

Edinburgh Contemporary Crafts open for business thanks to 1000 volunteer hours



Scotland's first multi-disciplinary craft workshop, gallery and shop are nearing completion thanks to over 1000 hours spent by volunteers renovating new premises in the Old Town.

Edinburgh Contemporary Crafts (ECC) is now open for business on Blair Street with a range of exciting craft courses available to the public. Volunteers have spent the last three weeks restoring the derelict premises, including stripping everything back to the original stonework and features and creating specialist workshop facilities.

✘ The concept is the vision of Louise Smith who established ECC in 2011, providing workshop space on Home Street for nine resident makers who taught more than 200 would-be crafters over 18 months. Having outgrown its former home, Louise found the new Blair Street premises and launched a crowd-funding campaign which has already raised £8,000 locally towards refurbishments. The new multi-disciplinary craft workshop – offering courses in screen printing, illustration, crafted textiles, book binding, dressmaking and upholstery – is now open to the public.

A taster day of workshops will take place from 10am – 5.30pm tomorrow Saturday 8 June 2013, with workshops including textiles, print making, pottery, book binding and jewellery. Each workshop lasts for 1.5 hours so attendees will have chance to try out at least three processes, and there will be demonstrations from the ECC resident makers throughout the

day. Lunch is included and there will be a bar and live music afterwards. Tutors are giving their time for free so that any profits can go towards renovating the gallery space.

Tickets cost £55 (which covers all materials used and lunch) and are available to purchase online: <http://www.edinburghcontemporarycrafts.co.uk/coursebooking.html>.

The permanent gallery, which will showcase local craft talent, is due to open at 7:00pm on Thursday 27 June and the shop opening is planned for July.

Louise Smith said:-“I’m delighted and slightly overwhelmed by what we’ve achieved in one month. It’s all been possible thanks to a group of really hard-working and competent volunteers who’ve been able to turn their hands to many things. We’ve demolished walls and stripped back years of layers to reveal original stonework, laid a new floor and constructed studio spaces for 28 residents, plus jewellery benches, a six meter textile print table, a pottery area, and huge communal work spaces.

“It’s been exhausting but a lot of fun and already you can feel the creative energy as everyone begins to move in. We’re all really looking forward to the opening and the following months as the next block of courses start and the gallery begins to take shape.”

All those involved in running Edinburgh Contemporary Crafts are practicing makers who are passionate about their craft, enjoy teaching, and believe that craft can be a catalyst for social and personal change. The move to Blair Street will now help to support new and established makers and encourage public appreciation and enjoyment of quality Scottish craft.

• Before and after pictures of the premises are available to view [here:](http://www.edinburghcontemporarycrafts.co.uk/renovations.html)
<http://www.edinburghcontemporarycrafts.co.uk/renovations.html>

Edinburgh Contemporary Crafts

- ECC provides a multi-disciplinary workshop which supports new and established makers and encourages collaboration and innovation while developing a thriving craft community
- ECC engages all areas of the community through courses, projects and membership while promoting public appreciation of craft through a permanent gallery and shop and a changing exhibition programme
- ECC has already attracted wide support in the form of donations of time and expertise in exchange for courses and membership, so far including: website development; public relations; photography; architectural planning; a structural engineer; a plumber, and a carpenter. A 'skills bank' will soon be launched to allow for trades (such as landscape gardeners and hairdressers) or services (such as restaurants or childcare) to exchange their skills and services for courses and/or membership
- For details on business sponsorship opportunities visit: <http://www.edinburghcontemporarycrafts.co.uk/sponsorship.html>

Submitted by [Samantha McKay-Challen](#)

