



Our craftiest designers bin bling and opt for quality

OUT with the bling and in with the pearls.

In these recessionary times people are yearning after quality rather than quantity, with consumers placing more thought into every single purchase, according to the organisers of this year's Showcase Ireland.

And, this year's event – the largest annual international trade show on the calendar for Irish designers and craftworkers – is being touted as more important than ever before for gaining key contacts.

Organisers remain hopeful this month's trade show will manage to match the €40m sales generated during last year.

Traditionally, craftwork bucks the trends, experiencing boom times during a recession, according to a spokeswoman for Showcase Ireland, which is run on behalf of the Crafts Council of Ireland.

"In the last 10 years, sales of craftwork remained steady; it didn't benefit from the same huge buying spree," said spokeswoman Alma Feeley.

Boomed

"Whereas in the '70s and the '80s, which was the height of recession, craft boomed. Now what we are seeing is the return to considered purchases."

With the fizzling out of the Celtic Tiger, people have also abandoned the brash diamante and branded look in droves.

"Bling is dead. That was fine for the last 10 years when there was this conspicuous consumption," the spokeswoman added.

One of the Irish talents exhibiting at the event, Margaret O'Rourke of MoMuse Jewellery, said she had noted people showing a strong interest in the origins of the product in the pre-Christmas sales period. "People are moving away from the High Street," the designer said.

Despite the downturn, a number of new craft businesses will be joining the 450 exhibitors at the event in the RDS from January 18 to 21.

Sarah McGovern (left) in a dress by Edmund McNulty, jewellery by MoMuse and handbag by Hope & Benson; and Karen Fitzpatrick, wearing a dress by Lisa Shawgi, jewellery by Eve-Ella and handbag by Hope & Benson, pictured in Collins Barracks, Dublin at the launch of Showcase Ireland, the country's premier craft, gift, fashion and interiors fair.

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