



LINEN BIENNALE EVALUATION 2018



Linen
Biennale
N.Ireland

EVALUATION 2018

Linen Biennale: recalling the past, rethinking the present,
reforming the future of our linen heritage.



Linen
Biennale
N.Ireland



at The Linen Rooms Lisburn



Funding raised by
The National Lottery
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund



**Arts
& Business**
Northern Ireland

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Biennale
Ireland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Linen is a timeless and truly European fabric. In Northern Ireland it has been a huge historical industry – at its peak 70,000 people were employed in its manufacture on 37,000 looms. But now the incredible versatility of linen is beginning to be recognised again, even after decades in the wilderness at the hands of globalisation. Once again, we are seeing its adaptability and value in staggering new ranges of design-led innovations.

The Linen Biennale 2018 was originated to leverage this rich heritage backdrop with a desire to expand new thinking associated with both linen and flax fibre heritage. The LB18 Conference looked to stimulate collaboration between industry, trade bodies and academia, with a focus on technology, design and research.

Linen may be Ireland's oldest textile, but the current range of artefacts and cutting-edge design mean that it has never been more exciting and relevant. And in a market that is increasingly aware of "slower" and more responsible attitudes to sustainability, linen is a smart choice for the future.

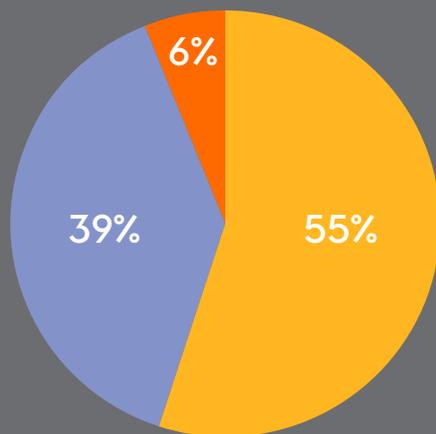
Linen may have a timeless quality, but it is undergoing an astonishing renaissance; we are seeing countless opportunities and possibilities unfolding: its longevity, its durability and its aptitude for practical applications seem almost limitless.

The R-Space Gallery, Lisburn led on this three-month festival of heritage, arts, craft and design and plan on delivering this type of programme on a two-year cycle. As an organisation R-Space has become more resilient with a change in management focus from the board downwards with a new strategic emphasis on the future objectives of the charity. This is based on people, buildings and creating impact in the local community.

This evaluation explores some of the following core questions:

- Who changes as a result of the Linen Biennale?
- What were the outcomes and what was the impact?
- Which outcomes are most valued and what difference did the Linen Biennale make?

The Linen Biennale utilised a cross-sectoral approach combining business, art, heritage, education and design. A key strength of this programme was the facilitation by organisers with an international network and creativity ethos. Arts creativity was the backbone of this programme with the business essence of how to move Linen and Flax into the future. The Linen Biennale punched above its weight with a very small management team that were highly committed and dedicated to truly developing a one of a kind series within Northern Ireland. There were over 80 events; exhibitions, tours, talks and performances took place throughout the Linen Biennale 2018 ranging from one day events to activities over three months with an estimated visitor numbers reaching over 30,000 at



55% OF ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS WERE WITHIN THE RE-CALL THEME, 39% RE-THINK AND 6% UNDER THE RE-FORM THEME.

venues across Northern Ireland and Border areas. There were three main themes: 1) Re-Call: that focused on the past with Linen heritage themed projects or exhibitions 2) Re-think: this element focused on educational projects or exhibitions with linen or flax theme and 3) Re-form: with a focus on design led innovation with linen or flax products. 55% of activities and events were within the Re-call theme, 39% Re-think and 6% under the Re-form theme. Partnerships were developed to deliver this programme with over 50 organisations from a wide range of industries including community, academia, businesses, museums and galleries, which represents a significant portion of time and coordination. This was truly a collaborative series.

Through engagement with local and international practitioners and audiences, the overall programme has entertained, informed and fostered a fresh approach to an ancient fibre deeply rooted right across our local culture. The Linen Biennale formed a bridge to connect Northern Ireland's internationally renowned linen heritage with contemporary uses and highlighted the very best in cutting-edge developments from around the world. The Linen Biennale allowed for Northern Ireland to bring that Linen and Flax heritage to the forefront and attract an international audience and speakers from multiple sectors including business, arts, heritage and academia. It is this diverse mix that has truly allowed the Linen Biennale to be unique and stand out.

The key stakeholders are to be commended for developing such a diverse and dynamic programme that has something for everyone within a limited budget. They were creative and resourceful in finding the necessary support to deliver such a diverse and substantial programme. Moving forward, for sustainability and to further develop the programme, more substantial funding will be necessary. It is noted that the event organisers were so committed and determined to deliver such a programme that they themselves gave up their time and money towards it. This was a high calibre series attracting international attention and world-renowned speakers from over 15 different countries including Alaska, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Columbia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Namibia, Spain, Sweden and USA.

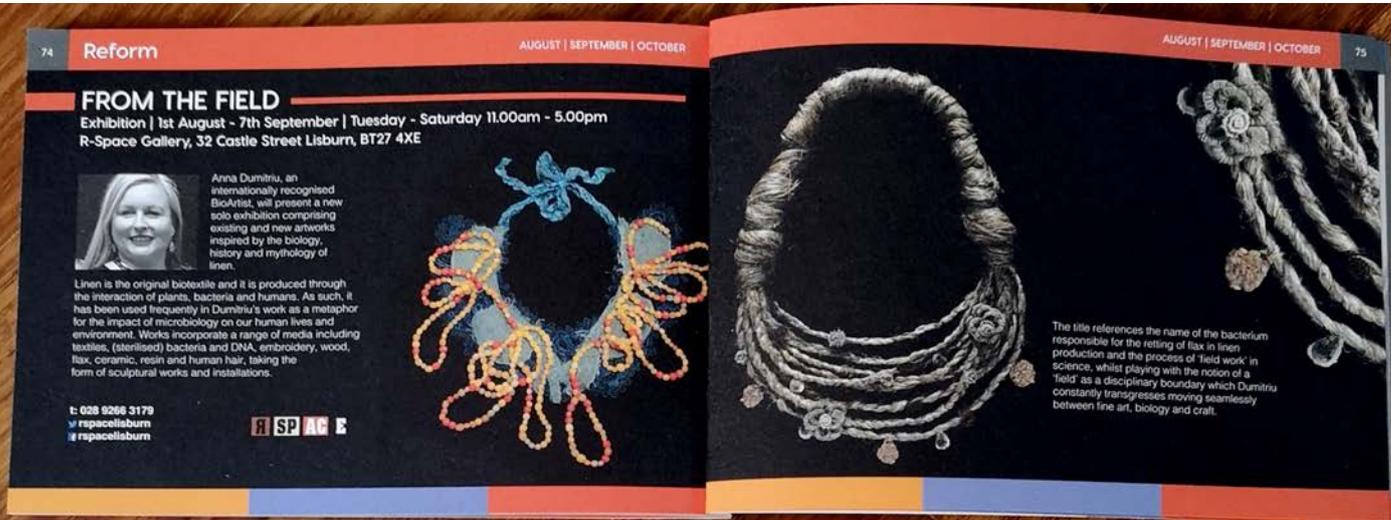
Image: David Cleland



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION



Northern Ireland's Linen Biennale celebrated the past, present and future landscape of linen through an extended arts and heritage festival, presented and hosted by multiple venues across the region. It took place during August, September and October 2018 with some activities reaching into 2019.

The hub of the Biennale, R-Space Gallery, sits at the centre of Northern Ireland's historic linen industry. The building at 32 Castle Street, Lisburn, former Georgian Rectory to Lisburn Cathedral, is now called The Linen Rooms.

In 2015 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland funded a feasibility study into a potential cultural celebration of Lisburn's linen history, giving it contemporary relevance through a festival programme of visual arts and other related events.

“Longevity in relation to a major series of events or a festival will require a constantly reinvented imaginative approach to the theme of linen which would involve a number of partners and the need for them to work together for mutual benefit.” The Art of Linen Research and Feasibility Study 2015

The Linen Biennale draws attention to linen and to flax fibre as an environmentally friendly material with an authentic local story. There is great potential for art and design-led developments, such as flax composites for applications like furniture, bicycles, surfboards and musical instruments to be developed in projects connected to the Linen Biennale 2020 and 2022.

The Linen Biennale has the potential to make a substantial contribution to local tourism. Comparable events, such as the British Ceramics Biennale Stoke on Trent, and The Biennale Internationale du Lin de Pont-Neuf, Quebec (BILP) have gone from strength to strength; with the last BILP attracting 17,000 visitors, with an estimated economic impact of over £600,000. Contributing to Northern Ireland’s vibrant tourism programme, the Linen Biennale overlapped with the province-wide August Craft Month promotion by Craft NI and with European Heritage Open Day.

The team at R-Space is passionate about continuing to deliver this innovative festival in Lisburn – ‘the city in the country’.



The value and importance of the Linen Biennale

There is growing international interest in the potential of the cultural and creative industries to drive sustainable development and create inclusive job opportunities. There is substantial evidence across the UK indicating that the diversity of arts audiences remains limited and that both physical and societal factors continue to act as barriers to engagement with the arts. Reviewing evaluations of funding programmes indicates a range of examples of how some of these barriers are being challenged and overcome. Different approaches have been trialled in an effort to broaden and diversify audiences. This Linen Biennale provided a wide range of art events and business events. It combined a variety of sectors for cross collaboration and provided a plethora of options for visitors and attendees. The team also collaborated with organisations from multiple sectors including heritage, tourism, arts, creative industries, business, charities and museums. This cross collaboration encouraged creative thinking, development of new partnerships and opportunities.

The Linen Biennale is aligned with a number of strategies and promotes cross collaboration amongst a variety of sectors including business, academic, arts, creative, heritage and tourism.

During the Linen Biennale 2018 we learned that Linen is a timeless and truly European fabric. The Linen Biennale was aligned with a variety of organisation's strategic objectives which are explored in more detail below:

Strategy	Alignment
National Lottery Heritage Fund's Strategic Funding Framework for 2019-2024	The Linen Biennale is closely aligned to the outputs and outcomes of the LHF. The following outputs are aligned: Heritage will be identified and better explained; People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions; Identifying places or collections that are relevant to a particular community and making information about them available; Talks or tours in a historic building; New displays in museums; People will have developed skills; Staff, volunteers and participants will be able to demonstrate new competencies e.g. in new specific skills (e.g. project management, digital skills etc.), increased qualification levels etc.; People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions; Visitor / user reaction to heritage topic; Visitors and users provide feedback on the new resources e.g. their ease of use, quality of information, impact on their understanding e.g. learnt new facts or information, made sense of something new, gained a better understanding or deepened understanding, made links between areas that had not done previously, created an interest in something new. Aligned outcomes will be discussed in outcomes section.
Arts Council of Northern Ireland: Five-Year Strategy 2019-2024	Similar outcomes to the draft strategy – including Make excellent art accessible to all; support individual artists to create work of excellence, to help art organisations deliver benefits to the community, to build partnerships, to support skills development, to encourage voluntary activities in the arts. According to the Programme for Government the following outcome is supported through the Linen Biennale: We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential. Indicator saw 27% engaging in arts/cultural activities; Changed ideas of visitors / users e.g. different perception of the importance of linen and how it can be used in the future

Tourism NI: A Prospectus for Change	Attracting tourism and celebrating rich heritage and culture of the Linen and Flax industries. Celebrating heritage and profiling museums and heritage locations through NI. It also extends awareness of the full heritage tourism offer beyond a few key sites. Linen Biennale is a joined-up, coherent and compelling offer. Tourism NI promotes thinking outside the sector. Heritage tourism partnerships must necessarily include arts organisations, event producers, local authorities, tourist agencies, attractions, hotels, transport providers, food and drink companies, retailers and so on. Linen Biennale did just that but also included industry, academia, and community organisations. Events are a key element of strategic tourism development and event-led short breaks is one of Northern Ireland's Tourism key market segments in order to showcase people and places. Cultural tourists tend to stay longer and spend more, supporting the local economy.
Invest NI: Business Strategy 2017-2021	The Linen Biennale is aligned by helping more businesses successfully sell outside Northern Ireland; selling Northern Ireland globally in a much wider context by attracting businesses and academics from afar, building knowledge between industries and generating more business locally
Lisburn Castlereagh City Council's: Plan for Growth and Connecting Corporate Plan - 2018/2022 and Beyond	Lisburn has important cultural assets in the Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum and the Island Arts Centre. It also has an attractive tourism offering. The Linen Biennale aligns with the Corporate Plan in the following outcomes and objectives: Build on our reputation as a place to visit, promoting the natural and historic assets of our city, towns, villages and countryside to attract greater numbers of international and national tourists.
British Council Northern Ireland	Bringing the best of international education and arts to Northern Ireland
Arts and Business	Advocate the power and creativity of the arts and engage in business development and advocacy in order to grow the corporate marketplace for partnerships with the cultural sector.

