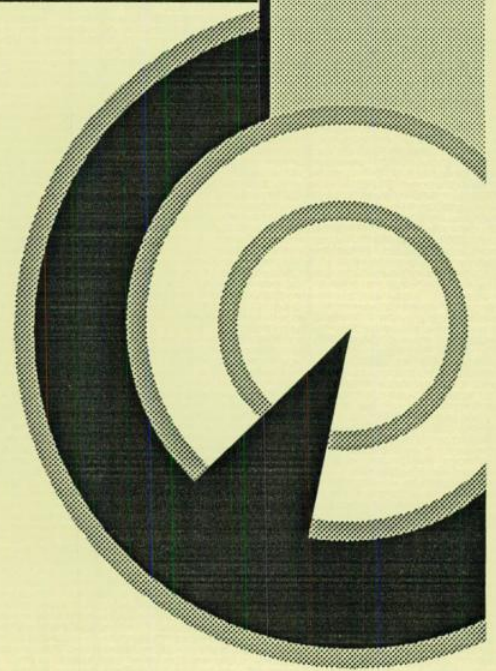
The I.D.A. gives special consideration to the craft industry because they believe that-

* Ireland has a long tradition of craft skills which is worth developing.

- * A number of craft products which are produced in a "cottage industry environment have penetrated world markets and are recognised internationally as Irish products e.g. lace, hand-knits, hand-woven fabrics and tweeds.
- * Many of the craft products which are distinctly Irish in design and reflect the country's heritage e.g. Celtic designs in jewellery, stained glass, tapestries etc, are in their minds worth promoting.
- * A traditional craft may evolve into a large industry with many ^bjobs e.g. crystal glass.
- * Craft production provides worthwhile and satisfying jobs which are particularly beneficial in the smaller towns.

This 1985, "Report on Crafts in Ireland" survey "consisted of a lengthy questionnaire sent out to craft workers and craft retail outlets and a series of structured interviews with other state agencies." This survey contained an ideal background on the situation of Irish craft and which Irish design should develop. The other purpose served by this survey was the establishment of what was good in Irish craft design, and full details of all the traditional skills, knitting, weaving etc. The survey can clarify the situation in Ireland for people like ^{the} Scandinavian Design Group and for the craftsmen and women of Ireland. **(Report on crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.2).**

chapter 2



CHAPTER TWO

The Scandinavia Design group had mentioned, many times in their report, the need for government assistance in helping to revive craft in Ireland." In particular the government have a most significant contribution to make towards raising the level of design by reviewing the design....." (The Scandinavian Design Report, 1961, P.4).

"**AN BORD FAILTE**, the Irish tourist board, was the first state agency to take an active and on-going interest in crafts. The interest came about in an indirect way. Research in the 1950's showed that spending by tourists was considerably below what it might have been because of the lack of durable functional quality items on sale, most of which were imported. To capitalise on this potential market, Bord Failte set out to persuade Irish industry to gear itself to produce and market for the tourist sector".

"The Bord had no specific interest in developing the crafts industry at the time, nor was it interested in differentiating crafts from manufactured gifts or souvenirs. Its primary concern remained visitors spending in general but it was drawn into the crafts by the absence of government policy towards the sector". Developing crafts as an economic sector and as a cultural expression are according to Bord Failte the responsibility of the other government agencies. A part of their plan to promote crafts was also to get other agencies to promote it too". (**Report on crafts in Ireland, Sean O'Siochru, 1985, P.27**).

After the "Design in Ireland" report 1961 by the Scandinavian designers, appreciation and production of design in Ireland was found wanting. though sensitively written, it did not mince words, ".... we found many products which were badly designed and executed and which, in our view, would not have the slightest chance of competing successfully on

the world market". **(Scandinavian Design report, 1961, P.3).**

In response, by the government, to try and improve the standard of crafts, the Kilworth craft training workshops in ^{North} West Cork, founded in 1981. They offered places to people in which "to work, sell and learn". **(Report on crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.4).**

THE KILWORTH WORKSHOPS closed down and re-opened in Kilkenny in 1988, and it is now called 'the crescent workshops'. "The product development and business skills course", at the crescent workshop is a 40 week programme catering for "craft design graduates who intend to set up their own workshops, or to design for industry". They receive expert advice on design and production as well as business and marketing skills. "It was developed in response to the councils perception that many start-up craft businesses needed business and product development training if they were to be successful and flourish in the medium to long term **(Crafts Council of Ireland - Annual report, 1992, P.8).**

THE CRESCENT WORKSHOPS, "though the emphasis of its design efforts has switched to the industrial sector it has retained its interest in crafts". While the crescent workshops "main energies have been moving from crafts to large industry and tendency if the I.D.A. has been in the opposite direction". In 1979, the I.D.A. introduced the crafts development programme, under which by 1982, £2.2 million had been granted to 324 craft projects with job approvals for 946 craftworkers. The I.D.A. also initiated the craft cluster idea. The first, developed in conjunction with Dublin County Council, was in Marley Park, followed by others. **(Report on Crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.37).**

I asked Emer Ferran the Crescent Workshop course supervisor and information officer, on how they go about preparing people for the craft industry, she said:-

We look for a good design idea and product, a gallery or craft retail outlet. Obviously it must be commercial and as unique as possible. They design and produce their own work and we impart business skills to them". **(Emer Ferran, the Crescent workshops, Kilkenny, 27.11.1993).**

THE POTTERY SKILLS COURSE:

The Council's other directly - run training programme, 'the pottery skills course' at Thomastown, County Kilkenny, provides young people, who have an ability for handling clay, with the skills necessary to find work within studio potteries so that these businesses can expand their production. There is a demand for high quality ceramics and the initiation of the Thomastown programme has meant that individual pottery manufacturers are provided with a source of skilled labour which otherwise would not be available.

THE IRISH EXPORT BOARD - (CORAS TRACHTALA):

The Irish Export Board, Coras Trachtala, "during the 1970's and 80's had been quite active in crafts", giving advice, organising exhibitions and standards at trade fair, **(The Annual crafts, gifts and fashion fair, "Showcase' Dublin")** the role of which I discuss in chapter three **(Report on crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.33).**

However similarly to Bord Failte Coras Trachtala does not address itself to crafts directly. 'Their concern in this area is with 'gifts and giftware', in particular for the Irish-American ethnic market.

THE CRAFT COUNCIL OF IRELAND:

The only body dealing specifically with the crafts is the Craft Council of Ireland. The Scandinavian design group actually suggested "the formation of such a body, one of whose aims should be to promote public interest in matters of design". **(The Scandinavian Design report, 1961, P.35).**

"Each Scandinavian country has a National society for Arts, crafts and Industrial Design which exercises considerable influence". "They serve as a forum for artists and manufacturers, for private individuals and institutions, for industry and government, and it is these organisations who, by promoting exhibitions in different parts of the world, have immensely helped the success of Scandinavian exports".

The Craft Council of Ireland is the national development agency for the contemporary crafts. The crafts council is state-aided through the I.D.A. It was initiated in 1971 by the Royal Dublin Society (R.D.S.) - Today's venue for the Annual Craft, Gift and Fashion Fair, Showcase Dublin - and it is a voluntary organisation. Its members are organisations of craftsmen and semi - state bodies with a particular craft relevance. Through its members, the council has close connections with the state Agencies which offer grants or special services of relevance to the craftsmen.

The Irish guild of weavers spinners and Dyers' and The National College of Art and Design are among its members. Some of the services which the Council provides are the organisation of Trade fairs, Seminars, Exhibitions and Promotions. The council identifies itself as the organised voice of the 'artist-craftsman'.

It has two primary objectives:

- (1) To develop the market for Irish Craftwork and
- (2) To encourage the highest standards of excellence in design and making.

"The craft sector of Ireland has a unique and important role to play in the Government's overall plan to tackle unemployment by building up small indigenous industry. currently there are 6,000 people employed full-time in the sector with a further 10,000 being involved in a part-time or seasonal capacity". (**Crafts Council of Ireland, Annual Report, 1992, P.2).**

There is a considerable potential to increase employment above these levels and the crafts council has a key role to play to enhance further growth in the sector.

During 1992, they undertook a comprehensive programme of activities in the promotion, education and training areas. For the coming years, they must strengthen their efforts in the marketing area and increase the public awareness of the quality and beauty of today's craftwork, particularly as functional and decorative pieces for home and office and also as gift items.

Anyone who spends more than 90% of their time engaged in craft work for a living is eligible to join for a nominal fee, but standards are kept high through exhibitions and competitions.

The crafts Council has its headquarters in the Powerscourt Townhouse Centre in Dublin where it has a shop, a gallery and an information office. The shop is quite new, and is "a place for selling innovative one-off work, developing a clientele seeking objects of distinction for interior design, gifts and presentations. As well it has extended the range of work and to include lower-priced items, books and cards so that there is something for everyone who visits." (**Crafts Council of Ireland, Annual Report, 1992, P.7).**

The Crafts Council's Gallery is the only venue in Ireland dedicated to showing contemporary craftwork from Ireland and abroad and therefore plays an important role in stimulating discussion on craft and introducing new work to makers and the public. It has become tremendously successful with the public and has become an important showcase for the work of young designers especially.

The Council receives a large number of requests for information on all

sorts of topics, they also collect a lot of very useful market research and information about overseas opportunities through their contacts. They provide this information and advice to makers, retailers, students and the general public.

Part of the Craft Council's role is to develop the market for crafts, the council should look to the possibilities of commissioning for:

"Corporate gifts and presentation items, for public and private buildings and interiors, for parks, streets and other public spaces. Commissioned work represents a real challenge to the maker. The chance to work to a brief, to experiment with new materials and techniques, perhaps to work on a larger scale, and to work with other professionals such as architects, planners and interior designers." **(The crafts council of Ireland, Annual Report, 1991, P.4)**

Also during 1991 the councils computerised database became fully operative and is now being widely used. It provides a comprehensive list of practising craftworkers, craft outlets, raw materials sources and craft courses which is constantly being up-dated. The number of craftworkers on the councils register is now over 500 and continues to increase. The register is open to any full-time craftworker practising a craft recognised by the craft council.

The Craft Council in 1991 produced a craft map which contains details of 250 of Ireland's leading craft studio and craft shops. The map will be of particular interest to tourists and those are interested in craft products.

The ability of the crafts council and grant aid projects is small, and money comes from SER TEC the European Social and Educational fund and from other European bodies and usually goes towards seminars, exhibitions and associations meetings. Though they cannot grant aid individual

business, craftworkers are assisted in seeking grant aid from the I.D.A.
(The Crafts Council of Ireland, Annual Report, 1992, P.2)

As far as the main trust of state agency policy during the 1960's and early 1970's was concerned, crafts did not figure prominently, yet through interest and effort of certain individuals within the state agencies, there was some movement and much of the ground work laid for further development.

As the emphasis shifted away from large industry during the 1970's, small industries and to a lesser degree crafts, became the focus of attention. Emer Ferran claims that "The Irish Craft industry is a slow growth industry but growing all the same". **(Emer Ferran, Kilkenny, 27-11-93).**

The Irish Crafts industry is riding out the recession better than most says Leslie Reed, training and education officer for the Crafts Council of Ireland, in an interview in 1992. The fact that craft-based companies tend to remain small and have low borrowings, he says, "means they can more easily make the necessary cutbacks to survive economic downturns." **(Leslie Reed, The Irish Times, 10-12-1992).**

The late 1970's and early 1980's were tough times for craft companies when value added tax on their products peaked at 35 per cent. The sector survived that period well, says Reed, and was in good shape to respond to the craft business upturn of the mid-80's. He estimated that the total craft business in Ireland is now worth an annual £100 million and employs about 7,000 people which is likely to be more now in 1994 due to the growth and the development of the industry in recent years.

Craft companies range from a small one-man operation, such as the embroiderer, Janice Gilmore from Belfast, who produces a range of embroidered jewellery and bags and prefers to work alone, she says:-

"I have a placement student at the moment, to give her work experience but I enjoy the making of my work too much just to over-see someone else making it. **(A Craft Council information leaflet on Janice Gilmore, 1994)** and much larger, craft companies such as "Weave O' The Irish", in Drogheda who produce woven shawls, jackets and other fashion items, mainly for the export market.

However the average company registered with the crafts council employs between two and three people, like Tile works, who are Orla Kaminska and Laura O'Hagan - designers and architectural ceramists. They make files and panels for architectural commission and also produce mosaic and tile decorated tables and mirrors. They, like Janice Gilmore, want to keep their business small. "The majority of these", according to Leslie Reed, "have no wish to expand". He sees the individual craft companies' "unwillingness to expand" as beneficial to the craft sector. **(Leslie Reed, The Irish Times, 10-12-1991).**

"Increased demand for hand crafted goods in recent years" has resulted in a proliferation of new companies rather than the expansion of individual businesses", Reed believes. This means that capital investment is more widely spread. Today, the craft companies are not burdened with the large debts that are common in other commercial sectors and, consequently, they are in a better position to make cut-backs if necessary.

According to Leslie Reed "the worldwide recession has had its effects on the craft business in Ireland, but, he says, "to my knowledge no craft company has gone out of business this year (1992). Compromises may have to be made and craft companies may have to let people go, but so far the Crafts Council has not heard that this is happening. In fact some craft companies are taking on people". **(Leslie Reed, The Irish Times, 10-12-1992).**



Figure one - Weave o' the Irish - Handwoven Garments.

