



# GMIT

INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA NA GAILLIMHE-MAIGH EO  
GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## Letterfrack

### The National Centre for Excellence in Furniture Design and Technology

Welcome to the 2nd Newsletter for GMIT Letterfrack. This newsletter captures just a few of the events that have taken place during the academic year of 2017-2018 that highlights collaborations and opportunities that the students of GMIT Letterfrack have been involved with.

## NEWSLETTER 2017/2018



The President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, visited the GMIT Letterfrack campus on Friday 10 November to mark the 30th anniversary of the partnership between Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) and Connemara West plc. This partnership has been responsible for the establishment of Ireland's leading education and training facility for furniture design, wood technology and teacher education. Over that time more than 1,300 graduates have emerged from the campus which was designated The National Centre for Excellence in Furniture Design and Technology in 2013.

President Higgins' visit sees the continuance of the long and proud history of the association between GMIT Letterfrack and Áras an Uachtaráin. The President officially opened a new Communal Furniture Trail which incorporates community recreational and furniture projects designed and made by students of the college, some of which were made from storm-felled trees from the grounds of Áras an Uachtaráin and Phoenix Park.



President Higgins said: "It is a great pleasure to be here today as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of what began as a most fruitful partnership between Connemara West and GMIT. Here in GMIT Letterfrack, students are encouraged to view art and beautiful craftsmanship as part of the everyday experience, occupying a place at the heart of our communities, enriching our lives and making a profound contribution to our society. It's wonderful to meet the students and staff again since my last visit three years ago and see the pieces they have made together."

Dermot O'Donovan, Head of campus said: "We are proud to have here today graduates who are forging a successful pathway of creativity and innovation in a world unimaginable to those who first established these courses. In a testament to management and staff of both organisations who have carried the torch since then, graduates now emerging from this campus have skills and knowledge commensurate with best international practice who are sought after by employers both in Ireland and overseas."

GMIT Letterfrack, Co Galway

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# ACHIEVEMENTS



## WORLD SKILLS ABU DHABI

Sean Hogan from Co Waterford, a fourth-year B.Sc. (Hons) in Furniture and Wood Technology student, was selected to join an Irish Team competing in the WorldSkills 2017 taking place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates from 14 to 19 October. Earlier this year he achieved first place in a rigorous selection process designed to identify the best and most resilient competitor in Cabinetmaking for inclusion in the Ireland team.

As part of the Irish Team preparations Sean undertook an intensive training programme under the direction of Declan Barrett, the WorldSkills mentor for Cabinetmaking in Dun Laoghaire Further Education Institute.

The IrelandSkills and WorldSkills co-ordinator for GMIT Letterfrack, lecturer Anthony Clare, says: *"This is a fantastic achievement for Sean and it will be the experience of a lifetime for him. All the staff in GMIT Letterfrack recognise and applaud Sean's skill, determination and commitment and sincerely hope he excels in this competition."*

*"GMIT Letterfrack has excelled in the IrelandSkills competition for the past decade and Sean's win in the 2017 competition delivered a ninth consecutive title to a student of GMIT Letterfrack, a remarkable achievement for any Institute of Technology. Three previous student competitors were also selected to represent Ireland in Cabinetmaking at WorldSkills. Cian Mulligan from Rathcoole, Co Dublin, competed in 2015, attained sixth place and won a Medallion of Excellence. Darren Barber from Drumcliffe, Co Sligo competed in 2013 and PJ Murphy from Ardrahan in County Galway competed in 2007 and won a Medallion of Excellence for his performance."*



## HURLING ALL IRELAND CHAMPIONS

Once again, GMIT Letterfrack hurling team travelled to Mallow, Co Cork to play UU Coleraine in the Semi Final of the Fergal Maher Cup. A stunning victory for GMIT Letterfrack, led by captain Sean Hogan put them into the final to defend their 2017 title against St Marys Belfast. Unfortunately, St Marys proved too strong on the day.

Our football team captained by Conor White also made it to the quarter-finals of the Corn Na Mac Léinn Cup competition but narrowly lost to College of Surgeons and made it to the semi-finals of the league. What an achievement by our students and coaches - well done to all involved.

## TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Paul Leamy has been awarded a GMIT President's Award for Teaching Excellence for 2017.

On behalf of all of the staff and students of The National Centre for Excellence in Furniture Design and Technology we congratulate Paul on this hugely significant and deserved accolade. The award is a reflection of Paul's high standards in teaching and learning and equally on the wider campus here at Letterfrack. I would also like to thank all those who took time to support his application.

Paul was presented with his award at the Graduation Ceremony that took place in November 2017.

# COLLABORATIONS

## Students win National Design competitions.

Kieran McNeely, 2nd Year design student in GMIT Letterfrack, was awarded the **Crafts Council of Ireland – Future Makers student award for 2018** with his 'Falls Chair'. Kieran won a prize of €500 in acknowledgment of excellence and creativity in the experimental use of skills in the Future Makers student Category Awards in July this year. Well done Kieran!



Kieran McNeely  
- 'Falls Chair'



John Gallagher won the student furniture award from the Institute of

**Designers** in Ireland for his final year project Kerf, a modern twist on a side table made traditional manufacturing techniques of kerfing and sliding dovetails.