According to the Tourism NI Prospectus for Change – “cultural tourism is taken increasingly seriously by cities and regions the world over. It delivers rich and memorable experiences. It triggers the imagination. It connects visitors with the landscape and the heritage, art and ideas of the host community. It builds up a story of a place, where it has come from and where it is going. It creates compelling destinations, known for what they stand for as well as what they offer” (December 2017). The prospectus states – “it is in its engagement with culture and the subsequent animation to the nation’s stories where value will really be added, creating the kinds of visitor experiences that can project the heritage offer forward”. The stories shared through the Linen Biennale provide insight and storytelling to some stories untold or forgotten. It also shines a light on Northern Ireland with a rich heritage of Linen and Flax.



R-Space and the team

The host organisation, R-Space Gallery, the charity is a visual arts and crafts space, presenting and commissioning a programme of exhibitions and arts activity based in The Linen Rooms in the heart of the City of Lisburn, Northern Ireland.

R-Space's ambition is to increase access, understanding and enjoyment of contemporary visual arts, crafts, design and other related arts activities. It collaborates with a diverse range of excellent and challenging artists and designers working in different media, providing audiences from a wide range of educational, social and cultural backgrounds with different points of access to the arts.

**Professor Jane McCann M Des RCA, M.Phil, C Text FTI.
Associate Professional**

Professor Jane McCann is a leading authority on performance sportswear and functional textiles.

She established the first masters programme in Performance Sportswear Design at the University of Derby and was director of the Smart Clothes and Wearable Technologies (SCWT) Research Centre (2004 – 12) at what is now the University of South Wales.

She collaborated with Robert and Anthea to curate the *Linen Futures Exhibition* in R Space Gallery in 2015, which, as mentioned above, has paved the way for the first Linen Biennale.

**Anthea McWilliams and Robert Martin
Co-Curatorial Directors, R-Space Gallery**

Anthea has been a freelance arts and culture professional since 1988, including her contemporary dance practice and work within R-Space.

Robert spent 13 years as Visual Arts Officer for Arts Council England. He heads up the Gallery's creative programming, which is primarily funded by Arts Council Northern Ireland and produces a blend of exhibitions and community events across the year.

Robert and Anthea established R-Space Gallery CIC in 2011. The Gallery's opening exhibition was The Art and Science of Linen with Anna Dumitriu, which planted the first seed of what would blossom into the Linen Biennale.

**Jo Watson
Freelance Project Manager, Linen Biennale 2018**

Jo secures funding, stakeholder management and production aspects of the project. She is responsible for the continuing development, production and delivery of events, exhibitions and workshops.

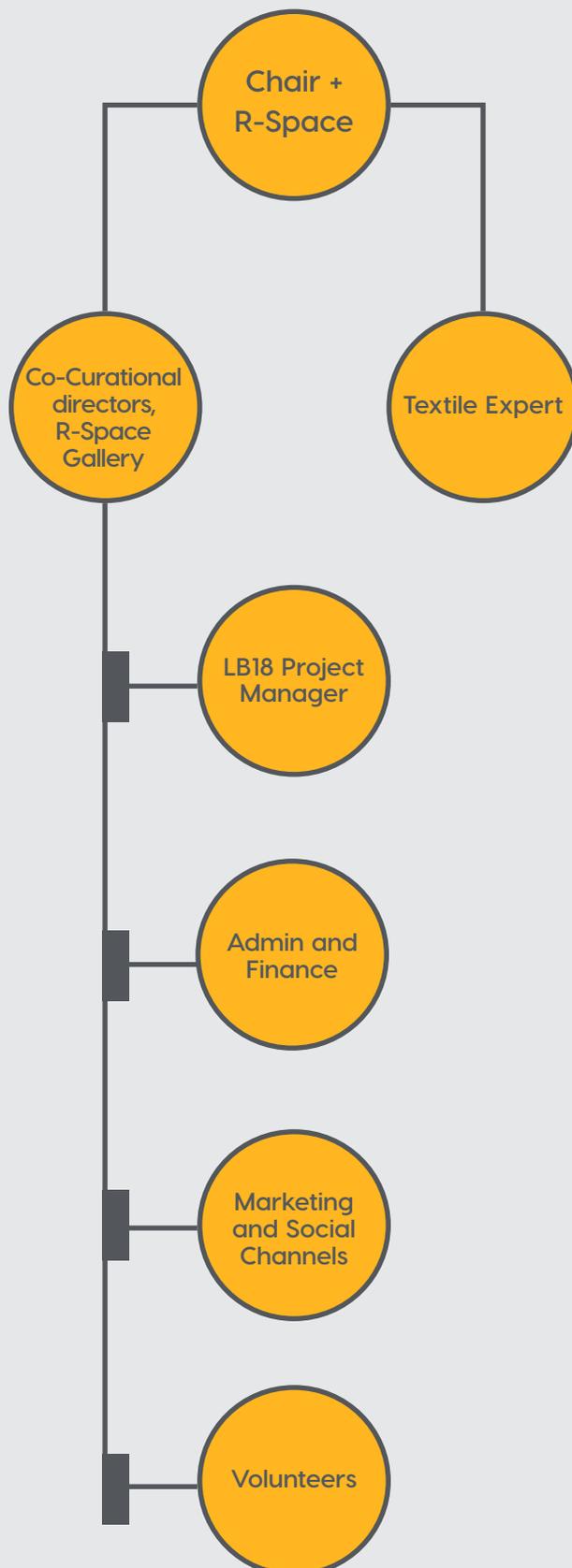
She trades as JW Associates NI, and has over 25 years' experience in the voluntary and private sectors, including event management, strategic planning, financial management, influencing key stakeholders and fundraising for a broad mix of charities, both national and local.

**Mags White
Finance and Admin Manager**

Mags is a freelance Cultural Consultant with 15 years' experience in front line management and administrative /financial control in the Local Government and Not-for-profit Arts Sectors. She also provides drama tuition to pre- and post- primary students within educational settings and community groups throughout the province.

She is a former member of the Chartered Institute Of Marketing and her accreditations include Volunteer Management, Event Management, and Arts Administration.

Team Structure



Funding

This programme was funded by a range of organisations reflecting the cross collaboration and innovation: including National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council NI, British Council NI, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Arts and Business and Invest NI. Recognition goes to the Arts Council NI who had the vision to fund the feasibility study in 2015 and Canadian research trip in 2017, which led the way for the first Linen Biennale 2018. The feasibility study identified the rich heritage of linen and provided the background to produce the first ever Linen Biennale involving a cross sectoral approach bringing together arts, heritage, design, business and education. This approach can be accredited to the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of both an arts-based gallery, R-Space and Professor Jane McCann.

With a budget of just over £100,000 the Linen Biennale had a considerable amount of gift in kind resources, expertise and hands on support to make this complex project come to life especially from Robert Martin, Anthea McWilliams, R-Space Chairman Alan Clarke and Professor Jane McCann. Without this support the Linen Biennale project would not have been possible.

Stakeholders

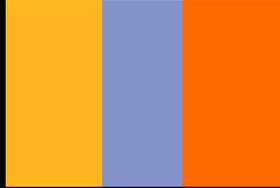
This programme involved a wide range of stakeholders that not only supported the uniqueness of the entire programme but also the collaborative nature and cross sector ethos of the programme. The key stakeholders are listed below along with the methods for gaining evaluative information.



Key Stakeholders	Description and Engagement methodology for evaluation
Funders/Key Supporters (100% are willing to get involved again in the Linen Biennale 2020)	A variety of funders were involved in supporting the Linen Biennale including Heritage Lottery Fund NI, Invest NI, Belfast Linen Quarter, Irish Linen Centre, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Arts and Business NI
Artists and Creatives	A wide range of artists and creatives were utilised and engaged.
Academics	Academics from a number of international locations acted as speakers and were involved in the programme including representation from Northern Ireland, China, Netherlands, India, Canada, France and Poland. A local Lecturer and Research fellow at Ulster University Trish Belford was also involved.
Partner organisations – Linen/Textile organisations, Heritage/Museum organisations	A number of textile organisations supported the programme including McBurney and Black, FE McWilliam Gallery, Kathleens Attic and Linen Stories Scotland. Museums also collaborated and were involved from both Northern Ireland and further afield.
Community Groups	A number of community groups were involved including Resurgam Trust, Cedar Foundation, Northern Ireland Science Festival, Lagan Navigation Trust, Belfast Senior Citizens Forum, Newtownbreda Library, Belfast Central Mission, primary and secondary schools and many others.
Volunteers	Volunteers came from a broad spread of people, ages and backgrounds united in a love for the arts and heritage.
R Space & Prof. Jane McCann	Both R Space and Professor McCann provided in kind time and effort for the project. They have strong links in the art, business, heritage and textile sectors. Their passion for the subject is extensive and their international connections enhanced the programme and made the difference of a successful, well received programme. They were the event organisers that brought life into the Linen Biennale.



R-SPACE ORGANISATIONAL AIMS FOR THE LINEN BIENNALE 2018



Anna Dumitriu's new solo exhibition "Linen - From The Field" at R Space Gallery



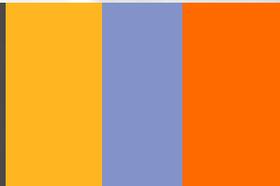


The aims of the project were to:

- To lead every two years on a three-month festival of arts and heritage, craft and design, including exhibitions and installations, conference, master-classes, and performances under the key themes of Recall, Rethink and Reform.
- To stimulate new thinking about Ireland's oldest textile products: flax and linen. Reaching out to the last of a generation who worked in the heyday of Ulster's linen production, the Linen Biennale forms a bridge to connect our internationally renowned linen heritage with contemporary uses and highlight the very best in cutting-edge developments from around the world.
- To show linen's applications within arts, craft, design and technology from past, present and future perspectives gives the linen story relevance to a wide range of audiences locally, nationally and internationally.
- To present a collective story of Ulster linen in an international context will stimulate new ideas and developments in Northern Ireland.
- To host the Linen Biennale international conference Lisburn, Northern Ireland.
- To develop cultural tourism in Lisburn through associating its rich linen history with contemporary visual arts and other related practices
- To develop a flagship event for Lisburn's regular cultural calendar with a strong visual arts element
- To promote Northern Irish artists and makers to an international audience
- To build new, and strengthen existing partnerships with local, national and international organisations
- To meet objectives in the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Five-Year Strategy and Lisburn City Council Tourism Development Plan and British Council Plan.
- To continue to develop R-Space Gallery as the primary destination in Lisburn city centre for contemporary visual arts and crafts



EVALUATING THE LINEN BIENNALE 2018





Proximity

Performance and installation by Alice Clark and Jayne Cherry

Curated by Sinéad Bhreathnach-Cashell, Northern Ireland Screen Digital Film Archive

www.digitalfilmarchive.net

This evaluation has been completed by Jakna Consulting. Jakna Consulting is a training and evaluation company managed by Nancy Brown. Nancy has been training, coaching, mentoring and delivering workshops for over 20 years and has first-hand experience in strategy development, corporate social responsibility, social impact, creation of programmes and evaluation. Her experience within the private, charity and public sector as well as social enterprise spans the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East and Russia. She has worked within a wide range of businesses reflective of diverse sectors.

Nancy Brown is an experienced programme evaluator and facilitator with a wealth of experience in the education, health, community, youth and arts sector and has worked with Gauge, a social enterprise that delivers impact assessments/evaluations as an associate for the past seven years. Nancy has grassroots experience understanding and exploring impact of diverse projects including those working with older people, people with disabilities, those unemployed, youth, families, NEETS, those with mental health issues, students, arts organisations and woman's groups. This has involved facilitation of key stakeholder groups at both operational and strategic level. She also delivers numerous workshops and training programmes given her experience in engaging with stakeholders at multiple levels. She is a trained Social Return on Investment practitioner and delivers workshops and consultancy on the topic for a number of organisations including Social Enterprise NI. Nancy is also a dancer and has a passion for the arts, hailing from the States originally and a NY girl at heart.

Nancy has a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science (USA) and a MBA from Queen's University. She also has an ILM Level 5 in Export Marketing.

Summary of research methods

This purpose of this evaluation is to measure the effectiveness and to capture the impact of the Linen Biennale based on the logic model depicting a journey that stakeholders engaged on. The journey incorporates outcomes around tourism and promotion of Northern Ireland, skills development, building international and local connections, celebrating the heritage of linen and flax, access to international speakers, best practice learning and opportunities for business development across a wide range of stakeholder groups including artists, businesses, universities, academics, volunteers, attendees and funders all of whom engaged with the Linen Biennale. This is demonstrated through the range of events, workshops, conference and the impact as a result of stakeholder engagement.