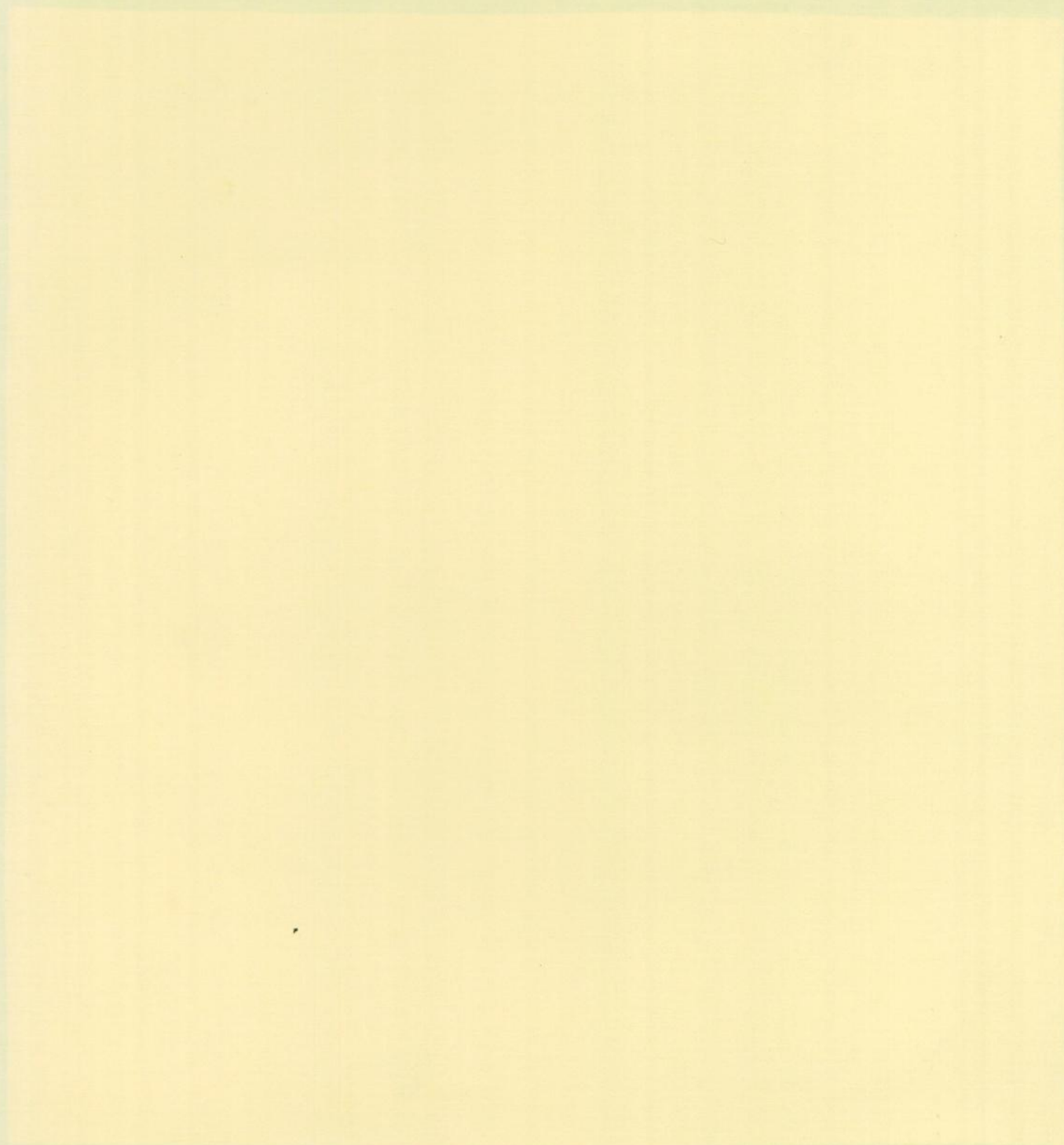
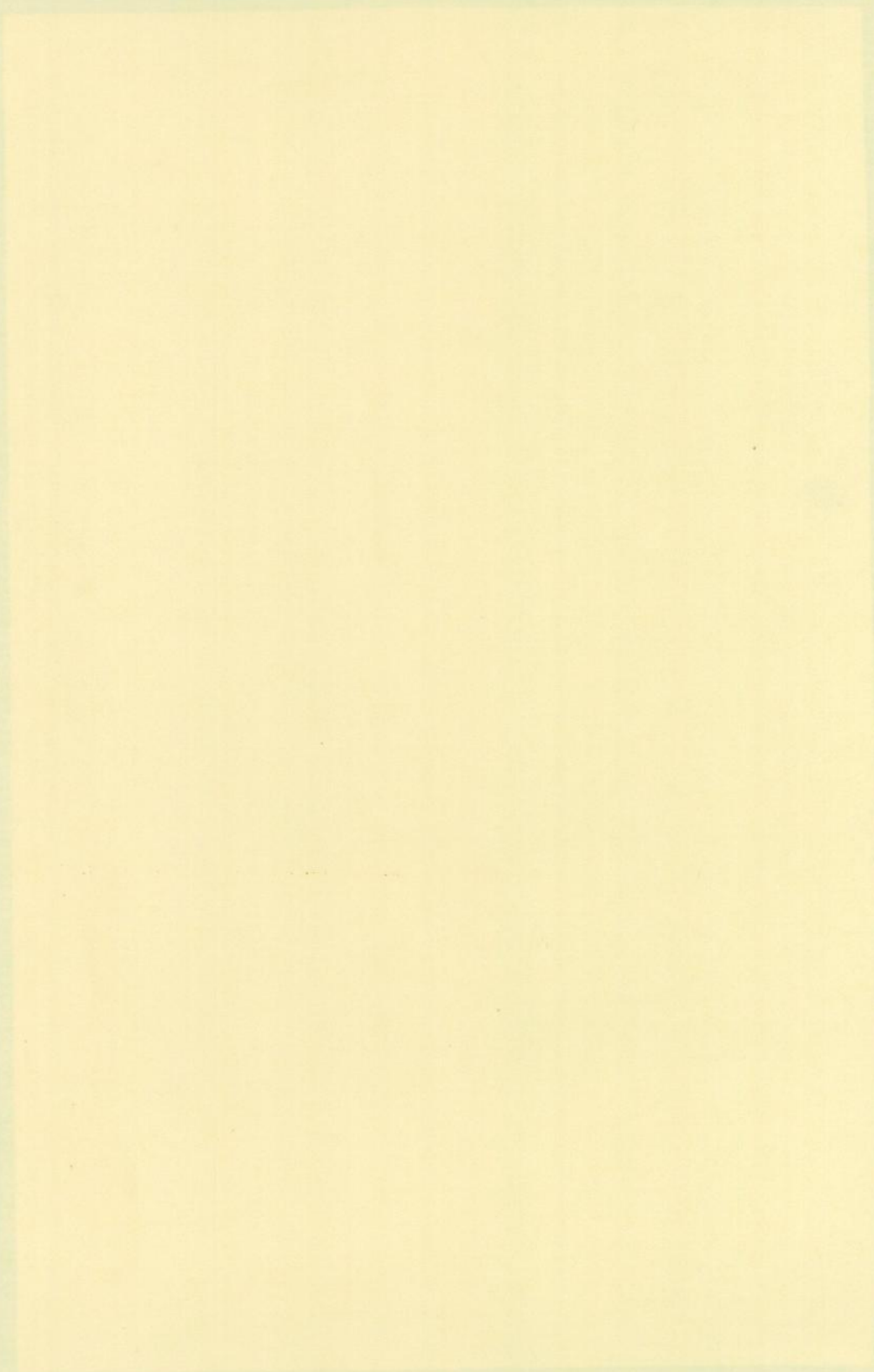




Figure two - Weave O' the Irish - Handwoven Garments.



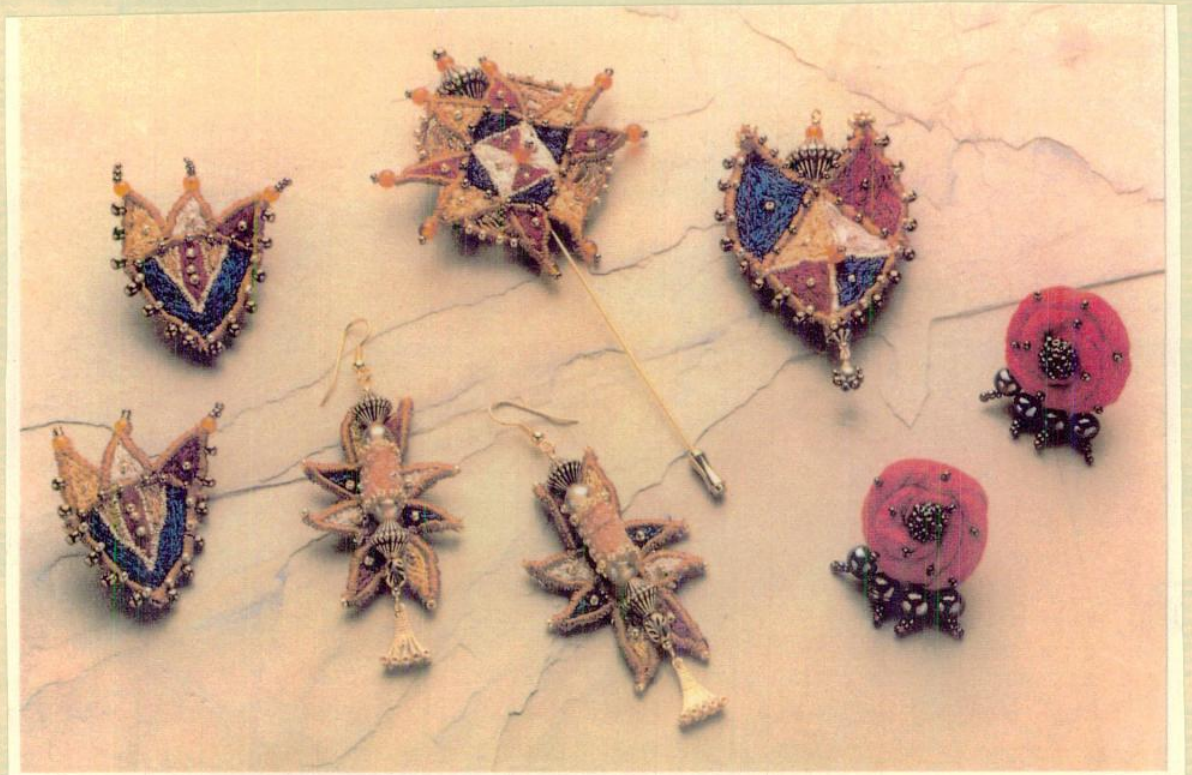
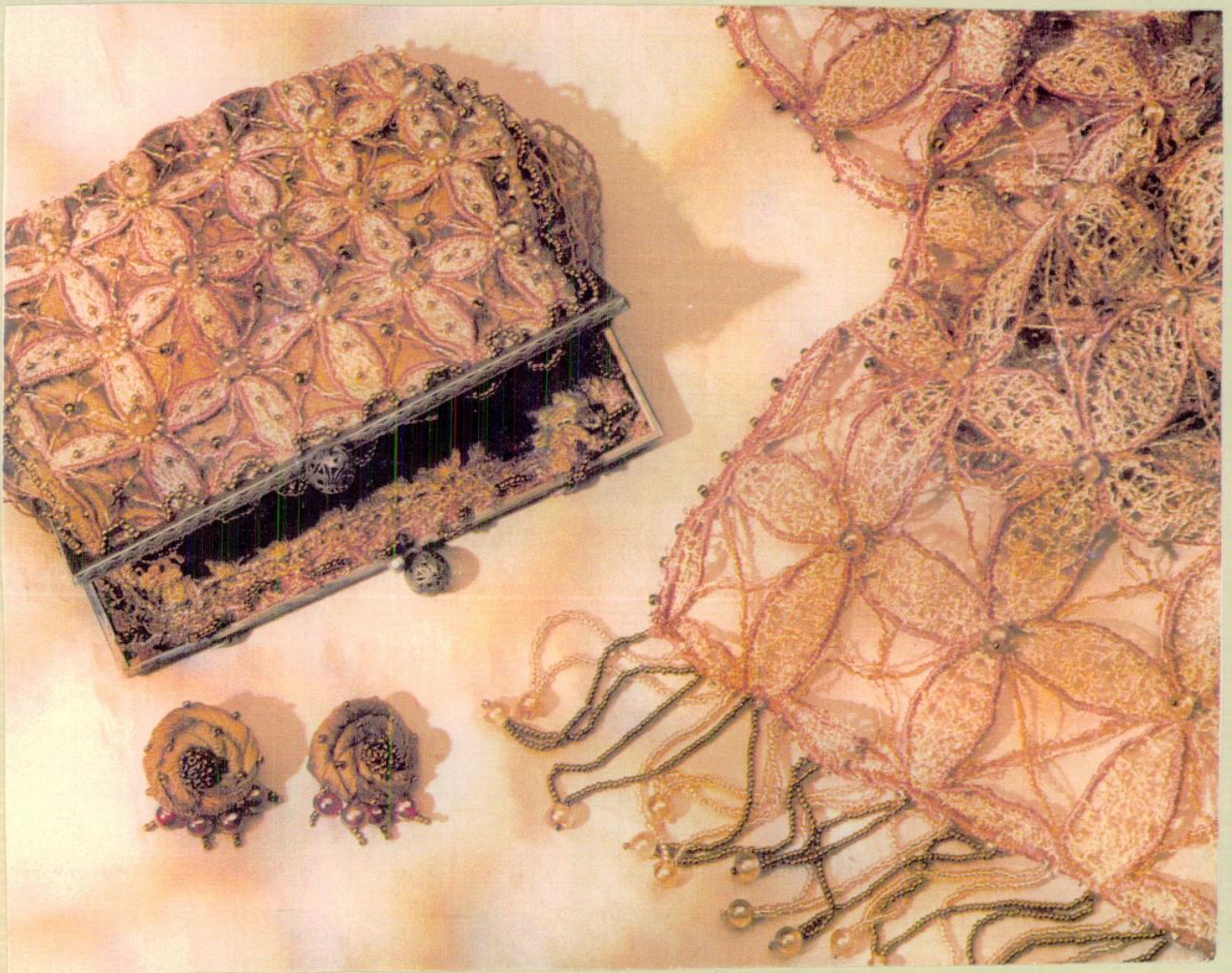