From the overall theory, many outcomes were generated, and the wide-ranging changes experienced by stakeholders linked to the Linen Biennale are highlighted through this evaluation. This study identifies the main inputs, outputs and outcomes, as they relate to the identified stakeholders, and are further outlined in the Input/output model in Figure 1 below:

- Inputs (What stakeholders invested in the programme over the period of the analysis)
- Activities/Programme (What was delivered by Linen Biennale)
- Outputs (What was achieved through these activities)
- Outcomes (The impact on the stakeholders and the impact both short and long term)

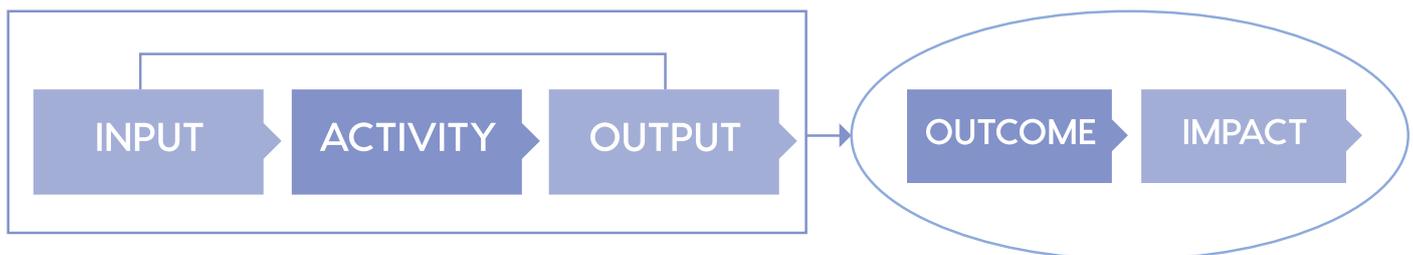


Figure 1: Input / Output Model

These core questions will be answered:

- Who changes as a result of the Linen Biennale?
- What were the outcomes and what was the impact?
- Which outcomes are most valued?

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilised to collate all relevant information, helping to build a complete and full picture of what actually changed for stakeholders as a result of participating in the Linen Biennale and to understand any differences that it has made. A logic model approach has been utilised and will be discussed below.

There is the possibility of limitations on this study including limitation of engagement with all stakeholders as there were over 34,000 people involved and there is also the chance of sample bias. Attendees were asked to complete evaluations after each and every event. There may have been sampling errors as it was a probability sampling so that the sample may not reflect the general population of those attending events. They may not have been a representation of the entire population. There was also a wide range of stakeholders involved with different needs and outcomes. Some individuals participated in more than one activity which therefore may have increased the outcomes whilst some only attended one or a few events. Also, because some of the feedback was captured straight after the event, the longer term outcomes are more difficult to measure. Whilst interviewing some of the organisations involved 6 months after the events they identified that they have been able to avail of business opportunities. That feedback would not have been given on the day of the event as time was necessary for these relationships to develop over time. There is also the issue of accessing those that attended after the events as uptake of survey completion can be low unless captured on the day of the event and email addresses/contact information can change.

Logic Model

Jakna Consulting completed this evaluation utilising a logic model, an approach to understanding and managing the value based on a set of principles that are applied within a framework. Logic model seeks to include the values of people that are often excluded from typical evaluations. The logic model is a framework designed to structure thinking and understanding. It is a story, not a number. It is about understanding stakeholders' journeys to measure the impact and value for money of the Linen Biennale.

The logic model can be depicted as a map or journey, linking the activities of the project, to the short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes experienced by service users, and other stakeholders.

From the overall theory, many direct financial outcomes are generated, and the wide-ranging social changes experienced by beneficiaries linked to the project are highlighted. Table 1 opposite provides an overview of the journey of change for a range of project stakeholders.

Flax Flowers: FE McWilliam Gallery

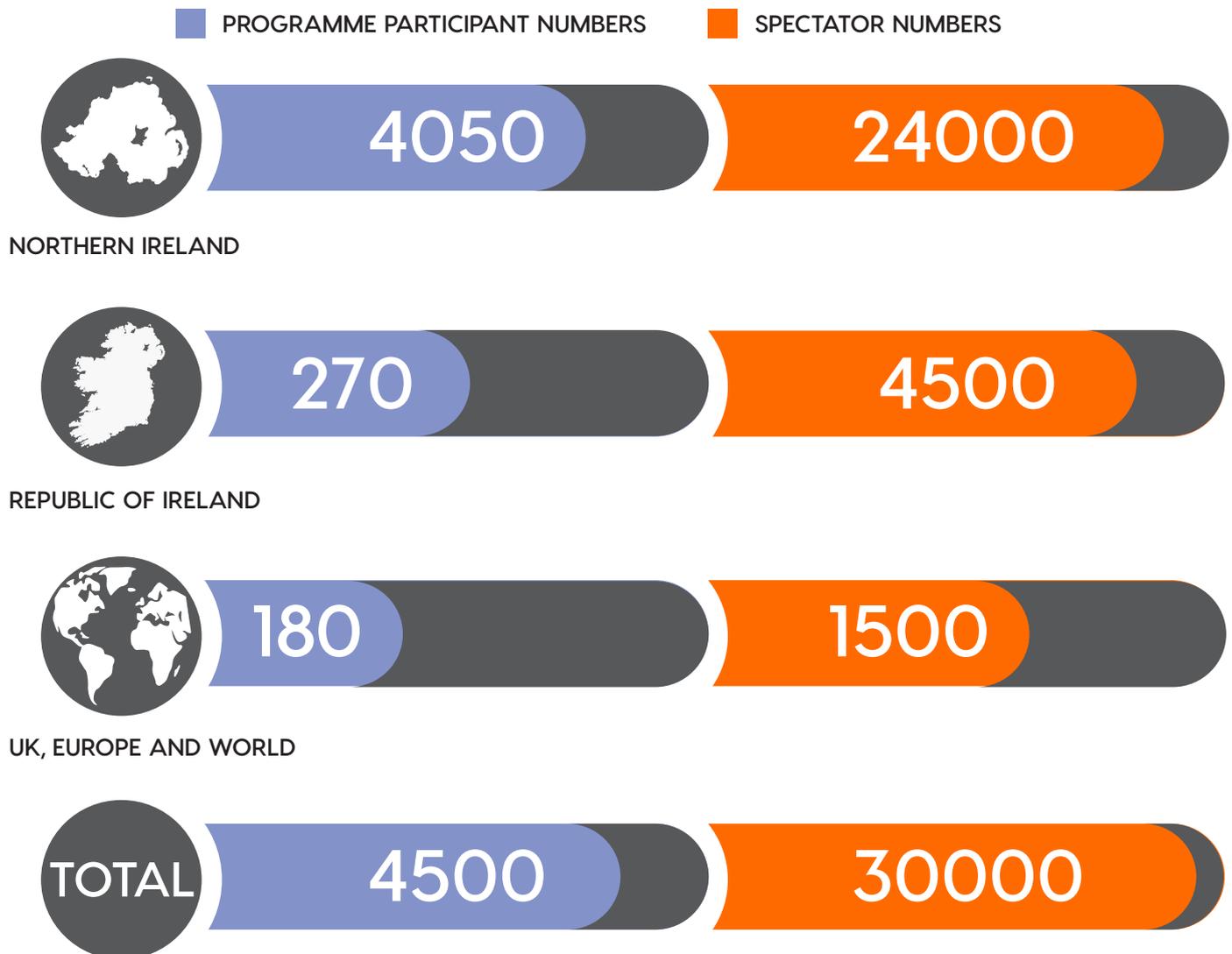


Table 1

Inputs	Outputs			Outcomes		
	Activities	Description	Participants	Short	Medium	Long
Funding, ticket sales, volunteer time and effort, collaboration with variety of stakeholders, in kind support	Exhibitions/ Displays	Exhibitions focused on a variety of themes around flax and linen	Variety of international and local participants from different generations, A wider range of people involved with heritage; i.e. people from a wider range of ages, ethnicities, social backgrounds, more disabled people; or groups of people who have never engaged with heritage before.	Developed links within the creative and arts sector; Developed new audiences; Establishes and builds international links; Celebrated heritage of Linen and Flax; sharing of best practice and building knowledge; improving skills; Promoting Northern Ireland; Encouraged tourism; Created business opportunities; Raised the profile of NI as a historical Irish Linen and Flax location	Building international connections and relationships, Opportunities for collaboration and business both locally and internationally, developing cross sector links and collaborations from industry, academia and creative sector; business development, increase tourism and the profile of NI as a Linen and Flax destination and place of heritage	Create strategic alliances and opportunities for collaboration internationally, Raise the profile of Irish Linen and Flax as well as raise the profile of Northern Ireland, continue to network and develop additional opportunities for ongoing business, Increases tourism
	Workshops/ Lectures	Workshops on a variety of themes				
	Conference	Focused on bringing best practice from across the world to NI				
	Events	Wide range of events including opera, fashion show and themed tours both walking and bus tours				
Assumptions				External Factors		
By bringing a variety of people together from different disciplines and locations globally the intention is that there will naturally be some work to come out of the programme and conference. Intentionally a wide variety of options were on offer to meet the most diverse needs of stakeholders interested in Linen and Flax. It was intended to increase awareness of NI as a heritage location for Linen and Flax. It also brought tourism to the region and raised the profile of NI within industry, academia and the creative sector.				There are a number of external factors including Brexit, Legacy of the troubles of Northern Ireland, Cheaper travel costs, limited places to stay in Lisburn - only one city centre hotel, Limited flights from US into NI, the benefit of more flights from European destinations to NI and easy access from Dublin airport are beneficial external factors.		

Programme

Over 80 events, exhibitions, tours, talks and performances took place throughout the Linen Biennale 2018 ranging from one day events to activities over three months. There was a wide range of activities which attracted a wide-ranging audience including talks at museums and galleries, fashion show, opera, conference on Linen, up close and personal with artists, work with schools and community groups, thought leadership sessions on how to use Linen in the future, visitor numbers reached over 30,000 at venues across Northern Ireland and Border areas. There were over 4,500 participants involved in the programme activities.

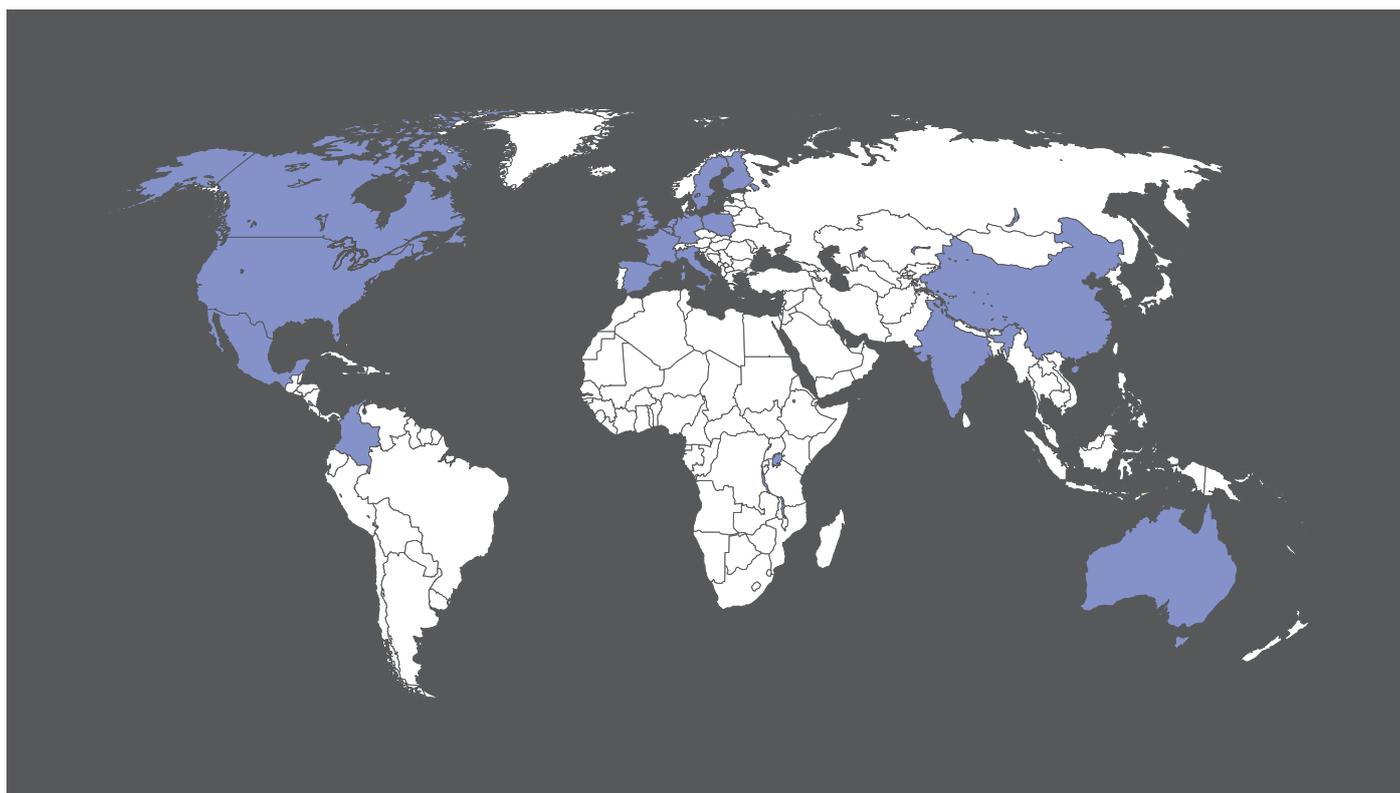


The programme was divided under three key themes:

- Recall** — Linen heritage themed projects or exhibitions
- Rethink** — Educational projects or exhibitions with linen or flax theme
- Reform** — Design led innovation with linen or flax products

55% of activities and events were within the Re-call theme, 39% Re-think and the balance under the Re-form theme. The range of events and activities attracted a broad range of age categories including young up and coming artists to those that remember Linen in its prime.