Figure three - Embroidered jewellery & bags - By Janice Gilmore
 " Pageant Jewellery "

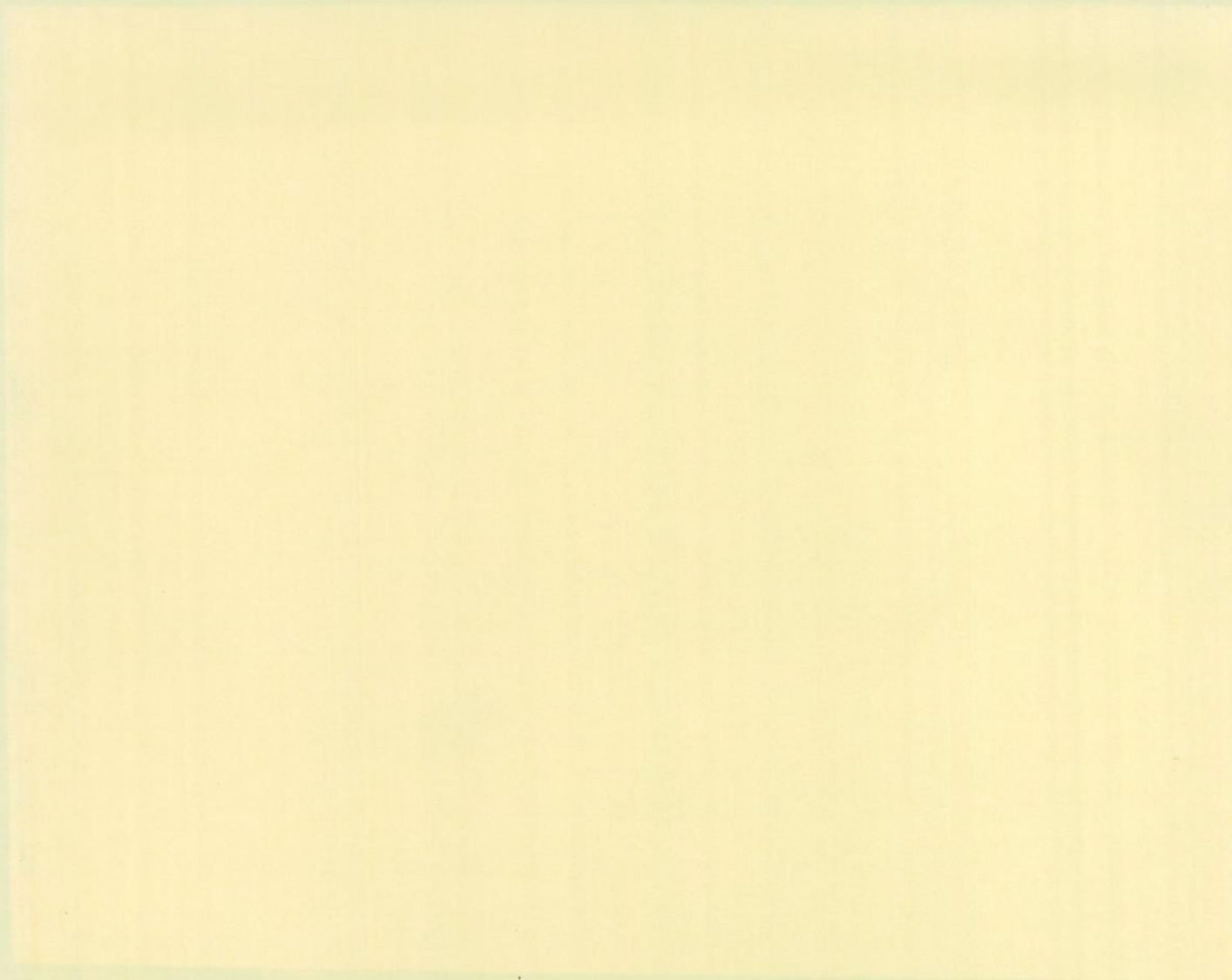
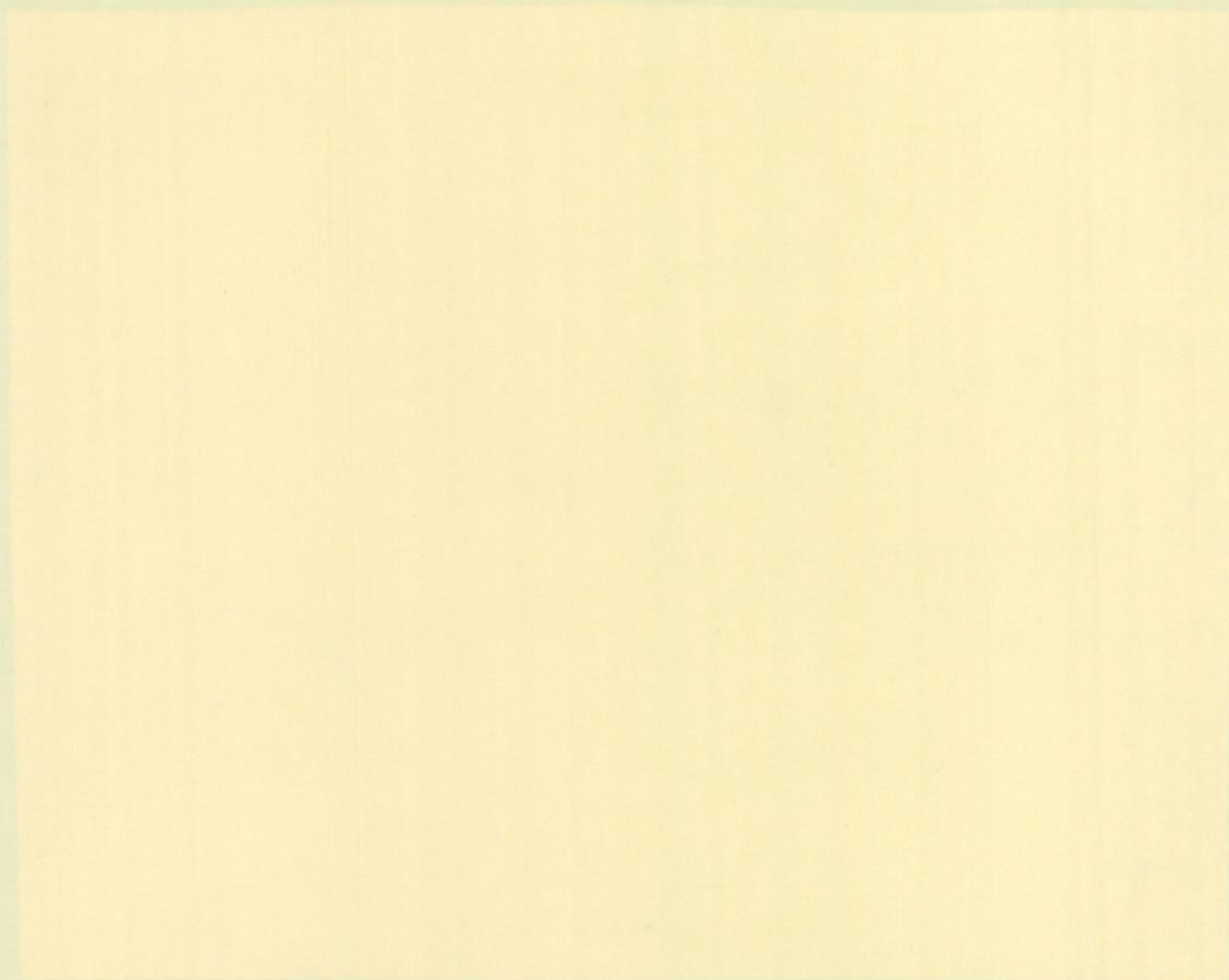




Figure four - " THE TILE WORKS "

Handmade decorated tables & mirrors.



x

THE CRESCENT WORKSHOP

The Craft Council of Ireland is the state body responsible for the development of the craft industry. One of their principle objectives for the nineties is to insure that the most dedicated and talented students from the craft and design courses in Ireland establish themselves in professional workshops. This applies to a whole range of craftsmen and designers, from those who seek to produce for galleries, to those who wish to work in established industries or to establish businesses of their own. Therefore the Crafts Council set up The Crescent Workshop business studies programme to help young artists, craftsmen and designers make the difficult transition from student to professional.

We regret that The Crescent Workshop is not open to the public but you are welcome to come into our gallery where you will find both the production of the Workshop and of some of Ireland's leading craftsmen.

GALLERY



Opening times: 11am-6 pm
Monday to Saturday



Figure five - " THE CRESENT WORKSHOP "

&

The Craft Council of Irelands,

Figure six

Business & Design Course, Kilkenny.

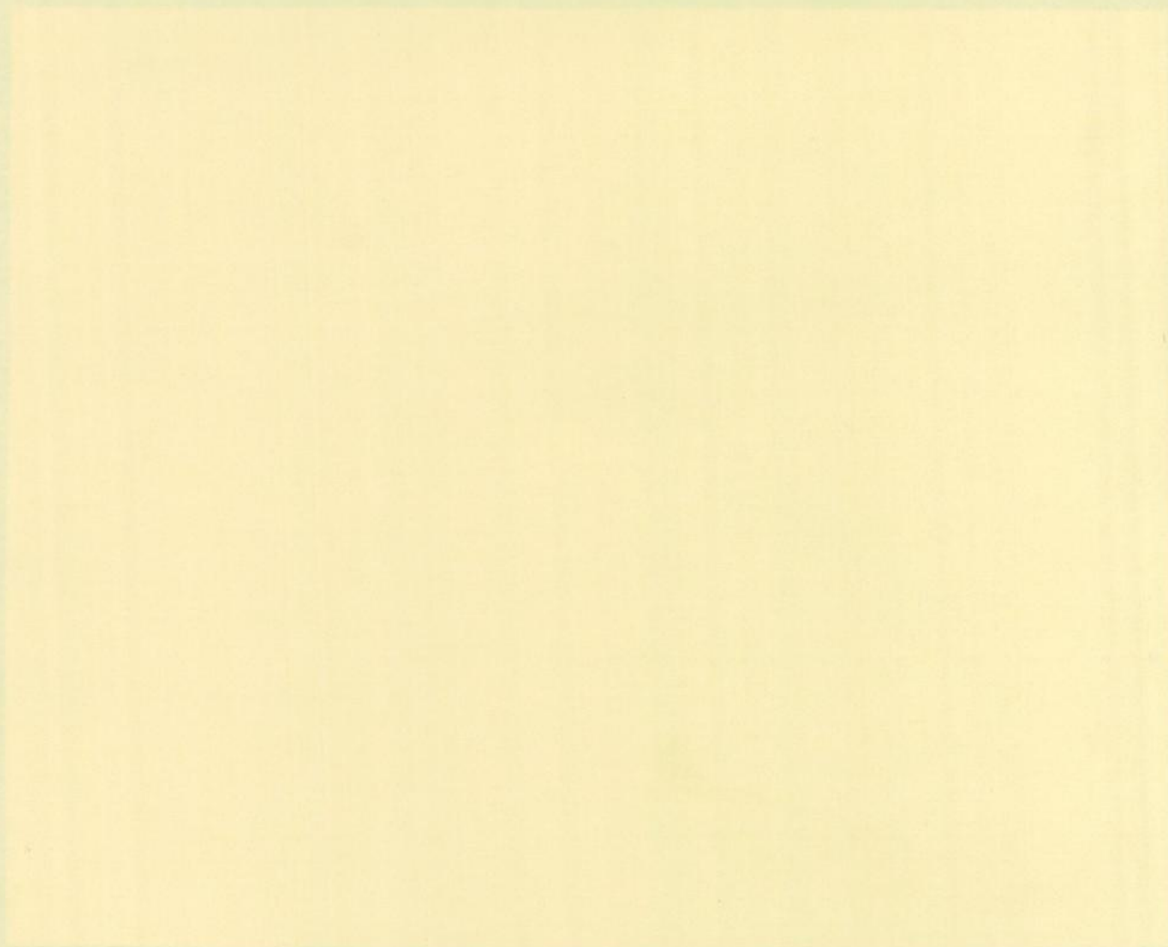
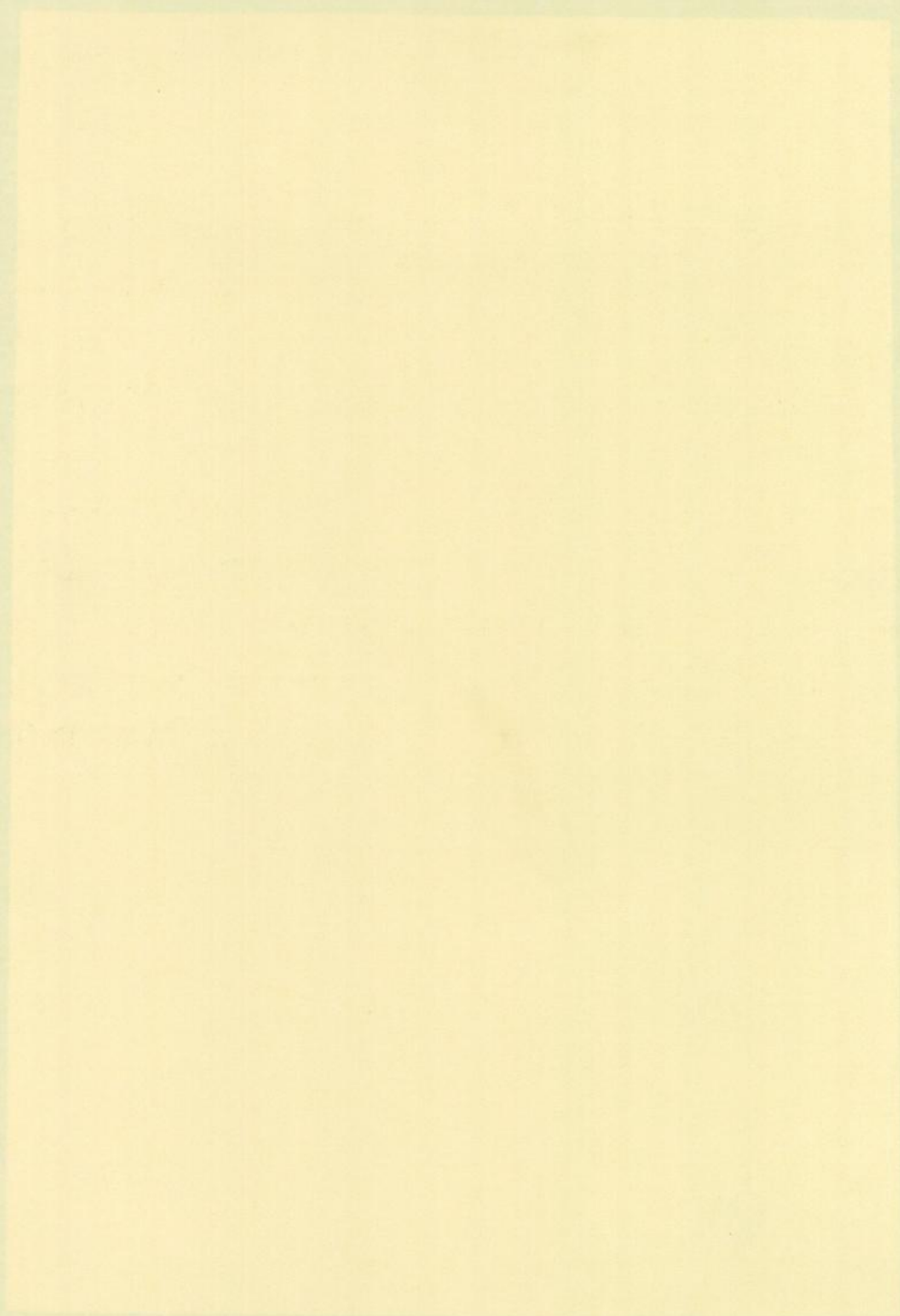




Figure seven - The Crescent Workshop - " Gallery Shop "

Selling merchandise produced in the Workshop.

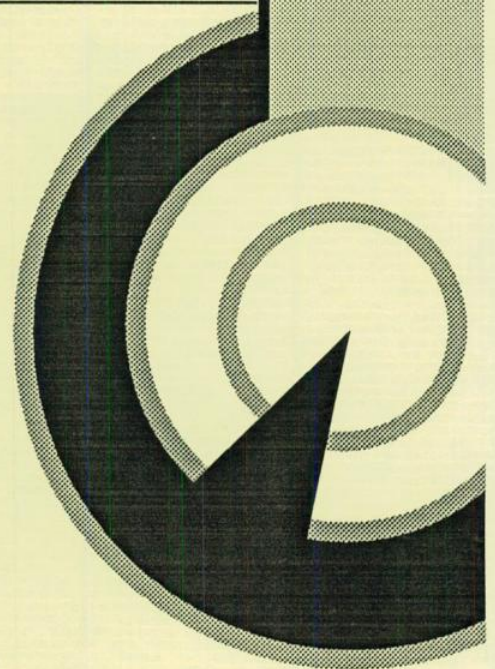


Even in those hard times new craft business were springing up. Reed acknowledges the role played by the I.D.A. in this. He says: "In the past five years the I.D.A. Employment Grant has been the single most beneficial thing that has helped set up craft companies.

He points to the cost effectiveness of setting up a craft business. He says that the average I.D.A. grant to the craft sector is about £3,000 - to finance capital equipment. This compares favourably with the I.D.A.'s figure of £14,000 to create and maintain one job in manufacturing industry.

For the craftsmen and women of Ireland "Small is beautiful". They run small businesses in a small country and they can see the advantages of that. Their approach to their business is responsible and long-term, and with the help of the relevant government bodies, previously mentioned in this chapter, those businesses who are innovative, professional and flexible will develop further.

chapter 3



CHAPTER THREE

Within this Chapter is:

1. An examination of the role of the craft fair - especially the 'Annual Crafts, Gift and Fashion Fair, Showcase Dublin - and how it helps the commercial side of craft, and encourages the promotion of crafts to the home and international markets.
2. The sources of finance available to Irish Craftworkers.

CHAPTER 3

The most successful enterprise organised by the Crafts Council is the 'Annual Craft, Gift and Fashion Fair' (Showcase Dublin). It has grown into the most important international fair in Ireland and the largest order taking one, with over 350 exhibitors in the general area and 100 in the Craft Councils own selected area. The Craft Village, which represents all aspects of **Irish Craft Industry**.

This special 'craft village' is for showing the work of the individual craftsperson. It forms the centre piece in the main hall of the Royal Dublin Society buildings, the R.D.S., and it is here that unusual ceramics, sophisticated furniture and jewellery of the highest quality is displayed. This is an exclusive area set aside for the craft councils chosen favourites, where talented and innovative craftworkers will be exhibiting. The fair organisers (The Craft Council) clearly does not want the individual studio craft worker to get over shadowed by the larger, more industry-based craftspeople at the fair, so they are each put in their own areas in the R.D.S.

The Scandinavian design report group originally suggested this kind of an exhibition for crafts - "All these activities, exhibitions, courses, competitions etc. should culminate in an Irish Design Year, with a national exhibition in Dublin" (**The Scandinavian Design in Ireland, 1961, P.3**).

The fair brings together, under one roof, a wide range and diversity of work from all over Ireland, such as, glass and leather-goods, custom-made furniture, hand painted silks, crafted silver and gold and decorative ceramics.

- Intricate beaded work - pageant jewellery, Belfast.
- Handwoven shawls and accessories - Tim Roberts, Belfast.
- The majority of the exhibitors are highly professional, and apart from

the expected categories such as pottery, glass, knitwear and tweed clothing, there are very original stands, showing unexpected things.

The charm of the craft fair is in its inventiveness and seeing the skill that has been put into each item. Some of the country's leading makers of knitted and woven textiles, as well as jewellery, ceramics and others, will be there to exhibit for the three-day fair. It has been described as "one of the most interesting and exciting events of the whole year", and is recognised as being one of the best organised and most successful craft trade fairs in Europe. (Knitwear being the most successful export).

The object of the fair is to sell to buyers from overseas and to home buyers. The fair could be described as a massive shop window of what is available on the Irish Craft scene. There are people working in crafts all over Ireland, some 6,000 of them in small and larger operations throughout the country. They work in their own homes, or workshops, in craft centres or craft clusters, often in quite remote areas. For the general public the only opportunity to see much of the fine craftwork being produced in this country has been at the craft fair.

Many of today's successes are people who started with a particular craft in a small way and who have built up a sizeable little business over the years. The fair is a wonderful showplace for the products of the smaller workers. It may be the only opportunity for them to meet buyers from overseas. **(Sunday Business Post, 13-01-1991)**. The discussions at the fair are less about looms and potters wheels and more on the subject of marketing, selling, product development and even technology.

Originally set up in 1977 as a place where buyers and craftworkers could meet annually, the first Irish Crafts fair had 35 exhibitors. Now in its eighteenth year, Showcase 1994 has over 400 stands. Only 25 per cent of which are occupied by individual craftworkers. **(The Irish Times, 18-01-1994)**

It used to have an Irish cottage look with people drinking pints and chatting while the odd customer wandered past. But now the presentation is more polished and more professional in the modern sense of the word. **(Sylvia Thompson, Crafts: from isolation to saturation, Irish Times, 16-01-1994).**

The fair is the single biggest source of orders in Ireland for the Irish Craft, Gift and Knitwear sectors. The premier buying venue.

Just under 60% of craftworkers in the 1985 Craft survey 'exported at least some of their goods predictably the United States was the most common distinction, Europe was next and then the U.K. and Canada. **(Report Crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.45)**

It is difficult to obtain reliable figures on either the amount or destination of crafts exported since customs and other sources of statistics do not have a separate craft category. However on the basis of Coras Trachtala investigations and the craft survey it is safe to assume that the fair is by far the largest market mainly Aran sweaters and jewellery (mainly claddagh types) and anything which has a distinctive Irish style. Most of the U.S. customers have purchased goods at the Annual Craft, Gift and Fashion Fair in the R.D.S. each year since 1977.

THE AMERICAN TOURIST

"American visitors have a romantic rural image of Ireland a country of beautiful scenery and friendly people and one where craft skills are still practiced. For those of Irish extraction (whose comprise a majority) a holiday in Ireland is a nostalgic and sentimental journey. It is planned long in advance" **(Design in Ireland, 1985, P.72).**

"Americans also tend to buy goods that are typically and identifiable Irish"

Waterford Crystal, Donegal Tweed, Aran Sweaters, Linen, Lace and Belleek China Known high quality is a significant factor to the status conscious Americans and in keeping with their image of Ireland they prefer goods to be hand-made. And there is considerable interest in actually seeing goods produced". **(Report Crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.72)**

But they tend to leave little time for personal exploration carefully mapping out their days or in the case of package tours having someone else do it for them. Consequently they prefer to shop in Department Stores where a wide variety of goods is on offer in an atmosphere which allows for browsing and comparison of goods and prices. The like of Kilkenny Design shop in Dublin and the Blarney Woollen Mills attract large numbers of American Tourists which probably has a lot to do with their similarity to department stores, "the wide open spaces and relaxed atmosphere clear display and a wide variety of goods". **(Report on Crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.73)**

Many Americans stayed at home in 1991 due mainly to the gulf war and in part to the world recession - when the weak dollar and the air travel ban during the gulf war dampened sales to the Northern American market. The craft sector like industry in general, performed with some difficulty that year. Also it was a disappointing year for Irish tourism with the numbers visiting Ireland being lower than expected. Tourists are a particular important outlet for Irish craftwork. But there was an increase in the amount of European buyers that year.

Now with the growth of economic confidence in the U.S. it should still provide a major outlet for Irish craft produce for a long time yet. The U.S. buyers represent Irish specialist stores, mainstream department store groups and mailorder companies.

An Bord Trachtála took action to lighten the problems of the craft produ-

cers and organised a follow up Trade Fair in Atlantic, Georgia (U.S.A.) to take Irish Craftwork to U.S. buyers who had been reluctant to travel during the gulf crisis.

They are also responsible for encouraging British gift shop owners to buy Irish goods raising the prospect that foreign visitors and Britain may return home bearing Irish gifts. The products have to be of a very high quality to compete in the export market. The gift market has a huge potential of Irish craft companies.

While the craft sector might be small, it is of growing importance and crafts and souvenirs are an essential edition to the tourist industry. This industry can bring special benefits to Ireland in terms of increased revenue from abroad and increased jobs, therefore resulting in less unemployment which in turn keeps the government happy.

Showcase 1992 was a great improvement in terms of sales after the gulf-war affected 1991 Showcase Fair. This is due to an Bord Trachtala's marketing campaign in promoting the fair in the U.S., Japan and Europe orders of £13 million which follow up orders doubled and trebled through the year. **(The Irish Press, 18-01-1992)**

Although the majority of buyers still come from the Irish gift and tourist shops around the country overseas buyers especially from mainland Europe are on the increase. But "to expand we need to get the non-ethnic buyers and there has been an increase in French, German and Italian buyers of knitwear, ceramics and general textiles", says Sean O'Farrell of the Crafts Council. "The ethnic market in the United States is great but there is no real growth in it since the younger generation of emigrants are less sentimental about Ireland, he adds. **(Irish Times, 19-01-1993)**

Drawing inspiration from the past and blending it imaginatively with

contemporary ideas and techniques, Irish Crafts have a great deal to offer both the people of this country and the discerning visitor.

"The call of the wild is so strong for craftworkers that many of them find themselves working in small studios on isolated tips of Ireland, far from the market place that determines the viability of their work. Come January, they are drawn to the capital for what is often the only annual large scale exhibition of their work. Showcase, the Irish Craft, Gift and Fashion Fair, then becomes the gathering for hundreds of craftworkers around the country". **(Sylvia Thompson, crafts from isolation to saturation, The Irish Times, 16-01-1994)**

Living in a quiet place means they can develop new designs all the time - Time was when Artist/Craftmen were mere hungry peasants but these days they prefer a living wage.

Going to the fair helps to keep their standards quite high and gives them a focus point for presenting new designs to the market.

Most craftworkers say that it is expensive but worth it. It is an ideal time because it gives them the opportunity to plan their year, judging from the orders at the fair.

It is good to find that in this age of technology some businesses have retained a strong handicraft input - such as in the case of the jewellery world.

My own impressions of the fair, knitwear is the first thing that comes to mind, and I am not just talking about Aran knitwear, but a broad range of colourful, well-designed and fashionable knitwear. There seemed to be so many knitwear stands, and one of the better ones was "Mary Barry, of the Shandon Craft Centre in Cork. Mary believes "the public tend to

spend more on an item to wear than on something of the same money value on an item for the home". **(Mary Barry, National College of Art and Design, 09-12-1993)**

There were many unusual and innovative products on show, for example the ceramic work of Diane McCormick. I find the ceramic section, perhaps, the most original of the crafts in the fair but I suppose there is a limit to the number of new crafts which one can expect each year.

Overall I felt there was a poor standard of woven products there was no innovative colours and design ideas, every weaver's stand had the same style of woven shawl, the same colour palette (quite safe and plain) and the quality of some was poor. The work of Tim Roberts, I felt was the best in the woven textiles section. His colours were more experimental, just simply colourful and his designs were a little different. Tweeds have become more dashing and colourful judging by the standard of "Weave of the Irish".

There is too much of the same familiar production show each year, and some craftspeople could benefit from better marketing and selling skills and presentation but the majority of the stands were very professional in their presentation.

DEVELOPING THE HOME MARKET

Wandering around the various exhibitors I saw that there were many products that were not traditionally Irish and had broken into the non-ethnic market. The reason for this is due to the complaint of many crafts people that Irish goods tend only to be thought of as traditional items, particularly in the home market.