People from Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland, Europe and USA took part in an online survey asking for their detailed feedback and suggestions for 2020. The majority of respondents were from Northern Ireland. See below for the international spread of visitors to the Linen Biennale 2018.



77% of people who evaluated the Linen Biennale 2018 were very satisfied

85% have requested to be actively involved in the Linen Biennale 2020.

There were a number of reasons why people became involved in the Linen Biennale. The main reason was the links with the creative and arts sectors at 86% following by the strong heritage theme at 68.57%. The following was found:

Reasons why participants got involved	
Strong heritage theme	68.57%
Links with the creative and arts sector	85.71%
Variety of events offered	40.00%
Raise the profile of Linen globally	48.57%
Target audience	8.57%
Trust the company / reliability	25.71%
International element	31.43%
Tourism	5.71%
Volunteering opportunity	5.71%
Enjoyed reading about Linen and Flax on the website and social media	22.86%

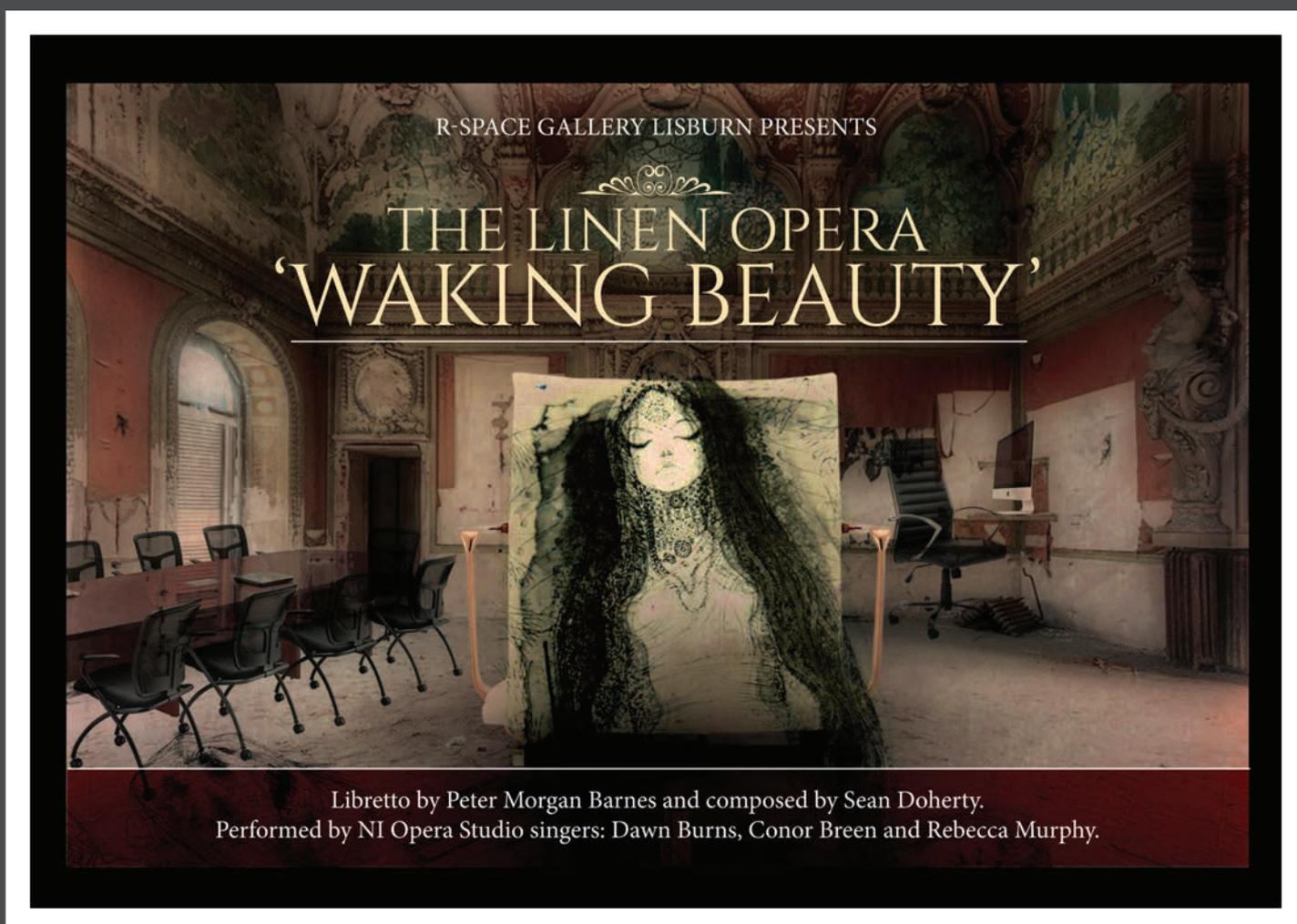
When asked about how attendees developed through the programme the following responses were given:

What they got from being involved in the Linen Biennale 2018	
Developed my skills/learned something new	54.55%
Developed links with the creative and arts sector	69.70%
Networked and met new people	75.76%
Found new audiences	21.21%
Developed my international links	15.15%
Developed better understanding of the heritage of Linen and Flax	60.61%
Built my networks	36.36%
Felt I was sharing my knowledge and developing others	48.48%
Allowed me to explore and visit Northern Ireland	15.15%
Provided opportunities for new business	18.18%
Travel and explore	6.06%

The number one area reported as an outcome for being involved was networking and meeting new people at 76%. This tied in nicely with the second highest area - strong links developed internationally for the creative and arts sector was the highest reported with 70%. This in turn led to new partnerships and new business being created. A number of organisations created partnerships that have turned into business and collaborations together.

This programme could not have been pulled together without the core organisation R-Space, Professor Jane McCann and team of volunteers. The volunteers were experienced and had a vast knowledge of linen and flax.

85% rated the staff and volunteer team as excellent and above average in their activities.



Linen Opera

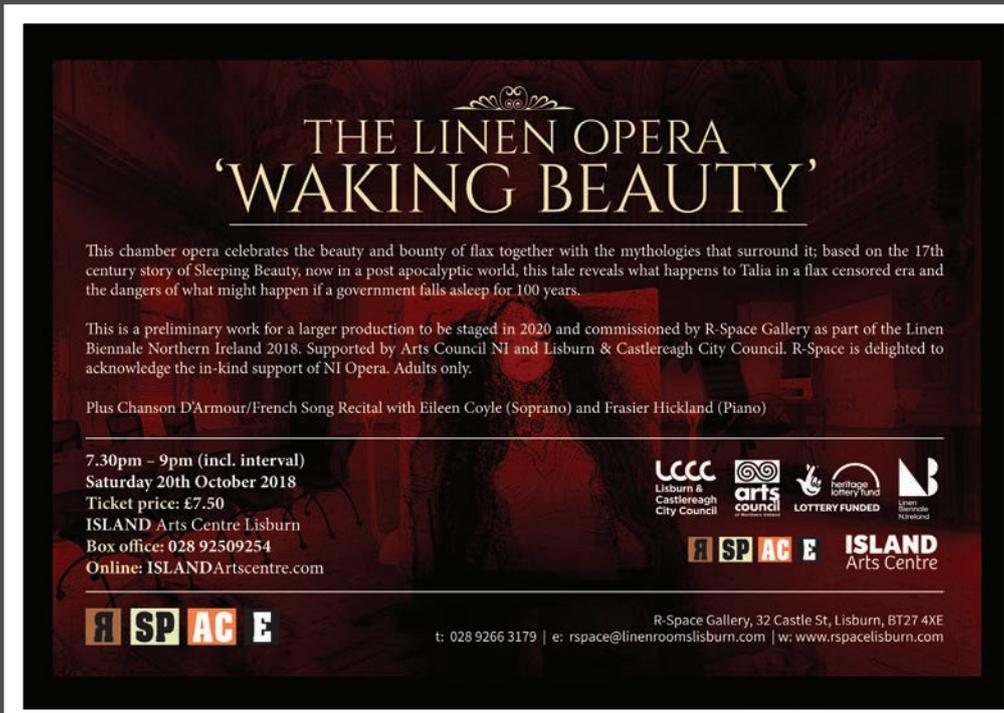
The opera, *Waking Beauty*, was preceded by a cross-community project involving 60 children drawn from the Black Mountain estate and Slate Street areas of Belfast. Aged 11-12 they worked in three groups of 15 with an even balance of tradition, gender and abilities in each group, to create three sequences of a theatre performance exploring the history of linen in Ulster. Rehearsals took place in May 2018 over a two-week period, with performances taking place in Conway Mill, for parents, families and invited guests. There were 70 per evening performance, and 90 school pupils per afternoon performance 320 in all. The Belfast Education Authority funded this part of the project.

The young participants learned how collaborative art is constructed, the importance of teamwork, and that the self-discipline of each performer creates the artistic excellence of the group. Participants experimented with different techniques of theatrical storytelling, including stylisation, choruses, Brechtian ensemble work, song-parodies and dance.

The new chamber opera funded by ACNI small grants was composed by Dr. Sean Doherty and Peter Morgan Barnes during the Linen Biennale 2018 and premiered in the ISLAND Arts Centre Studio Theatre in October 2018. This provided an opportunity for audience members who had in some cases never encountered this genre before, and our volunteer call out for extras also provided an opportunity for local people with little or no performance experience to participate, and therefore develop and enhance their interest in the arts. We invited volunteer extras to perform in a non-singing role as Courtiers. They ranged from having no performance background to having a keen interest in performing arts as amateurs (of all ages), but all agreed that it was an extremely worthwhile and challenging experience.

“I have been enthralled with the rehearsal process and the opportunity to perform with such professional singers” J.B., Volunteer Courtier

One of the main aims was to remove the stigma surrounding Opera as an exclusive artform and increase accessibility to the genre in the City of Lisburn. This was achieved using presentation, humour and style of the piece. This approach will be continued with the creation of the full Opera for the second Biennale in 2020 funding allowing, and in association with NI Opera.



**THE LINEN OPERA
'WAKING BEAUTY'**

This chamber opera celebrates the beauty and bounty of flax together with the mythologies that surround it; based on the 17th century story of Sleeping Beauty, now in a post apocalyptic world, this tale reveals what happens to Talia in a flax censored era and the dangers of what might happen if a government falls asleep for 100 years.

This is a preliminary work for a larger production to be staged in 2020 and commissioned by R-Space Gallery as part of the Linen Biennale Northern Ireland 2018. Supported by Arts Council NI and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. R-Space is delighted to acknowledge the in-kind support of NI Opera. Adults only.

Plus Chanson D'Armour/French Song Recital with Eileen Coyle (Soprano) and Frasier Hickland (Piano)

7.30pm – 9pm (incl. interval)
Saturday 20th October 2018
Ticket price: £7.50
ISLAND Arts Centre Lisburn
Box office: 028 92509254
Online: ISLANDArtscentre.com

LCCC
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

arts council
Northern Ireland

LOTTERY FUNDED

ISLAND Arts Centre

R SP AC E

R-Space Gallery, 32 Castle St, Lisburn, BT27 4XE
t: 028 9266 3179 | e: rspace@linenroomslisburn.com | w: www.rspaceisburn.com

“Beautiful music, so impressive to get locally produced opera. Super amazing singers”

Audience member evaluation.