The design in Ireland report emphasised the fact that Scandinavian crafts



Figure eight - " Decorative Ceramics " by Diane Mc Cormick
The Annual Craft, Gift & Fashion Fair - 1994.

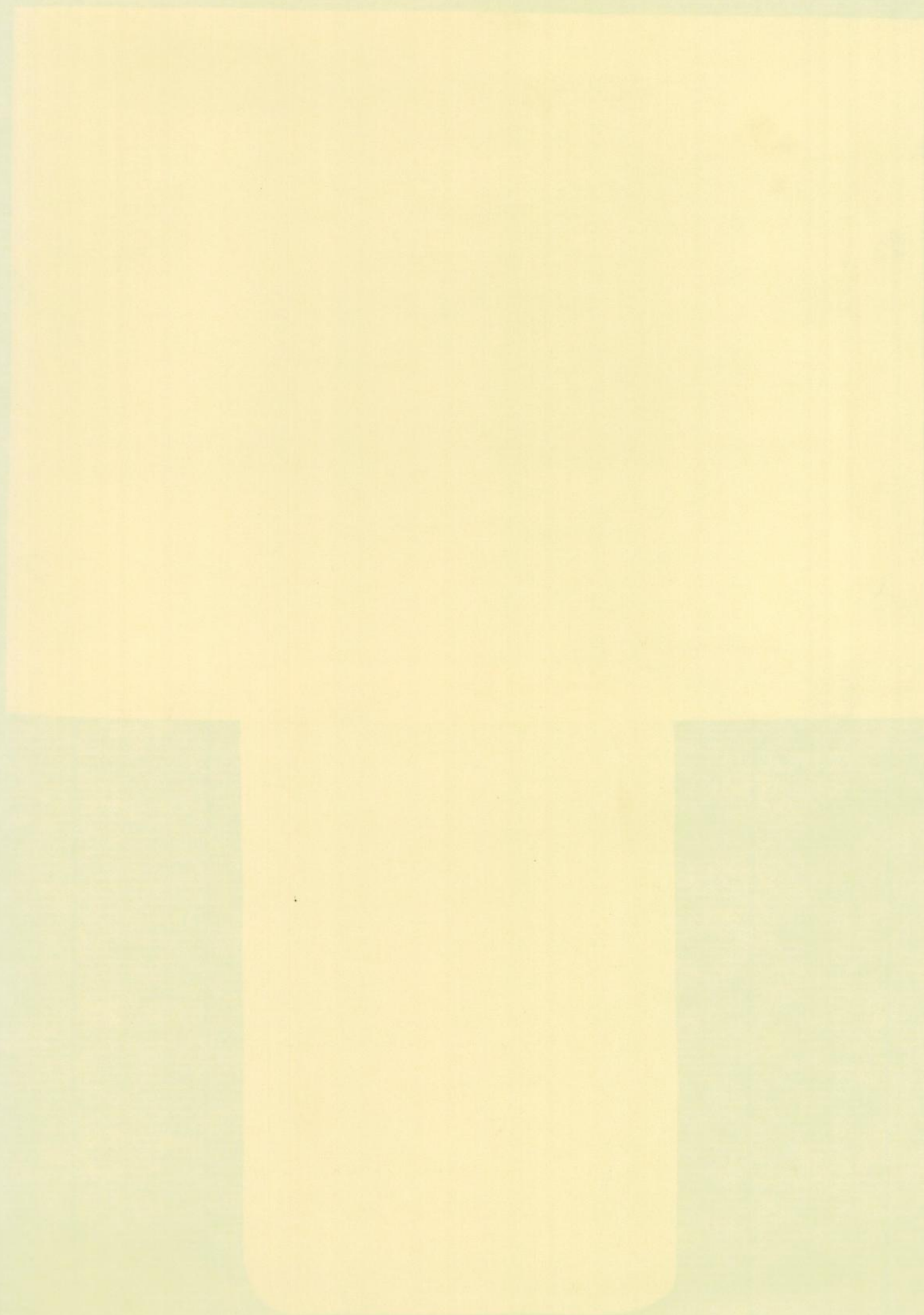


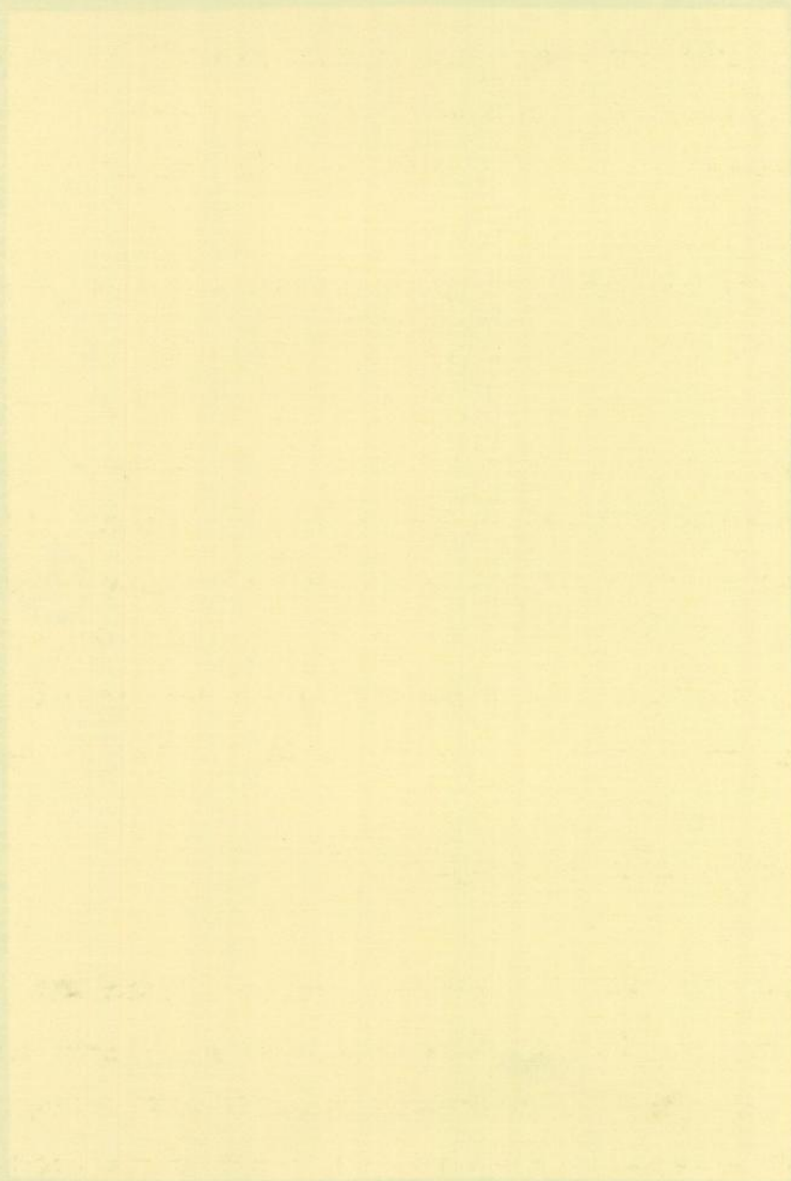


Figure nine - " Decorative and Embroidered Panels "

by Karen Fleming,

Belfast.

The Annual Crafts, Gifts & Fashion Fair - 1994.



and design had first to build up a strong home market before it could turn its attention to exports. We must change the Irish public's perception of crafts by taking from them any preconceptions that they might have had about craftwork in Ireland such as crafts being backward and only orientated toward the tourist market. **(Mansion House)**

The priority for the crafts industry must be the development of a strong and discerning home market and tourist market. The home gifts market already provides a much needed boost around Christmas, with the "**Mansion House, Christmas Show**" in December of every year. This popular event is an exhibition for the best of Irish craftsmanship and it is also a favourite venue for many Christmas shoppers who know that they will be able to find some original alternatives to the run of the mill gifts and which are also uniquely Irish. The quality consumer goods section would constitute a year round source of income and should be developed.

THE TOURIST'S MARKET / INDUSTRY

The U.S. market relies heavily on an ethnic identification with Ireland and this market has a definite saturation point which in the long term is likely to decline. But 'The coming of age' of the Irish American and a renouncing of the provincialism of an ethnic status, is close at hand. The younger generation are not so emotionally attached to Ireland as before. Furthermore it is limited to a fairly specific range of products and the scope for innovation and new product development, in this area, is restricted. Therefore, all arguments are against basing an industry on the U.S. tourist market in the long term. **(The report on crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.81)**

The European visitor, does not harbour any particular sentimental feelings towards Ireland, they have a keen interest in pure Irish craft, and they have a buy only exclusively designed Irish goods. The English tourist,

while also respecting Ireland as "tranquil, scenic and an escape from fast moving life there is nothing exotic or sentimental about the trip". They have no interest in shopping for sentimental reminders of their Holiday. The Americans ^{look} for a souvenir or for an inexpensive reminder of their holiday - "Cheap gimmicky things, they tend to buy trash". **(Emer Ferran, The Crescent Workshops, Kilkenny, 27-11-1993)**

The tourist industry is too finite for craft firms to depend on, therefore any company starting up may be prepared to look at overseas markets. They will have to look beyond Ireland for any sort of growth.

IRISH CRAFT SHOPS

In Ireland, most shops purchase some of their stock at the National Craft Trade Fair - showcase - Others receive deliveries in a number of lots at various dates through the year. Most craftshops were found to have little or no imported hand-crafted products.

"Most of the retailers tend to define crafts as being either handmade or both Irish and handmade. The next most popular characteristics that they expect is individuality of design, a high standard of workmanship and an aesthetic design and appearance". **(Report on crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.95)**

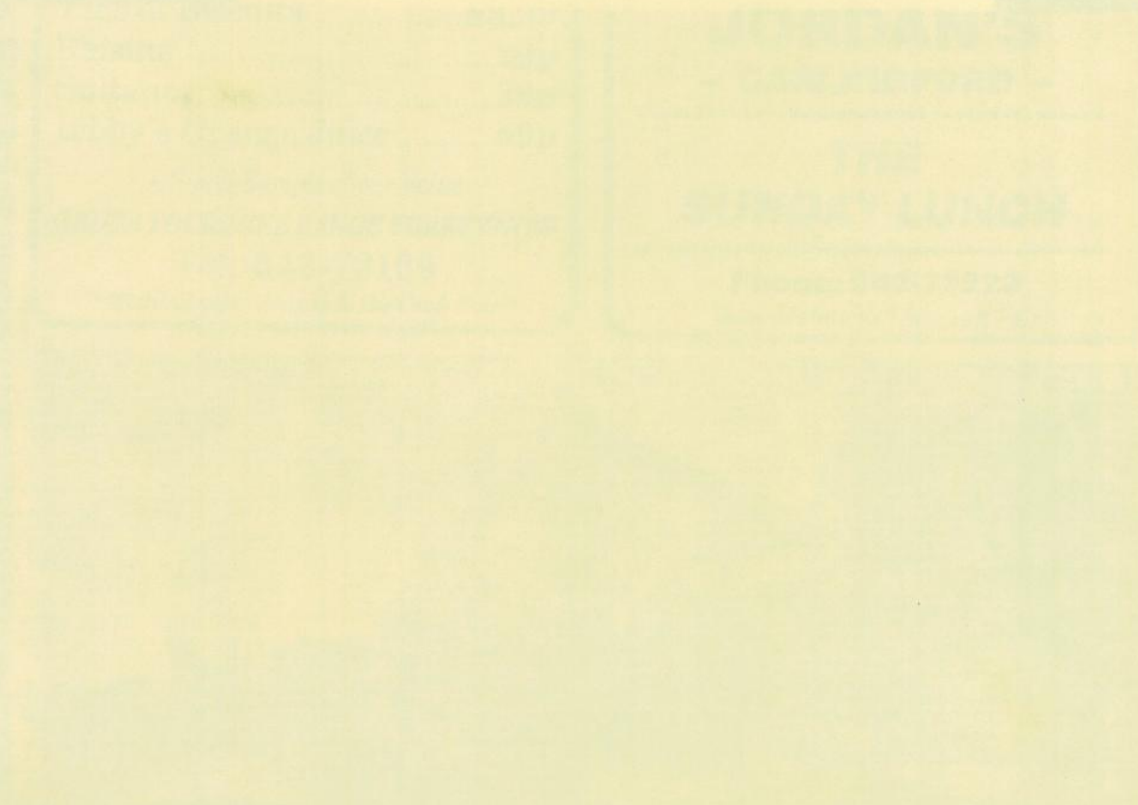
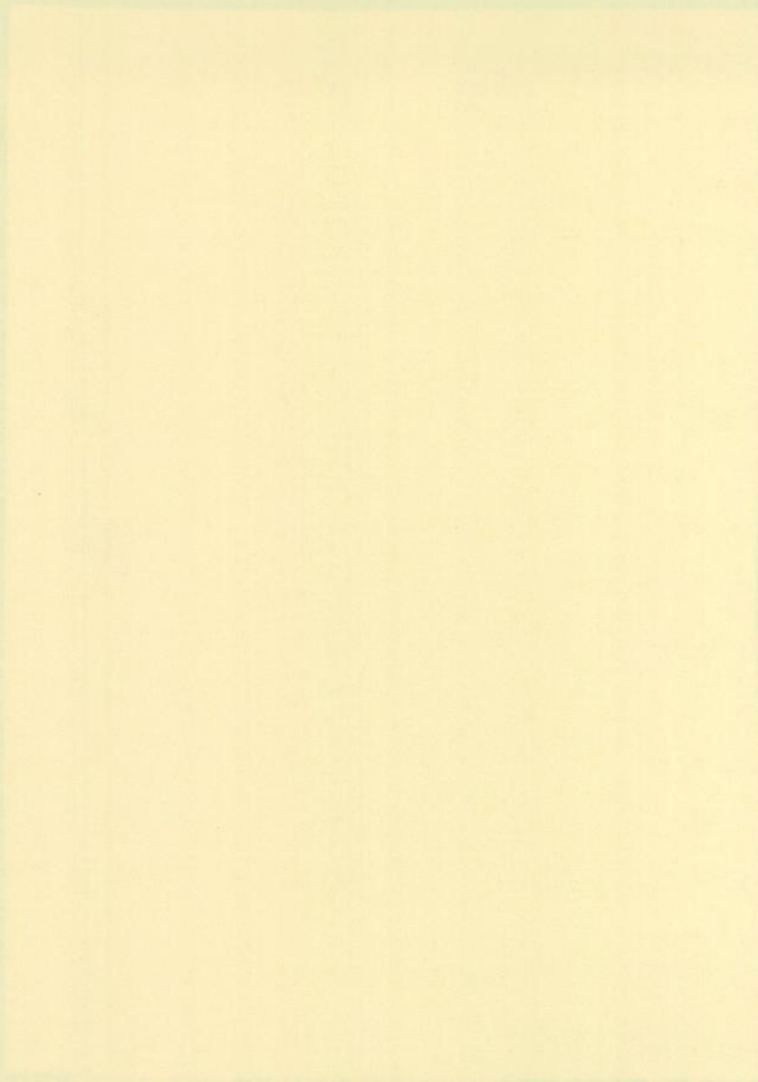
The proprietor of Tholsel Crafts, Roisin Cox of Carlingford, Co. Louth, believes that "people do not want to pay for handwork". In her craft retail / workshop she also makes and sells 'patchwork quilts' which can cost up to £150 - £200. "People would sooner pay a machine-made dress or something to wear rather than a hand made quilt at the same price. **(Roisin Cox, Carlingford, 30-11-1993)**

"This is not a career in which you are going to make money. It's a lean



Figure ten - " Thosel Crafts " - Craft retail/workshop.

Proprietor Roisin Cox ,
Chairwoman of the Louth Artists & Craftworkers Group .



lifestyle, and you do it because you can't do anything else. It's about something other than making money. People who want to make money do not go into crafts". **(Eric Pearce, Furniture Maker, Cork, "Irish crafts target the sophisticate" Francine Cunningham, 12-12-1993)**

But over the last decade there have been huge changes in both the quality of craft work produced in Ireland and attitudes to that work. The general improvement in the standard of crafts in Ireland, can be put down to several factors, including better training and an industry more in tune with what is happening on the world market.

Irish craftwork is being compared with work being done anywhere in the world. The finish and quality is improving all the time. Before, if something was badly finished there was a that 'will do' attitude, but that will not do anymore.

The crafts people of today are now entering into "contemporary life, making things that have to do with modern people's lives. Ten years ago, that was not the case, crafts were all about old, solid values. Those values are still there, and are very important, but they do not provide a livelihood for a huge number of crafts people". **(Irish crafts target the sophisticate, The Sunday Business Post, 12-12-1993)**

It is almost inevitable that prices are going to become more exclusive, because of the cost of running a one-person studio. Crafts are never going to be as cheap again. Mass production has made hand-work more expensive, because factories can afford more expensive electricity and pay more for raw materials.

One of the biggest problems facing the artist and designer is how to divide his or her time between creating new products and going out and selling them. Most craftworkers spends most of their time organising

sales, arranging finance, planning ahead and doing the book work. Many craftsmen have no desire to run a large business, fearing that the chores of management would take them, away from what they really love - Exercising their craft skills, others believe, that their customers are attracted by the hand-made nature of their products and fear that any attempts to try to produce on a larger scale would detract from the individuality of their creations.

Craftworkers share a common profile with the principles of small firms. They are experienced in the making of their product while weak in areas of financial control, administration and marketing. The need for training is generally acknowledged by all involved.

THE TRAINING OF CRAFTWORKERS

The training of craftworkers begins in Art College, Craft Council Courses and local craft courses. The Art Colleges do not prepare students for the commercial side of craft, book-keeping, packaging, marketing and so forth. Their job, as they see it, is to develop an artistic skill, appreciation and ability, and not to teach commercial skills. They see the Crescent Workshops business skills course as being there for that purpose. Many students, each year, leave their colleges of art, design and crafts to go into a highly competitive market with minimal business knowledge and therefore they frequently struggle to establish themselves. In college students are not made aware of the costs of the materials that they are using because they are usually free and in unlimited quantities. "A craftworker lacking marketing skills will forever be on the brink of a financial crisis". (Report in Ireland, 1985, P.99)

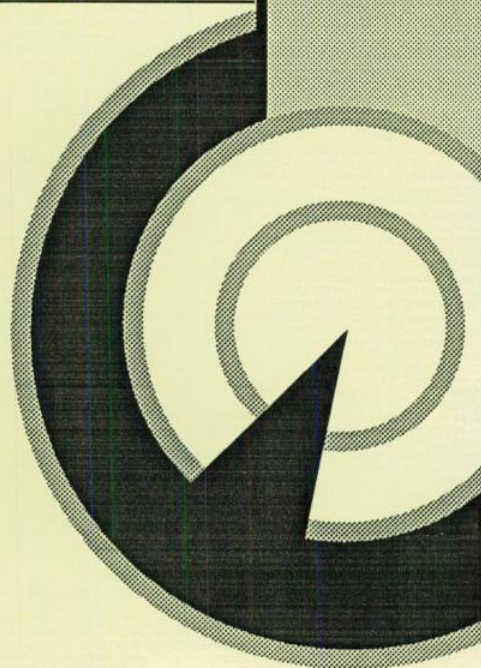
SOURCES OF FINANCE FOR CRAFTWORKERS

The I.D.A. and SFADCO can give grants of up to 60% of the cost of

premises and new equipment in designated areas and 45% elsewhere, while the Udaras can give a slightly higher grant. These cover not only craft enterprises setting up for the first time, but also renovation and re-location costs of existing enterprises who wish to expand.

If a loan rather than a grant is required the craft worker can approach the state bank, the Industrial Credit Company. A low fixed interest loan is available in designated areas. **(Report on crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.105)**

chapter 4



CHAPTER 4

It is important when discussing the craft industry to know what constitutes craft from manufactured goods:-

1. The process must unite the design and production skills.
2. The craft product must be an individual design, with aesthetic appeal.
3. The machinery and tools must rely on the control and direction of the craft worker to faithfully produce his or her individual skill.

How do you define true hand-making. Some of the characteristics of what is "not craft" are working to another mans design, using power-driven tools in production, producing a series of more than perhaps six things, of the same design and not making the whole article from start to finish one-self. **(David Pye, The Nature and Art of workmanship, 1968, P.7).**

"David Pye's boxes and bowls (woodturner) are the result of what he has termed the 'workmanship of risk', where the quality of the result is continually at risk during the process of making, and the result cannot be exactly pre-determined before production begins". A very different thing from the workmanship of artainty which we see in mass-production. All of David Pye's work like many other craftsmen's, takes him a long time to make - "it would not be possible to make a living from such painstaking manufacture", and therefore like David many other craft workers must earn their living with a teaching job or by any other form of employment. **(David Pye, Woodcarver & Turner, 19 , P.12)**

Craftwork, though satisfying is just as tough, maybe more so, than any

other business and because it is so labour intensive, it is usually less profitable than mass production. The activities of craft workers are usually carried out in remote and often beautiful surroundings, to the idea of the craftworkers idyllic existence, leading though some prefer to stay in the city, within close proximity to raw-materials and other resources.

It is hard to be creative while trying to earn a living. The idea of making a living from a handcraft is tempting, but for most it is just unrealistic. Making a profit from craft can be difficult. Usually crafts people cannot charge a realistic rate without pricing their goods out of the market. And yet they must run a business and create sales as well as practising their creative talents. For some the ideal is to find an outlet for their creations, for others, the pleasure comes from working with a client - "Craftworkers here are very self reliant and professional in a business sense - they see themselves as small business people as well as being creative". **(Christine Ross, The Chief Executive of the Crafts Council, The Irish Press, 02-11-1993)**

THE DEMAND FOR CRAFTS

The demand is perceived to be across the whole craft spectrum from low-cost souvenirs and gifts for the domestic and tourist retail market, through to collectible and investment, items (Art craft). Craftsmen producing the latter are finding buyers through an increasing number of craft shops and galleries and through the contract market which is hungry for new designer - makers of quality goods.

The market, at all levels, has been increasing steadily as individuals, marketing consultants, interior decorators and buyers from a wide range of outlets all recognise the increasing desire 'by the public' for originality, beauty and function, all of which come together in craft. **(Report on Crafts in Ireland, 1985, P.10)**

THE NEW DESIGN YARD - TEMPLE BAR

The newly opened Design Yard in the Temple Bar area of Dublin will act as a sort of marriage broker between crafts people and their clients.

The Design Yard has a commission of gallery dealing, in furniture, ceramics and metalwork with a jewellery gallery on the ground floor. "This is the first time Irish jewellers have had a gallery which gives them a year round platform for their work", said Design Yard Chief Executive Danae Kindness. Also,

"We want to see more crafts used in the home. It is an educational process: We are trying to get people to move away from the mass-manufactured work, into the hand-made area".
(The Sunday Business Post, 15-09-1993).

This is a highly commercial venture of both Irish and European craft products. The idea is to open up new markets for craftspeople and develop the existing ones through this new centre.

THE PERCEPTION OF IRISH CRAFTWORK

Before the general level of visual appreciation was low, but that was due to the perception of crafts people being coloured by the U.S. visitors mythical view of Ireland, as having a backward, peasant lifestyle producing work specifically for the tourist market. They had portrayed a negative image of Irish crafts, helped along by devious advertisers who saw this as a good marketing ploy, for selling craft with as from olde-worlde.

Much research, in the past few years, has been done in the area of marketing and presenting Irish crafts. In contrast to the American market, we know that the European's are not interested in the ethnic qualit-



Figure eleven - THE DESIGN YARD, Templebar, Dublin.

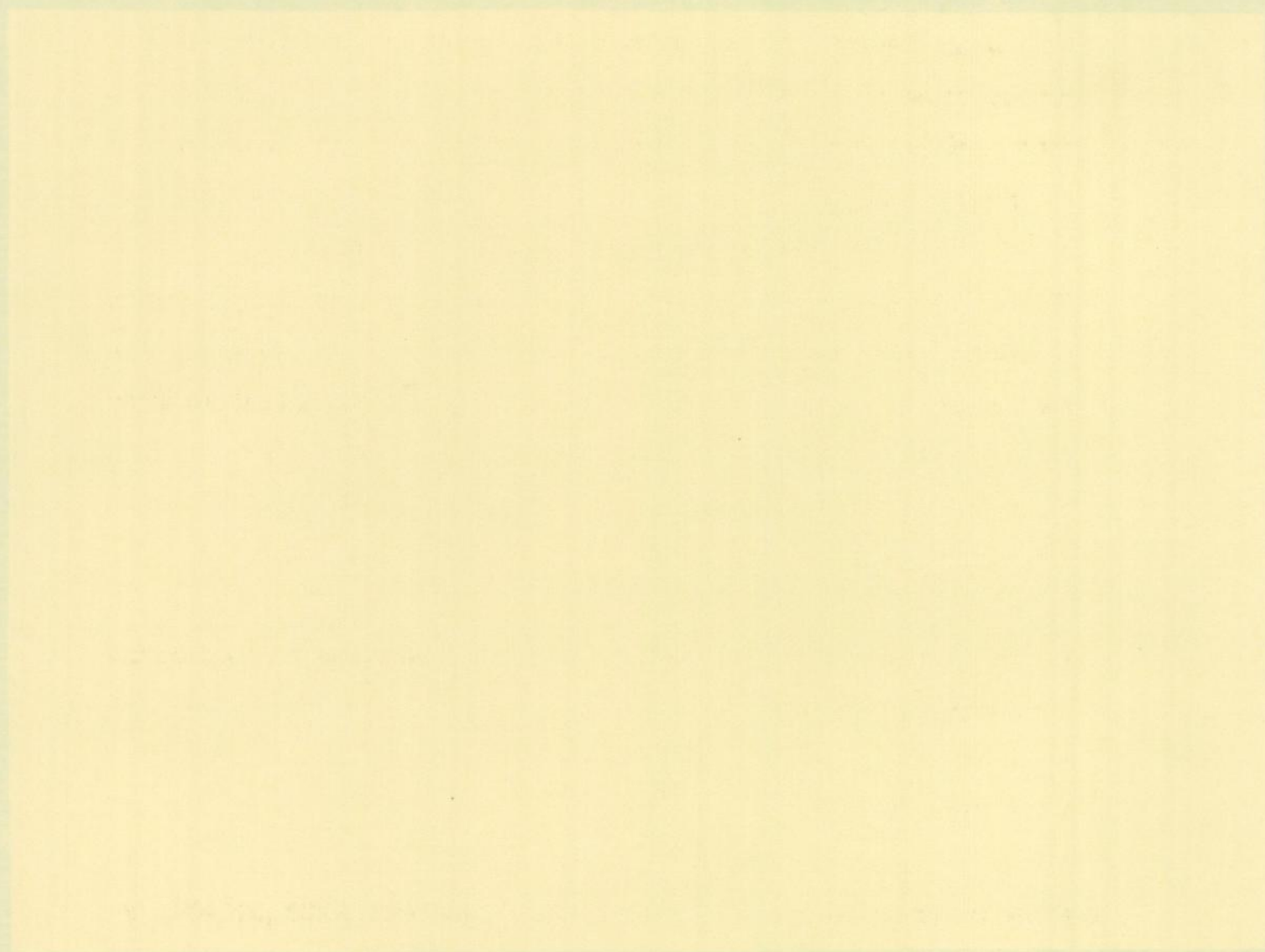
The rear view of the Jewellery Gallery.





Figure twelve - THE DESIGN YARD, Templebar, Dublin.

The front view of the Jewellery Gallery.



ies of our products - what they want is excellence in design and workmanship.