Image: Roel van Tour and Mathijs Labadie



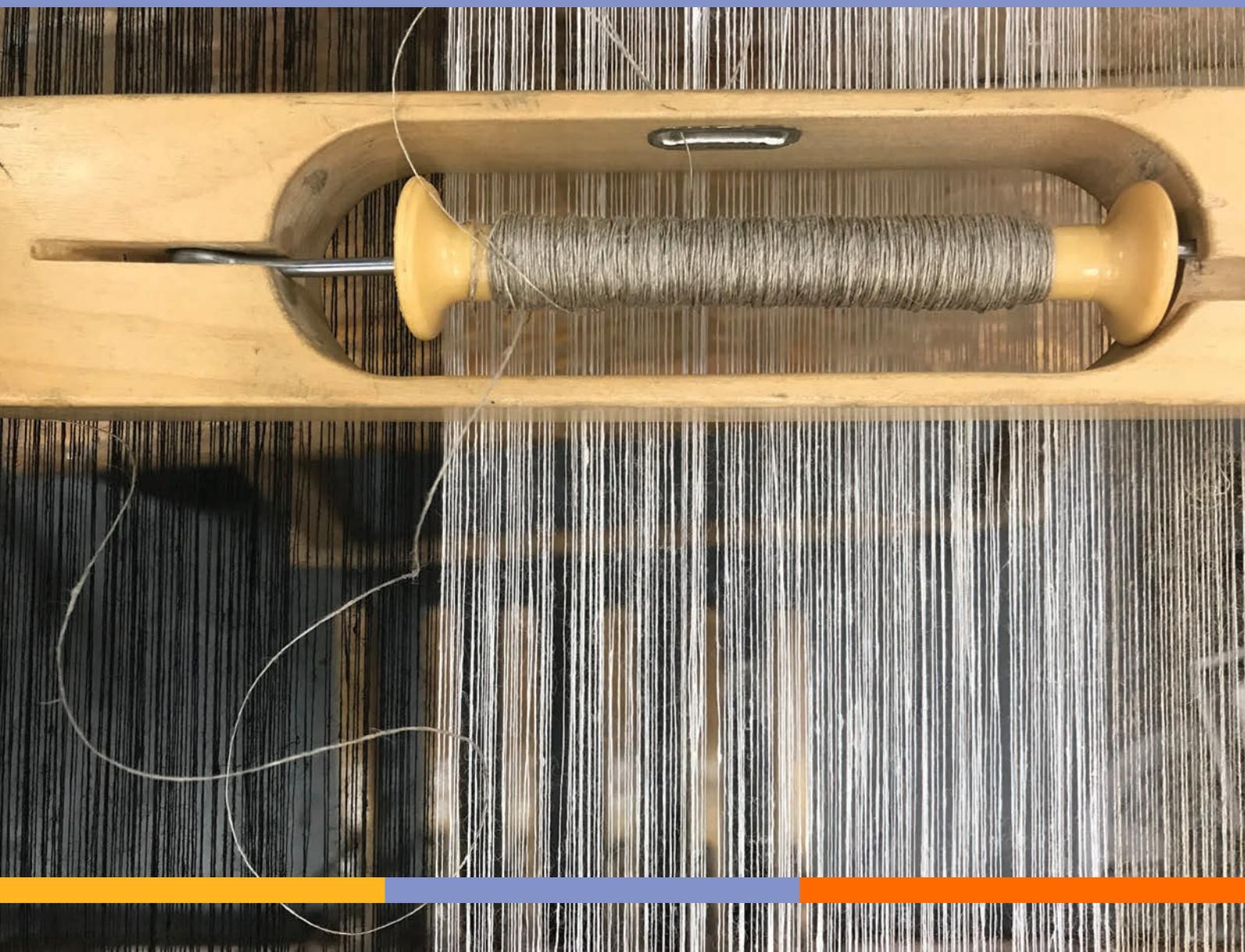
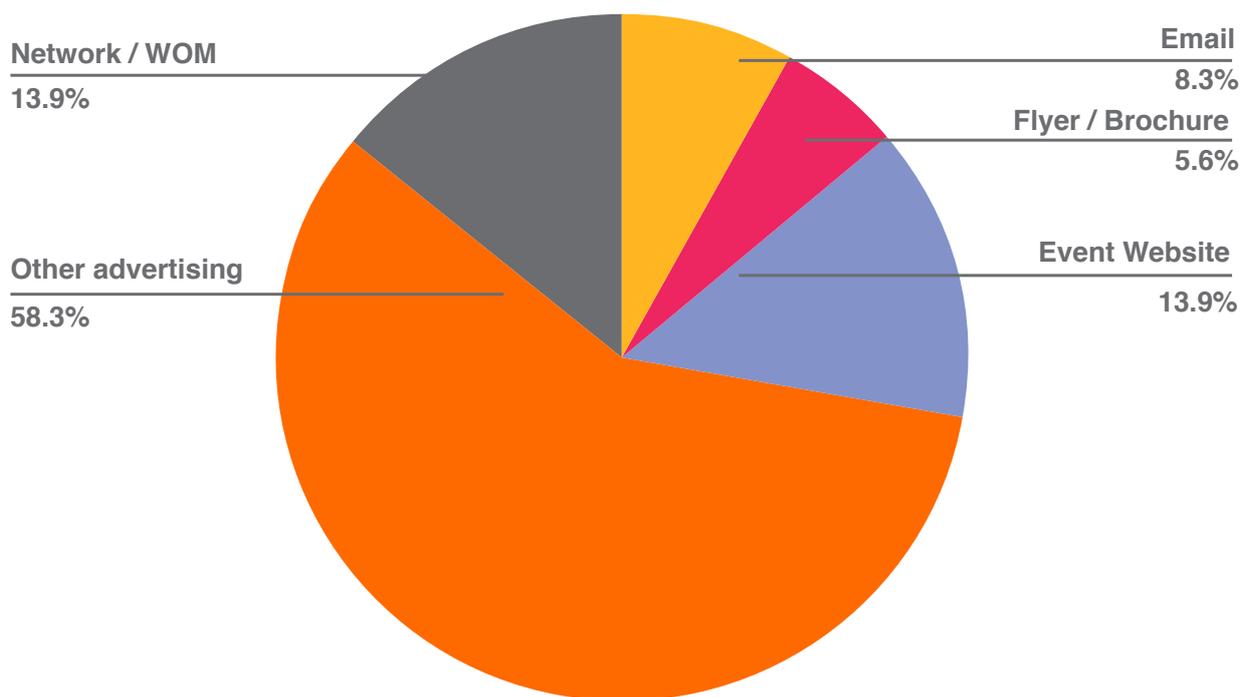
Conference

The Linen Biennale Conference 2018 expanded new thinking associated with both linen and flax fibre heritage. The Conference stimulated collaboration between industry, trade bodies and academia, with a focus on technology, design and research. Linen may be Ireland's oldest textile, but the current range of artefacts and cutting-edge design mean that it has never been more exciting and relevant. And in a market that is increasingly aware of "slower" and more responsible attitudes to sustainability, linen is a smart choice for the future.

The key note speaker at the conference was Christien Meinsdertsma, a Dutch artist and designer whose investigation of the life of raw materials sees her exploring pre-industrial techniques. Her work has been exhibited in MOMA (New York) and the V&A (London). Over the packed two-day conference we had speakers from France, Poland, The Netherlands, Canada and The United States, lending the biennale a lively cosmopolitan feel. Friendships and new collaborations were formed during the conference dinner and at "Linen Futures: Fashion Showcase" at Belfast's PRONI.

The conference reached an international audience with a recommendation for more paid marketing to reach a broader audience that includes private sector businesses. The evaluation showed that the paid for advertising had the greatest influence followed by the network and Linen Biennale website.

How did you learn about this conference?



EXPERTS

HERITAGE/ MUSEUMS

“The conference was by far the best I’ve attended in a 30 year museum career, and rounded off in style by a fabulous show. I would love to meet up with you all later in the year to see if the museum could make a better contribution to the next Biennale”

**Valerie Wilson, Curator of Costume and Textiles,
National Museums NI**

“The Conference (and all that surrounded it) was excellent and I know I am not the only one who felt greatly stimulated and motivated by all we experienced, both formally and informally during our few days in Northern Ireland. I feel very excited by what the whole Biennale has presented in terms of opportunity, and I am really looking forward to developing the various conversations, and leads into tangible new Linen stories, both ‘practical’ and ‘academic’.”

**Tim Parry-Williams, Course Leader MA
Design: Fashion & Textiles, Field of Design
Bath Spa University**

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIA

“Thank you very much for your fantastic conference and fantastic atmosphere during the whole event in Lisburn.”

**Assoc. Prof. Malgorzata Zimniewska, PhD Eng.,
Acting Director, Institute of Natural Fibres and
Medicinal Plants, Poznan, Poland**

“I was very interested in learning more about the fibre for our materials library. Quality 5* and the level of the presentations was extremely high. I would have liked more time for discussion after each. Perhaps add round table discussions, or workshops or more breaks time to allow for discussions and networking. Amazing job everyone. Thank you.”

**Tara St.James, Production Coordinator +
Research Fellow
Pratt Institute | Brooklyn Fashion + Design
Accelerator, USA**

“

“Thank you for such a deeply meaningful experience. I can't express enough appreciation for the opportunity to gather the knowledge and develop experimental work for the event.”

Brian Anderson, Assistant Professor, Industrial Design, School of Design, University of Illinois Chicago

“

“Thank you for putting together such a great event, glitches and all it makes it human.”

Trish Belford, Senior Research Fellow, University of Ulster

“

“Each speaker was obviously very well informed and respected in their own field and together they painted an extraordinarily wide image of flax and linen from a historical perspective, a contemporary scientific update and especially on the possibilities and practicality of the revival of the linen industry and the resultant possible contribution to so many pressing issues today, from health to environment.”

Mary Mullin

“

“The 2018 Linen Biennale Northern Ireland was unique and special because it was held in Northern Ireland, making it authentic.

I enjoyed being part of a much needed conference and programme.”

Fiona McKelvie, McBurney and Black

“

INTERNATIONAL COMPOSITES COMMUNITY

“I would like to thank you all for the very warm welcome, and the excellent conference. It brought together people from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds in a harmonious, exciting and inspiring event!”

Professor Jan Ivens, KU Leuven, Representing the CELC, The European Confederation of Flax and Hemp

“

“It was certainly a really insightful event.”

Conference attendee

“I really enjoyed the sessions and the excellent organization. Congratulations to the Team”

Dilip Tambyrajah, Secretary & founder member of the International Natural fiber Organization (INFO), Initiator of the NFCDesign Platform, The Netherlands & Active member of the UN FAO Inter-Govt. Group on Hard Fibres.

“It was truly an honour for me to be able to provide my limited support over the few days and to be involved at what I hope will be the start of a new commercial opportunity.”

And - from Dilip - a year before the conference!

“Jane, What a wonderful initiative (Linen Biennale) and I really love the fact that you are keeping at it. Because from experience I know that it can be rather frustrating and disappointing as well. But in the end I am sure NFC will gain a market share that it truly deserves, also thanks to people like you who believe in it.”

“I do hope we will have an opportunity to engage (representation from the international conference speakers) as the ‘Natural Fibre Composites’ network evolves.”

LOCAL INDUSTRY

A local company director has had a ‘light bulb moment’ in relation to the relevance of natural fibre composites within the automotive industry and is committed to contributing to the natural fibre composite network.

Richard Ennis, Director, Creative Composites, Lisburn.

Regional economic development.

And, in relation to the culmination of the conference:

“The Fashion show was truly amazing and I do hope as a side line you put some of your garments into production as I certainly would like to make a few purchases.”

Linda Jamison, Collaborative Growth Manager, Skills & Competitiveness, INI.



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**BED NIGHTS
GENERATED IN
THE LOCAL AREA
DURING THE
CONFERENCE**

Outcomes from the conference participants evaluation included:



Understanding the developing material opportunities.



To broaden knowledge and make new connections.



To network with international linen industry and learn more about what's happening with linen around the world, especially within Europe.



To meet other flax and linen manufacturers from around the world.



To understand more about sustainable production of linen and design



Learning about composites and potential for collaboration in textiles sector in Northern Ireland



Hearing more from those pushing the boundaries and reinventing flax as a relevant modern fibre

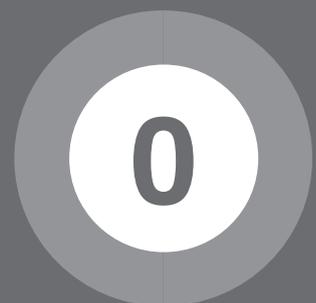
How likely would you be able to recommend this event to a friend or colleague?



Very Likely



Neutral



Very Unlikely

Fashion Showcase



CARYN FRANKLIN, MBE introduced the Linen Biennale Fashion Showcase at PRONI, Belfast. As a former fashion editor and co-editor of i-D Magazine, a BBC broadcaster for 15 years on prime-time programmes such as The Clothes Show, Style Challenge and many others, Franklin has explored the politics of image and self-esteem extensively over 37 years of fashion practice in commercial, educational and activist positions.