Thanks to many committed craft-supporters, perceptions of Irish crafts from a cottage industry, dominated by eccentric artists and shamrock festooned souvenir makers has changed, to a serious business that generates healthy export earnings and a decent living for the thousands of people involved.

"The shift of emphasis in the colleges must move from producing unique, once-off pieces for galleries to well-designed objects and products that have a greater commercial significance. That isn't to say that there is no place for the unique gallery pieces, rather that wider markets are waiting to be served". **(Terry Kelly, Former Chief Executive, Crafts Council, Irish Times, 14-12-1990)**

But in an industrial society craftwork provides a welcome contrast to the mass-produced functional item.

WHY HAND MAKE

Many craftsmen and women go into craft in the first place probably because they have been told at some stage in their lives that they are good with their hands, even though craft is as much about design and imagination as it is about making. The craftsman expresses his individuality and uniqueness of thoughts into the process of making, something which is a 'work of craft'. The design of craft is the eternal search for ways to make things which are better in themselves, which can be imagined, but not known until they have been created. The craftsman gets tremendous satisfaction by being able to create something from raw material to finished product.

According to many psychologists, using your hands to create something useful or beautiful is a great way of dealing with stress, and doing any craft work, of various kinds, can be very satisfying, as well as relaxing.

"I've always wanted to do, there is something in me wanting to fiddle, mend things, work things out, take things apart and put them together again" comment by a craftsman in 'The myth of the Happy Artisan 5 Articles on craft'.

David Pye has written that "one contributory cause of present confusions of thought about handwork and craftsmanship is perhaps that people have generalised about it who did not know....." **(David Pye, Wood Carver & Turner, 1968, P.15)**

'Workmanship' of the better sort is called in an honorific way, 'Craftmanship'. Nobody is prepared to say where craftsmanship ends and ordinary manufacture begins. It is impossible to find a generally satisfactory definition, as so many things come under the word craft. **(David Pye, Wood Carver & Turner, 1968, P.15)**

Here are some comments made by a range of practising Artist / Craftspeople, defining craft:-

- "Pride and excellence in workmanship is very much part of it".
- "I admire the achievement of something well made".
- "All the world knows that any good workman feels a responsibility for the durability of a product of which he makes".
- "The excitement for me is seeing it in three dimension".

(Christopher Frayling & Helen Snowden "Craft in the market place", Crafts Magazine, July /August 1982)

THE DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF CRAFT

People come into the crafts industry through family tradition, through art

school, through a hobby or creative interest, or through a desire to escape from a nine to five existence in a city. This creates a motley workforce, with very different standards in production, design and marketing.

While some individual rural crafts people - notably basket makers thatchers and cabinet makers, continue to serve "local needs" by producing customised goods or performing skilled services in traditional ways - some others try to reach the mass market or the 'haute couture' market, and these are today's contemporary craftpeople.

There are so many divisions and sub-divisions in the world of craft (and art) - Artists, Artist-Craftmen, Designer Craftsmen and Designers - mainly three distinct groups:-

- (1) Traditional Craftspeople.
- (2) Designer Craftsman.
- (3) Artist Craftsmen.

Today contemporary Irish craftspeople see themselves probably more as Designer Craftsmen and/or Artist Craftsmen. These designer Artist Crafts people produce well-designed and well-made products which are good enough to compete with their industrially-produced equivalents. They probably sell directly from the workshop or studio or through the Craft Council Gallery or in other craft galleries such as The Design Yard.

THE ARTIST-CRAFTSMAN tends to produce work which is in between the 'fine art' and craft categories. It is usually both functional and decorative, such as the ceramic work of Diane McCormick mentioned in Chapter Three, and they are usually unique, one-off pieces of 'fine craft'.

IS CRAFT MOVING INTO THE ART FORUM

Craftsmen are turning to the art world as a source of value. They are

trying to get the same recognition and attention for a piece of craft as a piece of art relieves.. They also crave the freedom of expression and individuality that the artist has. Their client's (Artist - Craftsman) are those who wish to own a piece of art which they understand and which is tangible - Art Craft. People like to buy something which is handmade, be it from any of the craft tradition, because they buy for the uniqueness of the product it is special and it has a strong artistic content because it is usually a 'one-off'.

Some Artist - Craftsmen take the stand point ' I am holier than thou', this attitude is presumably involved to some extent in the conception of the 'fine crafts', which, however, I will define. These craftsmen have created a space further up the market by setting themselves apart from the material, economy in their role as artist creating one-offs or 'limited edition pieces' which only the wealthy and sophisticated elite can afford. **(Christopher Frayling & Helen Snowdon, "Skill, A word to start an argument", Crafts Magazine, May / June, 1982)**

There is a continual blurring of the line between craft and fine art. Some of the reasons for this blurring are to be found in the way in which the contemporary fine arts have developed - because today's society are looking for individuality.

European and American Artist Craftsmen have their craft judged as we would judge art, for aesthetic and ideological content, though there are still existing references to functional forms. Irish craftsmen and women are also turning their ambitions towards areas which were previously considered the province of the painter and sculptor.

DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS BETWEEN CRAFT & FINE ART

There seems no reason why, for example, pots - clay objects, which

happen to take the form of functional vessels - should not be contemplated with the same kind of degree of attention that we bring to artworks outside the craft category. Craft, which is mainly functional, is sometimes seen as having less worth because a hand-made mug or pot is used in every day living and you take it for granted, regardless of how beautiful it looks and how well it is made. But a painting or piece of sculpture ^{are} not functional and are there to be admired. I believe that both craft and fine art are there to bring beauty to our lives. "With fine art, you are buying the conceptual idea, people don't see the true value of craft at all". Because fine art is there to be admired and considered more aesthetical **(Breda Haugh, Jewellery Designer, 17-11-1993)**

Artist - Craftsmen develop "a kind of art world around their activities" as members of this world they can earn more money from their products and can attract grants and subsidies as well.

"In principle, if everyone can have a mass-produced chair, the buyer of a unique or limited-production chair, made by an artist - craftsman or woman with a reputation (preferably one who signs his or her work) is buying status as well as the object and thereby demonstrating a particular set of values which the buyer reckons is embodied in the work". **(David Pye, The Nature and Art of Workmanship, 1968, P.14)**

In this respect, the work of these artist craftsmen and women belong in the same sector of the economy as the work of the successful fine artist. But in other respects, the parallels between the artist - craft persons market and the fine artists market can be pushed too far - after all, only a tiny percentage of the art-and-craft population, about ten artist-craftsmen and women in total, is deemed by investors to be in "the gilt-edged superstar bracket". The rest may aspire to have their work inspected in the best auction houses and museums, but they are usually content to sell their work in interior design shops where it represents a better alternative



Figure thirteen - Breda Haugh of Orna Jewellery Design -
The Tower Design Centre, I.D.A Centre, Pearse St. , Dublin.

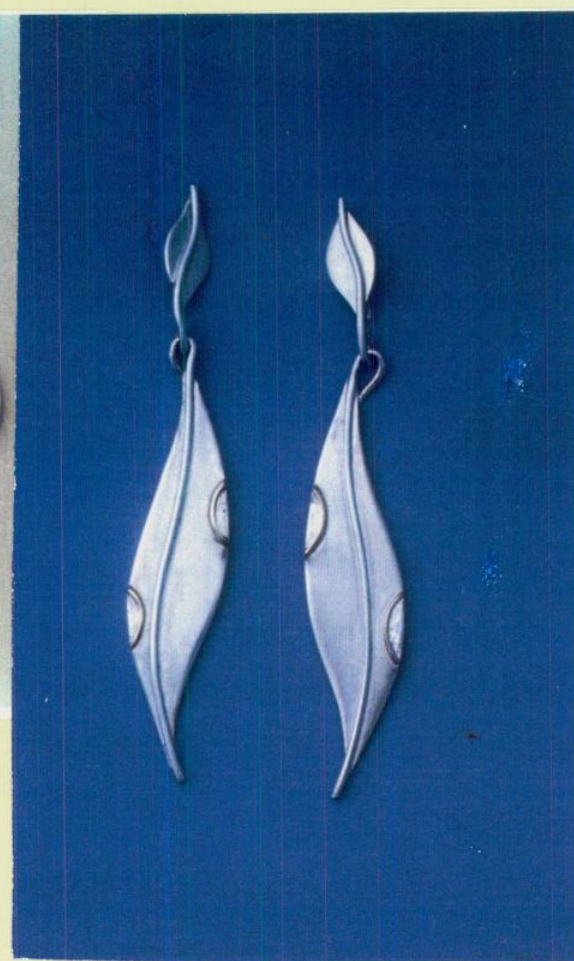
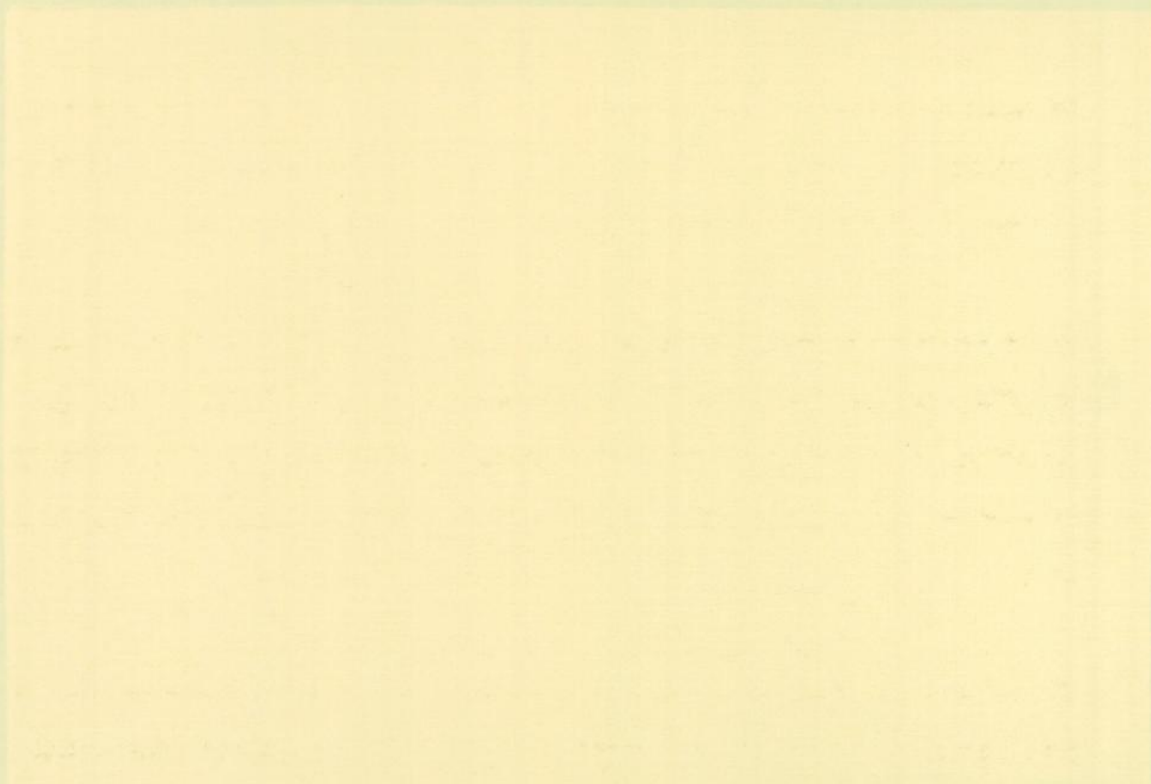


Figure fourteen - Examples of her
& handcrafted Silver
Figure fifteen Jewellery designs.



to the mass manufactured product - often at prices which do not even cover the time put into it. **(Christopher Frayling & Helen Snowdon, "Crafts in the Market Place", Crafts Magazine, July / Aug. 1982)**

Most Artist craftsmen / designer craftsmen or studio craftsmen have tried to disassociate themselves from the popular image of the craftsman, as being seen as "a folksy alternative person who can't get it together, who has opted out as a reaction against rather than a complement to industry".

Three main traditions of craft activity in the twentieth century, the Arts and Crafts tradition, the industrial design (Designer - Craft) and most recently the craftsmans art tradition (Artist - Craftman) - all go under the general (if occasionally misleading title of the crafts). But many of these "Artist craftsmen" and "Designer craftsmen" whether they like it or not belong to a tradition which invented this image of craft, as a way of giving craftsmanship some respectable origins, and they depend on clients who may be reacting against mass-produced goods by investing in well-made, well-designed unique items. **(Christopher Frayling & Helen Snowdon, "The myth of the Happy Artisan", Crafts Magazine, Jan / Feb. 1982)**

The Arts and Crafts people, following the theories of John Ruskin, appear to have believed that "he who works with his hands only is a mechanic, he who works with hands and head is an artisan, and he who works with hands, head and heart is an artist" - The myth of the happy artisan. **(David Pye, The nature and art of workmanship, 1968, P.12)**

The association between art and craft has as many meanings as the different traditions which have come to be lumped together under the catch-all label of the word "Craft".

"The Craftsman", we are told, "is an artist when he is fighting the tendency of automated industry to deskill mans personal labour", when he can select (and execute) the most beautiful design solution, from among the many which are available to industry, when his training took place at an art college and when he is expressing himself through making. Conversely, the Artist is a craftsman when he makes a table rather than an abstract sculpture, when his work is exhibited and sold as art, when he transforms a material object into something different. Those artist - craftsmen who react most strongly against the implied association of their work with developments in the fine-art world, prefer the word to mean "well-made" and "well-designed" - "Art" as a standing example to mass-production industry, and they sometimes end up rejecting the word out of hand, because it leads to so many misunderstandings". (**"The myth of the happy Artisan", Crafts Magazine, Jan. / Feb. 1982**)

Craftsmen have the knowledge and skill which can be used to produce useful objects and they also have an ability to produce in a way which meets the publics practical needs, members of the Art world, by contrast, have no interest in producing work for any conventional reason.

THE DESIGNER-CRAFTSMEN who are concerned about the relationship of their work to more industrialised forms of design, tend to think of craft skills as an essential component in the design process or "the therapeutic bit in between the struggle of designing". They seem to be less interested in the "conceptual idea", than the artist craftsman are, but still, they find unacceptable any separation between thinking and making two different approaches within craft. (**David Pye, "The nature & Aesthetics of Design, 1968, P.21**)

This along with the designer craftsman breaking into the industrial world, has caused confusion in the organised world of craft, where each group of people turn in different directions in order to gain support and recog-

nition for their work within the different worlds they are interested in - The industrial futuristic world and the fine-art world.

Some say that craft is the actual physical making - being able to do it - and design is imagining the object. That craft is just the mechanical part, the making and design goes all the way through. To me, the combination of designing and making are all a package - craft. I cannot see them being separated. A contemporary or any craft piece in my opinion can not be true craft if it was made by many hands, and not their own design and their own making. The designer of today is in a sense the craftsman today because most good designers today can actually make and the whole craftsman today conceives, designs and produces the finished product - with Aesthetic and functional traits combined with a good standard of manual skill involved also, depicting the craftsman own style and individuality. "A work of Art", wrote Lethaby, "is first of all a well made thing. It may be a well-made statue, a well-made chair or a well-made book The master workman must have control from first to last to finish as he will".

The Arts and Crafts movement leaders tried to bring designer and maker together by insisting that the craftsman design everything that he made. Although some first rate makers as talented as they were at making, lacked the imagination in design. In any case, it is essential that the designer must have a through knowledge of methods of production, whether by hand or machine, in order to turn out good design ideas in their work.

Design and craft (making) I believe, are totally intermeshed. Because, however, beautifully made, if the object is not well designed it is a waste of time and vice versa. There must be a combination of each on interaction of a high standard of design and good craft production.

A design is in effect a statement of the ideal form of the thing to be made, to which the workman will approximate in a greater or lesser degree. The designer is a person who decides the contents of the drawings - that is to say decides what information they are to convey - the designer may of course be the maker. Good workmanship is that which carries out or improves upon the intended design. Bad workmanship is what fails to do so and ruins the design.

"I never really think of myself as a craftsman, because it tends to split the operation as I know it. To me making is only part of the process. It starts in the head, then it goes down on paper and its not finished until the object is made. I've never been able to visualise totally whats in my head, whats down on paper, and what the thing actually is going to look like - this is one of the reasons for making it.

**(Christopher Frayling & Helen Snowdon,
"Skill, A word to start an argument,
Crafts Magazine, May / June, 1982)**

DEFINING CRAFT

The jewellery designer - Breda Haugh - of Orna Jewellery Design in the Tower I.D.A. Enterprise Centre, Dublin, believes that Craft could be much broader, any skill that is well carried out, is craft. It should be allowed to take, carpenters, builders and others all into account, who work with their hands.

This opinion differs with many. Craft is pride in doing work well, good manual skills. The Craft Council does not consider only manual skills, as pure handicraft - only ^{those} that are Artist-Craftsmen, Designer-Craftsmen come under the category of craft. The concept of craft, as a special kind of knowledge, has always been difficult to write about, because of the differing of opinion of what constitutes hand-making. A craftsman /

Workman (Builder, Carpenter etc) stands to be judged solely by his work. These are men who by making, getting pleasure out of doing their job well with a high standard at the of the job.

INDUSTRY & CRAFT

Industry is almost the total separation of mental and manual work. Industry tends to stress utility and technical skill at the expense of aesthetics and for the most part, eliminate skill altogether from the production process. The crafts, alone, preserve the unity of the three elements in the production process, design, aesthetics and production. "Men can only take pleasure in their work if they are allowed to invent, to exercise thought - that is to say to design as well as to make". **(The Nature and Art of Workmanship, David Pye, 1968, P.28)**

With the development of manufacture, in the industrial age the destroyed traditional forms of craftwork, not only was the worker deskilled and the craft itself disintegrated, but the product no longer reflected the individuality of skill and design of a particular craftsman - mental and manual labour became separate from each other since the individual craftsman was no longer involved in the overall production process - craft workers could not compete with the new mass-produced, manufactured goods.

But most craftsmen today would be wise to maybe work along with industry, be a complement to it, but not to totally give in to the machine. As the machine seems to threaten the individuality of craftspeople. The machine has a purpose in that it can do the "Donkey Work" of craft and allow the craftsman to spend longer on the creative side of craft. "The craftsman should not oppose the machine but simply learn from", says Mumford. **(Gillian Naylor, The arts & Crafts Movement, 1980)**

"Time is the most expensive element in Irish craft production" both at the

design and the production stage" says the former Chief Executive of the Crafts Council, Terry Kelly. Computers could halve design time and speed up production, without this technology Irish craft workers are at a disadvantage - " (Jill Kerby, "**Craftworkers have a bottom line too**", **The Irish Times, 14-12-1990**)

"The crafts will always be compared to industry and they cannot afford to come off second best. (Gillian Naylor, **The Arts & Crafts Movement, 1980, P.65**)

The crafts will therefore survive as a means of livelihood only where there is a sufficient demand for the very best quality at any price. That sort of demand still exists in some trades. Haute Couture flourishes - fashion, textiles, jewellery, musical instruments, etc. are still in that kind of demand.

A craft person, for example, a cabinet maker can aim at making a few unique / original pieces of the very best quality each year, so long as he keeps himself solvent by producing quicker and cheaper and quickly made furniture in competition with the manufacturers. Whatever he does of the very best quality will have to be done as a side line, very likely at weekends. For the man who does this is likely to find that to make a moderate living he has to become more than a designer / maker - sales manager, an accountant and other all rolled into one - always in competition with the industry.

Misconceptions that crafts are quaint and craftspeople cranky seem set to vanish. Due to boredom with mass-produced fashion and furnishings, individually created pieces are becoming much sought after. Irish people are now becoming more and more aware of the range of hand-produced goods available and are losing interest in mass-produced goods available and are losing interest in mass-produced goods. People have been

starved of good visual objects, but now that these are more accessible they are being appreciated at last. In comparison with comments such as "The Irish public does not appreciate crafts, tending to see them as highly priced items, which could be obtained cheaper perhaps at the local supermarket, believing that other nationalities have a much higher appreciation of crafts, though some felt that the Irish public is improving". (Design in Ireland Report, 1985, P.)

The appreciation of Irish crafts certainly has improved. It could be because some Irish people feel a vague responsibility to support crafts as a part of their cultural heritage. According to Breda Haugh, jewellery designer, "the appreciation of crafts is getting better".



Figure sixteen - Tim Roberts - " Little Patrick St. "

Weave Designer

High fashion weaves for the top international fashion houses.



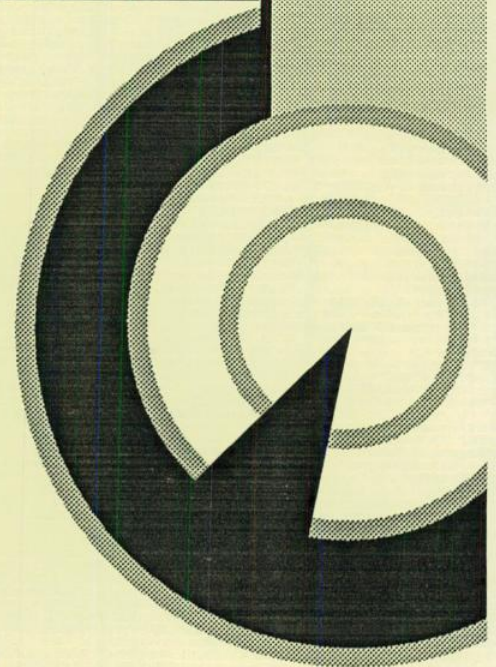


Figure seventeen - (Left)
Tim Roberts "Little Patrick"
Beautiful coloured, handwoven
shawl - " Showcase 1994 "

Figure eighteen - (Below)
Samples of his fabric
lengths in Liberty's ,
London.



conclusion



CONCLUSION

Since the "Scandinavian design report" in the 1960's, there has been a considerable amount of development and growing interest in the Irish craft scene. There have been huge changes in both the quality of craft work produced in Ireland, and attitudes to that work. The perceptions of Irish craft are rapidly changing, thanks to the aid of 'the design report' and those who worked , took the Scandinavian's advice in changing this industry into what it is today. As Terry Kelly (Former Chief Executive of the Crafts Council):

"The perceptions of Irish Craft, from a cottage industry dominated by eccentric artists and shamrock festooned souvenir makers to a serious business that generates healthy export earnings and a decent living for the thousands of people involved".
(Jill Kerby, "Craft workers have a bottom line too", The Irish Times, 14-12-1990)

The general improvement in the standard of crafts in Ireland can be put down to several factors, including better training and an industry more in tune with what is happening on the world market. And to keep this steady improvement, craftworkers would do well to receive as much academic training in technique and design, with some practical experience, and a good grounding in business and marketing techniques.

Two of the fundamental considerations which will shape the future of the crafts are the time they must take over their work and the competition they must face. The differential in price between a product of craft, of the very best quality, and a product of manufacture varies, naturally according to the trade, but it is always large and sometimes huge. It has to be, must be or else the craftsman has no hope of having a modest professional standard of living.

In order to widen their marketing opportunities, crafts workers would do well to consider an option which is now becoming available to them, with the development of increasingly sophisticated technology, they will be able to design and make individual pieces which can be produced in large limited edition batches of which each one is different - a "batch produced" one-off. If they do take up this option, they will no longer have to call themselves artists or produce goods for the exclusive luxury market in order to engage effectively in the personal production of well-designed pieces for a market which expects special attention.

However an essential element in the success of this proposition shall be the acceptance of Irish craft by the Irish public. I suggest that Irish craft could be promoted by raising the general level of awareness of good design among Irish consumers and to explore some of the possible methods that craft outlets could utilise to become more accessible to the Irish public. The long-term interests of crafts will best be served by building a strong and discerning indigenous, home market, and an innovative tourist market.

There was a time when tourists left Ireland with their bags filled with shillelaghs, a leprechauns perched on pieces of Connemara marble and other kitschy horrors. But that time has gone with the help of grants, publicity and other forms of encouragement given to people with bright ideas and talent there are now souvenirs available of better taste and quality.

The crafts have got to take care to look as different as possible from the workmanship of certainty or rather mass-production, but only in the indirect way. It should continue simply because the workmanship of risk, in its highly regulated forms can produce a range of specific aesthetic qualities which the workmanship of certainty, always ruled by price, will never achieve. The workmanship of certainty can do nearly everything well

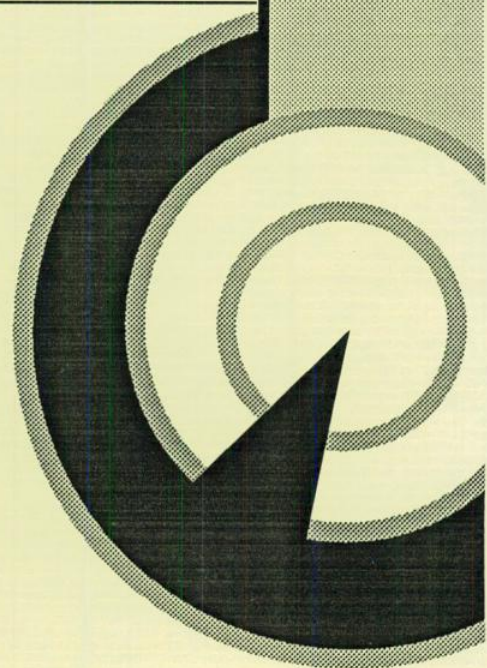
except produce variety. **(David Pye, The Nature & Art of Workmanship, 1968)**

It is my belief that there is too much mass-produced synthetic goods around with little or no attention put into their manufacture. We want originality and we can only get this uniqueness from the love and attention given by a craft worker to their product.

If the contemporary craftsman were to take on board the idea of using modern technology and computers, they could increase their time spent on the creative side of craft and leave the machine to do the labourious tasks and the "Irksome and unintelligent labour, leaving us free to raise the standard of skill of hand and energy of mind....." **(David Pye - "The Nature & Art of Workmanship", 1968)**

It is certain that Irish craft or the workmanship of risk will continue to survive in the future simply because people will continue to demand individuality in their possessions and will not be content with mass-production everywhere. it is a need we have to possess originality and uniqueness in everything.

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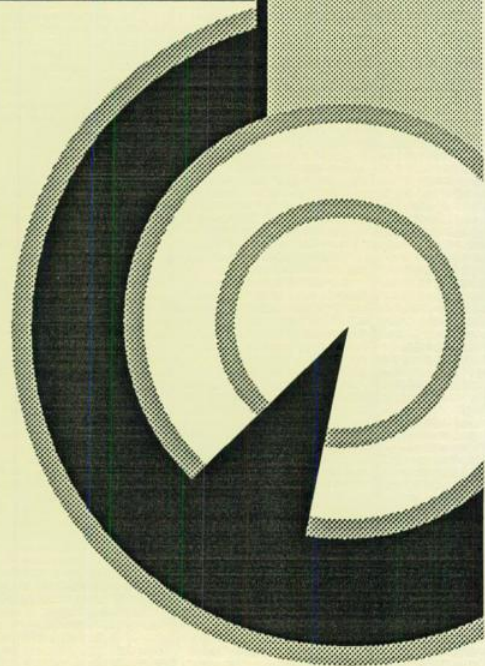
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Designer)

8. "The Annual Craft, Gift & Fashion Fair, 'Show Case', R.D.S.,
Dublin. - 18-01-1994.
9. The Mansion House, Christmas Craft Show - 18-12-1993.
10. The Craft Council Christmas Fair, in Headquarters, Powers Court
Town House Centre. - 21-12-1993.
11. The Tower Design Centre, Pearse Street, (Open Day & Craft
Show) - 27-11-1993.
12. The Crescent Workshops, Kilkenny (Open Day) - 27-11-1993.
13. The Design Yard, Temple Bar, Dublin - 25-02-1994.