This finale to the conference was staged on the evening of Thursday October 4th at the PRONI building in the Titanic Quarter and was brought together by the creative Professor Jane McCann. Jane has been a huge source of advice and guidance to the Linen Biennale Team helping to bring about our shared vision for linen. This Fashion Showcase was a fitting tribute to her skills and expertise.



Image: Professor Wang Lu, Dean of the School of Art and Design at China Women's University, in Beijing images from the 'Workwear' collection

The Fashion Showcase celebrated the relative sustainability of linen and flax fibre in clothing that promotes longevity of design as opposed to fast fashion. The focus was on enduring styling for everyday life: clothing that is both elegant and inclusive for a range of figure types and age groups. Collections from established designers including Maria Cardenas, Grainline, Loft Trading, as well as from Celia Homewood (France) Sirpa Morsky (Finland), Claudia Escobar (Scotland) Tara St. James (USA) and from, the Showcase host, Jane McCann. Student collections celebrated emerging talent from the China Women's University (presented by Professor Wang Lu, Dean of Art and Design), Belfast Metropolitan College, Ulster University and Chelsea College of Art.

The Fashion Showcase proved a fascinating finish to the conference that was shared with the public at PRONI, Titanic Quarter, Belfast. the final practical conclusion of the catwalk. The Linen Biennale Showcase team wishes to acknowledge the invaluable support of William Clark and Sons, Loft Trading, Stoker Mills, Style Academy, Gayfield Projects, The British Council, Arts and Business and styling by Anne Chaisty in the Titanic Quarter's memorable venue provided by PRONI.

Caryn Franklin said "Thrilled to be here in Belfast for the Linen Biennale conference and fashion show. The flax plant and the production of linen once a huge industry in Ireland needs to be reframed as 21st century sustainable product. "



Linen Futures: Fashion Showcase

4th October | PRONI

Digital evaluation of the website

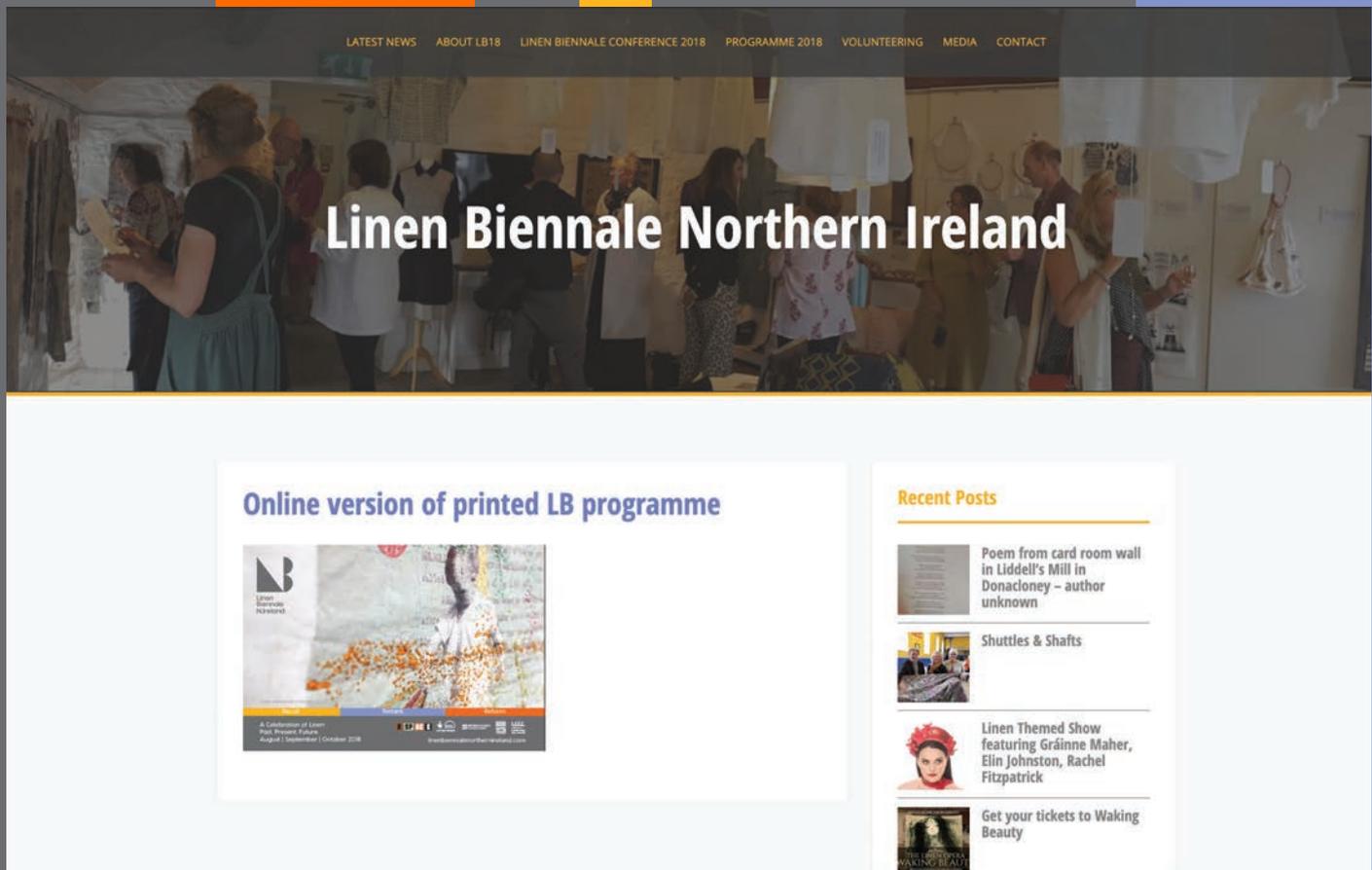
There was wide spread reach of the events and conference via digital channels. The following provides a breakdown.

Website

During the Linen Biennale 2018 the website was developed and updated to include a platform to host video and more interaction. Feedback was that the site was colourful, relevant and easy to navigate. It was clear that for 2020 the website will need to be developed to be easily used as an online catalogue of events and activities. Participants want to be able to access information easily through their phone and with an ease of booking. Get Invited also worked well and is compatible with many platforms.

Website views

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2017			1	416	154	167	125	225	224	208	1.1K	1.0K
2018	555	623	519	550	1.2K	881	3.1K	4.3K	4.2K	2.4K	669	336
2019	436	448	550	395								



Social channels

Facebook



Linen Biennale NI



Linen Biennale NI
@LinenAliveNI

Linen Biennale page was created in January 2018. Social media support funded through the Heritage Lottery Grant began in April 2018:



Followers increased by 205%



25 new followers every month



Average reach increased by 518%



Average post engagement: 18



Highest post engagement: 406

Total page followers have grown by 179% - from 157 on 23/04/2018 to 479 on 09/05/2019. An average of 50 new followers every month. In the 3-month period prior to social media support, the highest organic post reach achieved was 749 accounts, with an average reach for the period of 57. From the beginning of social media support until today, the highest organic post reach achieved was 2641, with an average reach for the period of 215.

Twitter



LinenAliveNI

**Linen Biennale NI**

@LinenAliveNI

Account created August 2017. Since social media support began in April 2018:



Followers increased by 215%



40 new followers every month



Average reach increased by 102%



Average post engagement: 16 per day



Highest post engagement: 242

Followers have grown by 215% from 112 on 23/04/2018 to 353 on 17/10/2018.

In the three month period prior to social media support, we achieved 213 impressions per day (organic reach) per day. Link clicks, retweets and likes each averaged at 1 per day and replies were 0% (3 replies total). Taking an average of the two x three month periods since social media support began, in order to compare with the three months prior to social media support, total organic reach grew from 53,300 in the pre-support period (Jan to end Apr) to 323,200 total during the twelve month supported period (averaged to 105,800 per three month period of support), meaning average reach was boosted by 198%.

Link clicks and retweets each averaged at two per day following social support and likes averaged at five per day. Replies averaged again at 0 per day but went up to twenty three for the whole period from three.

Instagram



Linen Biennale NI



Linen Biennale NI
@LinenAliveNI



Account created December 2017. Since social media support began in April 2018:



Followers increased by approx. 600%



35+ new followers every month



Average reach increased by approx. 340%



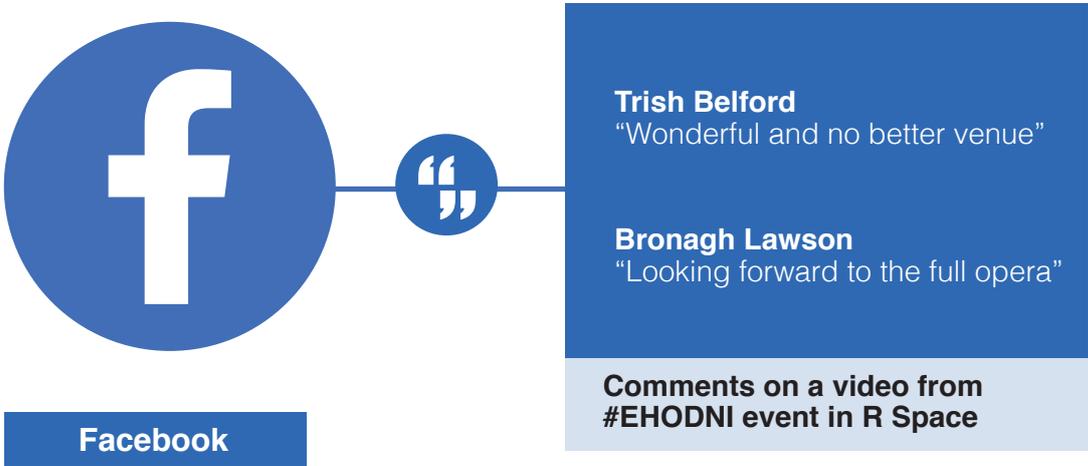
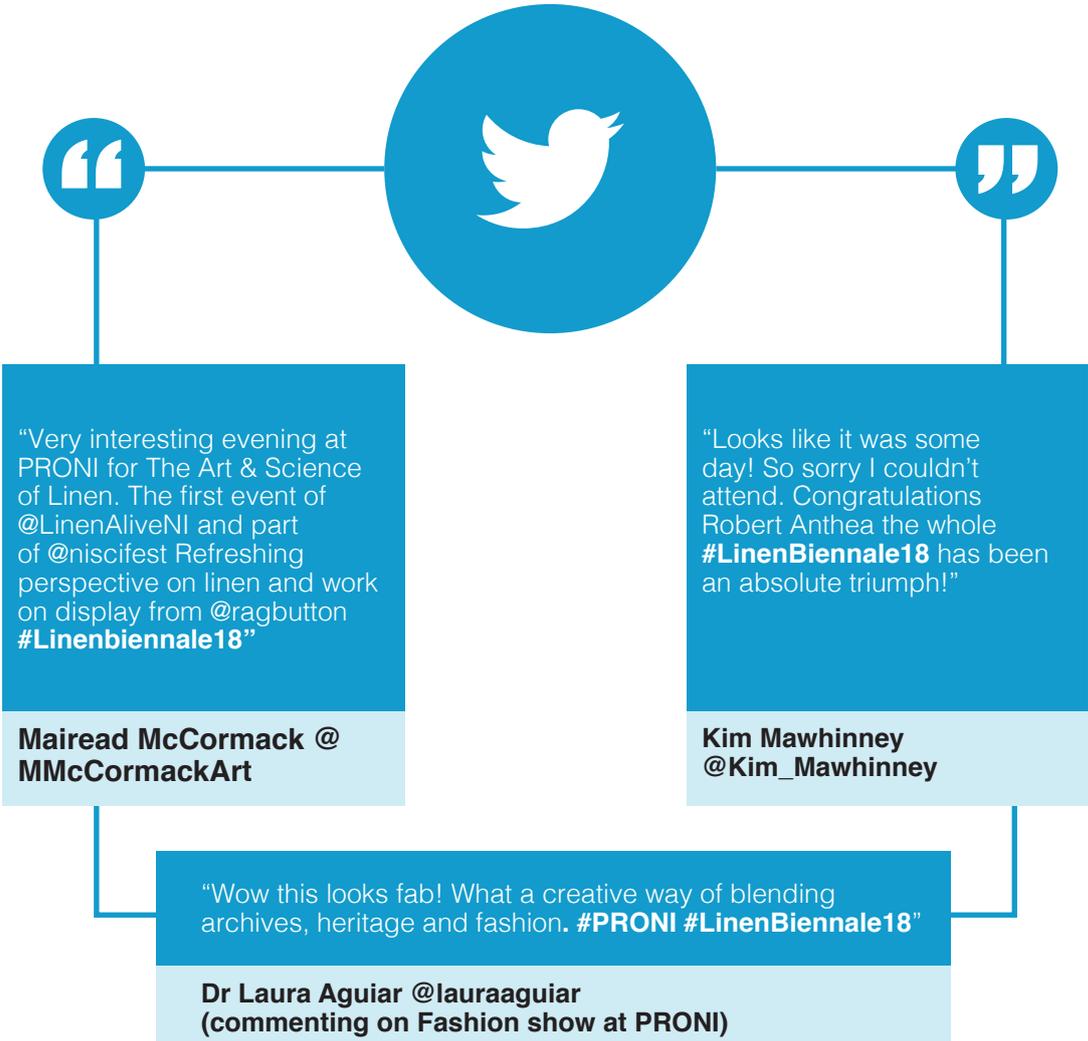
First post engagement: 18



Highest post engagement since social support: 97

Instagram does not have the same level of detail or historical data available, however our followers were at approximately 100 when social media support began and today sits at 587, growth of nearly 600%. Our first post with analytics available shows 32 total engagements (including likes, comments, clicks, follows) and a reach of 156. Our best performing recent post during the 13 months of social support had 97 engagements and a reach of 592.

Twitter





OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



There were over 80 events within the cultural, heritage and arts sectors and were delivered in partnership with over 50 organisations. Throughout a plethora of heritage and cultural locations including museums, heritage centres, PRONI, galleries, libraries. They also included a variety of artforms including a fashion show, opera, art pieces, educational talks and storytelling workshops, singing and walking tours.

These events were aimed at all ages and intentionally included specific events for the younger audience such as the Linen Tea Towel competition and school age singing workshops.

Collaboration with over 50 organisations inclusive of industry, academia, arts, cultural, heritage and community. Many new pieces were created and new displays in museums, galleries and public venues to included the Donegal Tweed Chair by Christien Meinsdertsma, the Dutch artist and designer.



Linenopolis – The Belfast Linen Quarter Bid August - December 2018

Linenopolis was a pop-up visitor experience and store opened in Bedford House in the heart of Belfast’s historic Linen Quarter, showcasing the wares of more than 30 of the north’s leading linen entrepreneurs. Linenopolis was located opposite the Grand Central Hotel on Bedford Street, and was the first-ever experience on the island of Ireland wholly dedicated to linen, providing both an insight to its social, economic and cultural history and a showcase for the best in contemporary linen brands as part of the first Linen Biennale.



Linenopolis included story boards, images and artefacts highlighting the city's linen heritage, accompanied by entrepreneurs including Katie Larmour, Mourne Textiles, Flax Fox, 31 Chapel Lane and Placed Ireland displaying their artisan wares. The then Lord Mayor of Belfast Deirdre Hargey opened this temporary attraction and recognised Belfast's rich shared heritage of Linen production.

Chris McCracken from Belfast's Linen Quarter Bid, which represents 440 businesses in the area, said: "One of our first goals when we launched in April was to create innovative opportunities for entrepreneurs and we're proud to support the creative arts in this way. We also want to tell the story of the historic Linen Quarter and rebrand it as one of the must see destinations in the city. Our hope is that we can find a more permanent home for Linenopolis, and that this will continue to build momentum in the regeneration of this increasingly vibrant area."

The Linenopolis initiative in Bedford Street Belfast celebrated original contemporary Linen design and products together with a bespoke design interpretation of the Irish Linen story specifically in Belfast. There was genuine appreciation by visitors of the concept, design and products available, many expressing their hope that the pop-up store would be sustainable and recognizing the cultural and tourism opportunity it offered.

A number of free public walking tours, talks and events took place throughout the four month period August to December 2018. These proved popular with adults and families, culminating in additional visitors to the store where they could appreciate the story afresh and handle artefacts relating to the industry. The Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum contributed loan items for display and Spinners for live events together with the Grand Opera House and Belfast City Hall.

Sometimes the designers were present to engage with the public and specialist talks included Sebastian Graham from Wellbrook Beetling Mill, Jane & Maurice Leyton singing tours and Fiona McKelvie of McBurney & Black to name a few. Contributions by members of the public to the Air Your Linen programme were willingly received by Anthea McWilliams, this is an ongoing project that will culminate in 2020 when the largest linen table cloth ever laid out on the former Northern Irish linen greens can be enjoyed by all. Media coverage included interviews on Radio Ulster's Your Place & Mine.

The collaboration between R-Space and Linen Quarter Bid, Belfast was both ambitious and innovative, many lessons were learnt however the Linenopolis store provided a unique opportunity on many levels. Visitors were enthralled, purchasing from designer/makers some of which had never been seen in Northern Ireland not to mention the significant presence on the street in the heart of Belfast's Linen Quarter. Some of the following comments were received:

Brilliant idea, I love this space. Should be made permanent.

Wonderful – just what we need to showcase our wonderful Irish Linen.

Great shop! Lovely staff! Americans will love it! Doreen

Fabulous fabric, design, everything! Elizabeth & Jenny

Wonderful to see a resurgence of linen. Karen (N.Z. originally N.I.)

**Delighted that the Jaffe connection is being promoted at the Linenopolis shop.
Excellent display. Jewish History Tours led by Steven Jaffe**





Outcomes

The programme was diverse with a massive range of events, workshops, speakers and creative bespoke experiences such as the Linen Fashion show. There was a wide range of outcomes as the target audience and the large number of people involved.

Outcomes included:

- A wider range of people involved with heritage;
- Change in audience profile over the course of the project– visitor background – i.e. people from a wider range of ages, ethnicities, social backgrounds, more disabled people; or groups of people who have never engaged with heritage before.
- Boosting the local economy and financial spend in the local economy
- Attracting tourists to NI and increased footfall at heritage sites
- Change in resources & expertise
- More local stakeholder involvement and partnership working – a wide range of stakeholders were involved from heritage, arts, culture, industry, academia, community organisations, charities.
- New skills were developed both from those presenting and those in the audience. Heritage skills were demonstrated with new ways of using art as inspiration for business with a focus on innovation and bringing linen and flax into the future.
- New audiences were identified as well as and business opportunities were also created throughout the programme leading to innovation and developments



- People found the networking beneficial to help support the development of partnerships and business opportunities especially as the audience was a mix of sectors.
- Made excellent art accessible to all (a wider audience) and supporting individual artists to create works of excellence with a focus on collaboration
- Helped not only art and heritage organisations deliver benefits to the community
- High level of volunteering and encouraging voluntary activities in the arts and creating sense of community

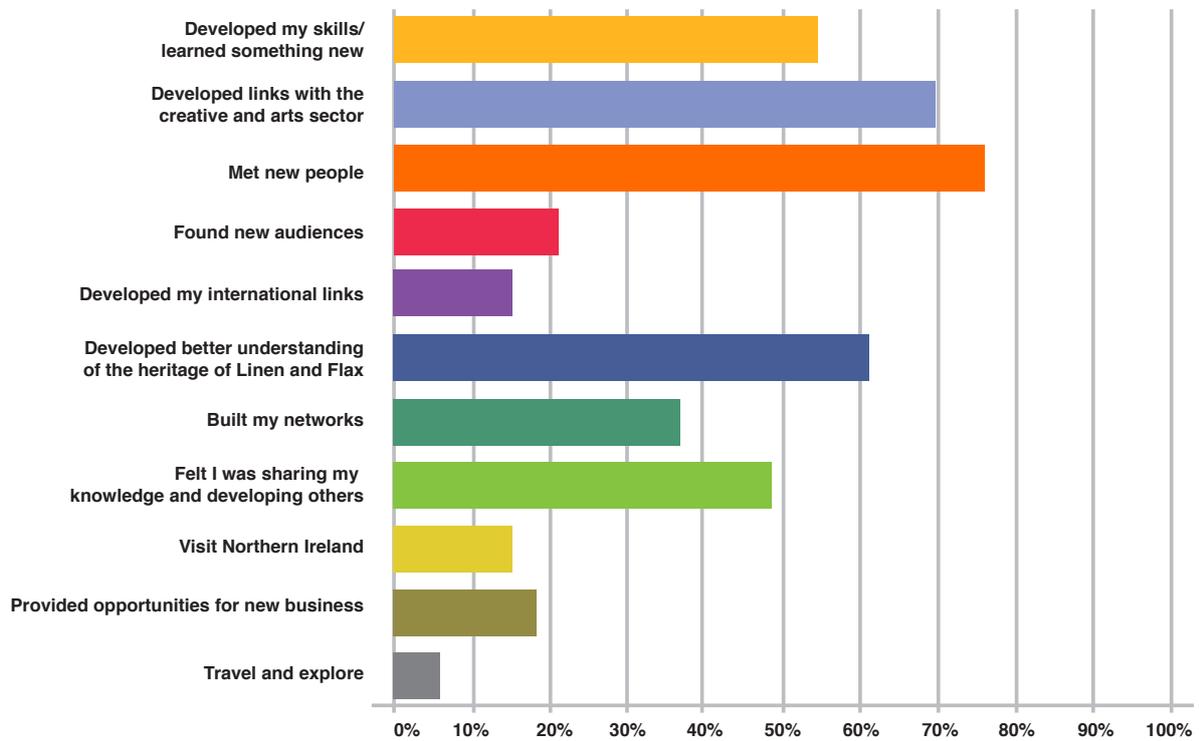
When stakeholders were attending the events, they were questioned about the benefits of the Linen Biennale. The top five benefits included networking and meeting new people, development of links with the creative and arts sector, developing a better understanding of the heritage of Linen and Flax; developing skills/learning new skills.

Community engagement with local community groups and charities included work with Resurgam Trust, Cedar Foundation, Northern Ireland Science Festival, Lagan Navigation Trust, Belfast Senior Citizens Forum, Newtownbreda Library, Belfast Central Mission, and many more.

Other ways people benefitted included: discovering new audiences and new collaborators; developed international links; built networks, knowledge sharing, exploration, opportunities and travelling/exploring.



Participants were asked how the Linen Biennale 2018 benefitted them



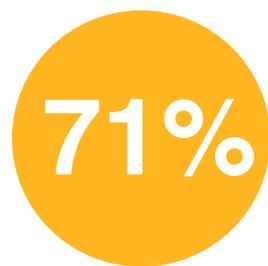
When partner organisations and funders were asked about the benefits of the Linen Biennale the top benefits included:



building networks



promoting Northern Ireland internationally



developing links with the creative and arts sectors



This was followed by developing international links, celebrating heritage of linen and flax and providing opportunities for new business

Below are a few quotes from a variety of stakeholders

“Given the heritage of Northern Ireland, I think the knowledge from local people really makes the Linen Biennale unique. Practically everyone in the country has some kind of connection to textiles and/or linen.”

Quotes from a Partner Organisation

“What makes the Linen Biennale so unique and special was the kind of combination of looking at stories of the past and potential for the future. Some tend to look either back or to the future. There is a rich history here that has been unexplored – the Linen Biennale brought that history to life. They pulled together different art forms and highlighted the power of artists working with scientists – there was real collaboration.”



Social Impact/Action

Throughout this evaluation it has been evident that the Linen Biennale required very high levels of volunteered time, skills and expertise. Even those with a paid role consistently worked over and beyond the contracted hours. The founders gave of their time, energy and considerable fortitude and perseverance to make this successful project a reality. Special mention should also be made of the many experts who gave of their time in a volunteer capacity especially Professor Jane McCann, who gave so much more than her initial modest fee allowed for, given her passion for textiles, flax and linen.

In terms of the delivery of the programme volunteers were an essential part of ensuring the active participation of the many visitors. For the purposes of this evaluation the financial in-kind contribution has been calculated:





Volunteers Orla McGrady and Anthea McWilliams

The volunteers told us that

- It provided meaningful ways for new people to get involved and influence the Linen Biennale
- It supported people to build transferable skills and experience, and help retired people to maintain and share skills
- Taking part boosted volunteers' confidence, and wellbeing
- The workshops especially enabled people to try learning new things and meet others
- Created important links with the community, and provided warm and personable ambassadors for Linen Biennale
- They supported fundraising and provided in-kind contributions for external grants
- Volunteers have already expressed their willingness to be involved in the Linen Biennale 2020 showing a continuance and sustainability to the skills and knowledge learned.

“

“The linen industry has always been a part of my life and I wanted to help re-establish it as part of our shared future.”

Rosie

“

“Linen set our country on its feet and we have all reaped that benefit. By being involved in the biennale, we celebrated our heritage and helped to bring linen into the present.”

Anna

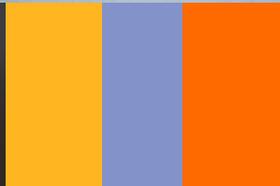
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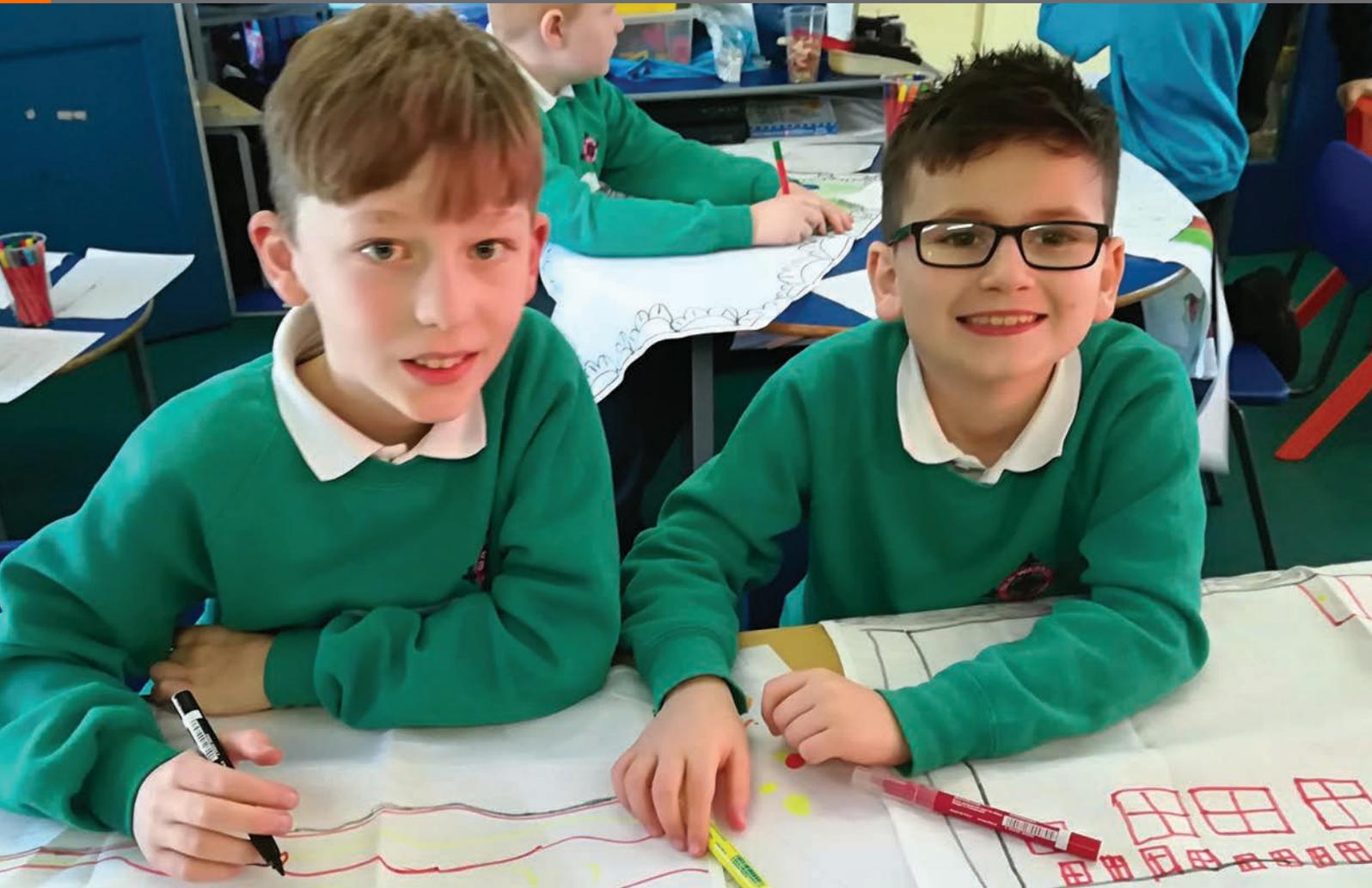
“I’m hugely passionate about our textile heritage, linen in particular. I was delighted to be able to volunteer at an event that celebrated our linen heritage in a wonderfully diverse & contemporary way. Look forward to more!”

Orla



CONCLUSIONS





Teatowel Competition Schools Workshop

This section summarises the key conclusions and messages from the evaluation and sets out recommendations to support the future development of the Linen Biennale. These are drawn from the findings & analysis presented in previous sections of the report.

- Some of the pop-up activities, namely singing tours and community events, gave access to people who had not necessarily planned to engage as they took place in the public spaces of both Lisburn and Belfast.
- Linen was given a new lease of life by looking at how it can be utilised in the future.
- Stakeholders engaging with the Linen Biennale programme benefited significantly by developing new links and collaborators which lead to business opportunities, reaching new audiences, developing skills, networking, learning about the heritage of Linen and Flax in new ways and mediums as well as understanding how it can be utilised for opportunities in the future, international reach and engagement.
- The collaborative approach to creating bespoke events, workshops, shows, etc. worked extremely well. The Linen Biennale team were fantastic at collaborating and co-creating. They collaborated with over 50 organisations which was a challenge in itself.

- The content developed organically which can be a positive, but it also then can limit the time for co – creating with a wider spectrum of partners. Given this was the first Linen Biennale there has been significant learning as to the type of events and workshops that work best and have the most interest from the public.
- The intrinsic values and aims of culture include: to entertain, to delight, to challenge to give meaning, to interpret, to raise awareness, and to stimulate. These non-market values are difficult to measure in monetary terms but are just as important as the instrumental values. While jobs can be created by many economic activities, other kinds of production can generate these same intrinsic values. Cultural capital is one. This is defined as the sum total of a country's wealth or stock of art, heritage and other kind of cultural expression. Like other kinds of capital, it needs to be invested in – otherwise it will depreciate and be devalued over time.
- Northern Ireland has a rich cultural history of Linen, and the Linen Biennale profiled it globally and helped to move it forward into the next century. It is about understanding how we can use Linen and Flax in the future, supporting sustainability of the art form and creating new ways of working for business.

Heritage Lottery Northern Ireland Committee member Sheila McClelland and Jo Watson



- When working in partnership, it is tempting to give everything equal billing but it necessary to identify headliner events and workshops.
- The Linen Biennale built upon the previous solid work within the Linen Sector from the Irish Linen Centre and other museums, Linen Diaspora, Ulster University, Jane McCann, R-Space.
- This programme with such a small budget delivered an impressive cluster of diverse activities and events. The sheer calibre of the speakers, attendees and events was amazing and considering that such a small team was responsible it is to be highly commended. They have punched above their weight and delivered a wide ranging, thought provoking programme and conference. They thought outside the box and collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Whilst there was a wide range of people in attendance due to this being the first event in Northern Ireland there may have been some apprehension. The Linen Biennale has placed itself on the map in Northern Ireland with a strong reputation for recalling, rethinking and reforming Linen. There is huge opportunity to increase the outreach and expand the audience even more. There could have been more students in attendance as well as more local academics.
- There was significant social media exposure but additional traditional methods for promotion would be beneficial such as TV, radio , art magazines and sector networking groups.
- Following from the point above a marketing budget to promote future Linen Biennales must be enhanced to increase the reach and participation.
- There has been a marked change in the financial outlook of R Space with the financial resources that were secured to deliver the Linen Biennale. The levels of expertise within the charity have grown and developed over the lifetime of the project underpinned by more local stakeholder involvement. These new skills and more substantial partnership working have been evidenced by the success of the first Linen Biennale 2018.
- A detailed budget and plan is required for the Linen Biennale 2020 to ensure strategic direction and staffing resources are in place. It is not feasible to operate again on such high levels of volunteering for the core management of the project.
- The overall strength of this programme was the way it was approached by the creators, with an open and flexible mindset. This provided a uniqueness to the programme.

Image: Tim Parry-Williams



RECOMMENDATIONS

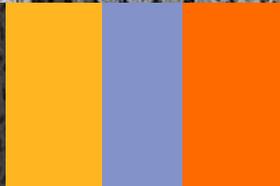
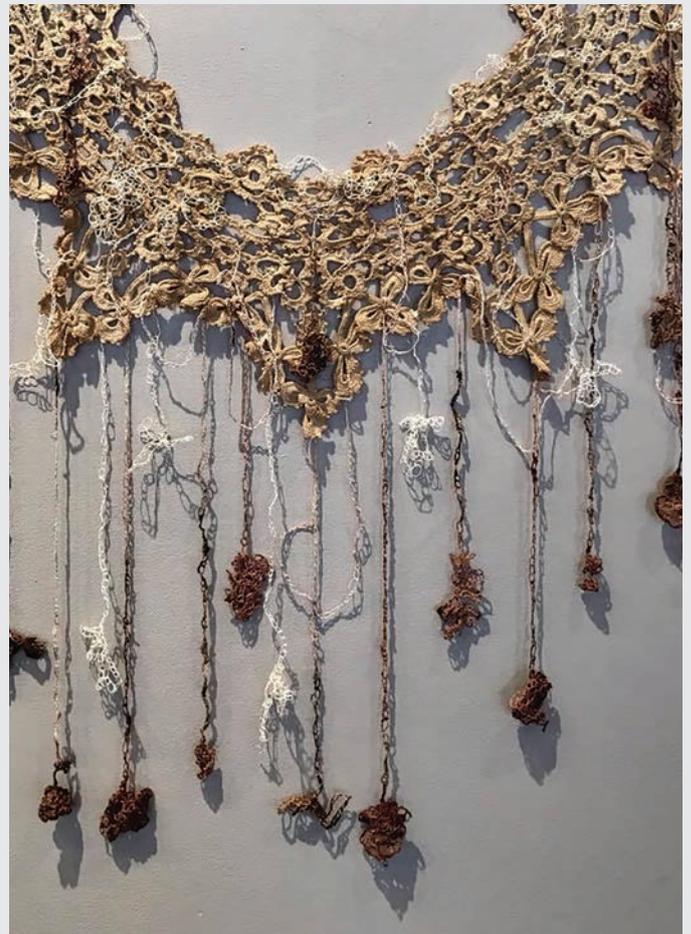




Image: *Earthed By William Clark - Contemporary Printed Linen* www.earthedbywmclark.co.uk

- Significant means for supporting this programme needs to be explored further. Currently the funding model is not sustainable. The co-curators and the textile professional are to be commended for what they achieved within their own time and efforts. None of these key players were remunerated financially. This needs to be rectified in the future.
- Different billing based on headliners within the programme. Some of the significant pieces (workshop and events) should have been given more priority such as the newly created tapestry by Cecelia Stephens which was exhibited at PRONI, Belfast. This will require participants to provide necessary programme information in a timely manner.
- There needs to be more resources and additional team members with clear roles and responsibilities. With such a small team there can easily be overlaps as it is all hands-on deck. There needs to be clearly defined roles and responsibilities as well as standardised procedures and processes.
- Utilise both traditional marketing including PR and magazine articles as well as digital media forms for promotion. Start promotion earlier and provide a student price that is reflective of what is affordable.

- Increase collaboration with Universities and build upon relationship with Ulster University to understand how they can become more involved.
- Consideration for part or all of conference to be managed by a partner organisation as it would then attract more academics looking to strive to be published. Some academics want to focus on peer reviewed conferences to help encourage global exposure.
- The programme was extremely ambitious – this was stressful for staff and may have been overwhelming at times. Consideration for less events in the future and/or having a larger team would enhance the programme delivery.
- Increasing the business audience and local industry engagement would be beneficial. Review messaging and identify some industry champions who can support the programme to the business sector. There can be a misconception in business that art and the creative sector is nice to have and not fiscally focused. Reality is that this conference identified how Linen can be fiscal and how industry can leverage it in an innovative way to benefit financially.





- Start conversations earlier to ensure that promotion is given a significant lead time as many outsiders need time to make plans, schedule additional meetings and make travel arrangements.
- Explore measuring and how to measure some of the major events. Discuss with key stakeholders as to what information they would like to obtain and explore. Ensure there are questionnaires or mechanisms for capturing data including some of the softer outcomes straight after events.
- Marketing packs could be provided to each organisation involved so that the Linen Biennale is leveraging the wide range of organisations involved and increasing outreach to a greater audience. This will increase marketing and channels as well as decrease pressure on a small staff team.
- Continue organic growth and collaboration in an open minded way for future programmes. It is valuable to have arts and creative organisations involved in developing the programme as they may approach the programme differently. There was also a strong feeling of co-collaboration where organisations worked together to create some of the events. This is a positive and should be continued.
- Consider the use of external organisations to provide support such as marketing company and/or event marketing company. This would free up the team to focus on the elements that are most suitable to their skill set.

LINEN LINES

Small blue flowers in verdant fields
Lost skills, silent mills, new schemes, flax redeemed
Soil & sun, seed & shower, linen for a bridal bower.
Alfesco picnics
Fresh cucumber sandwiches
Crisp linen grass.
Love Linen, for it grows old gracefully;
Lowliness lulled in linen's loving luster
to become
Fuzzy front fibres, 3D knitting !

Linen Biennale 2018

Linen Poem

Contributions came from 2018 Conference attendees (and compiled by Anthea McWilliams)

Image: *From the Field by Anna Dumitriu - Artist* www.annadumitriu.co.uk



Artist: Christien Meindertsma
Image: Roel van Tour and Mathijs Labadie



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