Congratulations also goes to graduate Gabriel Hielscher who was commended in the same category for his White Giraffe Stool.



## Joey Burns Wood carver

The Students Union organised woodcarving Joey Burns to come to GMIT Letterfrack in November 2017 to demonstrate his unique skills in both carving and chainsaw sculping! Students flocked to see his workshop to learn new techniques and to see transform a tree stump into a cluster of acorns.



## RSA

The Road Safety Authority returned to GMIT Letterfrack in November with their impressive interactive truck along

with the roll over simulator. The RSA were also joined by the Clifden Fire Department to give demonstrations on emergency procedures carried out when attending car incidents.

The interactive truck and roll over simulator provide a valuable learning tool to educate road users of the potential dangers and harm in the event of road collisions.

# COLLABORATIONS



## OFFICIAL OPENING OF KILN

The official opening of GMIT Irish Hardwood Research Centre (IHRC) took place on February 21st, 2018. Andrew Doyle TD, Minister of State for Forestry and Horticulture officially opened the centre on a beautiful sunny day in Letterfrack. The centre is a huge asset for the furniture college especially in terms of sustainability for the future. This added resource gives the students opportunities to learn of the conversion and seasoning of wood required for manufacturing purposes. This project is a collaboration between Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Connemara West Plc. With a total investment of nearly €140,000. Minister Doyle commented *“This project involves building capacity to research and develop expertise in the seasoning, conversion and use of Irish-grown hardwood timber, work that is vital to the Irish timber industry”*.



## IRISH WOOD AND FURNITURE MANUFACTURING CONFERENCE

The Irish Wood & Furniture Manufacturing Network (IWFMN) was established in 2018 to help companies in the industry thrive through collaboration. Its success depends on the active participation of the industries stakeholders; designers, manufacturers and educational bodies. At the first conference of the IWFMN Entrepreneur Sean Gallagher shared his knowledge on strategy for growth & innovation and will embrace discussion with key experts on

- **Brexit and International trade**
- **Business Strategy & Growth**
- **Innovation and Design.**

GMIT Letterfrack have been a key driver for his network and believe that the industry requires a platform to promote collaboration, networking and skills development. Students and staff joined more than 160 delegates at the conference. Colin Marren, 4th year student was asked to do an interview and answer some questions from the student's perspective about his career aspirations. Students interested in joining this network can visit [www.ifwm.ie](http://www.ifwm.ie)



President Michael D Higgins with Furniture Design student Gerry Murray on his visit to mark the 30th anniversary of the partnership between GMIT Letterfrack and Connemara West plc

## CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN THE CLASSROOM

The annual Creativity and Innovation in the Classroom Conference took place this year in the Connacht Hotel on February 14th. This conference is a showcase for our 4th year teacher education students of the BSc in Education (Design, Graphics and Construction) to present examples of innovative teaching practice. All student teachers are invited to attend, and it is a great learning event, where knowledge and experiences are shared. Colleagues from NUI Galway were also in attendance and a welcoming address was delivered by Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton.

# STUDENTS WORK EXPERIENCE



## SEA WEEK 2017 - 'After the Light'

The Annual Sea Week community festival took place in Letterfrack in October. 1st year students worked hard on making masks, costumes and lanterns for the very impressive night festival and parade. The parade, joined by local National Schools, always proves to be a great spectacle and a fun way to collaborate with the wider community in Letterfrack.

## LEAN FOR INDUSTRY

The Furniture Wood Technology 4th yr. students attended a guest lecture by Mr. Martin Conroy, Senior Director, Continuous Improvement Medtronic, joining up with NUIG Engineering Department undergraduate and postgraduate students. Martin gave a very interesting talk on 'Lean for Industry' and an insight into the experiences of Medtronic whilst implementing Lean



## SWEDEN STUDY TRIP

In February this year, the 2nd & 4th year Design Students went on a study trip to Sweden. While in Stockholm they attended the Stockholm International Furniture Fair. Stockholm Design Week was also taking place that week which provided them with opportunities to attend multiple events, seminars and exhibitions. <http://www.stockholmfurniturelightfair.se/> <http://www.stockholmdesignweek.com/>



## NORTHERN IRELAND STUDY TRIP

The 4th year Furniture Wood Technology students took a trip to Northern Ireland to visit a range of companies including Merenda, Cherrymore, Andoras Limited, Specialist Joinery, UForm, Mivan, The Deluxe Group, MJM and Farrells in Ardee. Study trips are beneficial to the students to see the industry at its best and in the manufacturing process, it gives them an opportunity to make connections with industry partners and to ask questions.



## Pop up shop

In November, 4th year students set up a pop-up shop just in time for Christmas! The students made Christmas gifts to raise funds for a study trip to Sweden. The pop-up shop proved to be very popular amongst local shoppers with a large turn out from the wider community. Certainly, one to repeat next year!

# GREEN CAMPUS



## GREEN FLAG FOR BIODIVERSITY

Green Campus GMIT Letterfrack were successful in obtaining their second green flag for biodiversity in November 2017. Not only were the judges impressed about the development of the community native woodland in the Connemara National Park, but they thought that there were many elements on the Campus that were commendable including the new bug hotel! The new identification sign has been installed at the biodiversity area at the entrance, highlighting the different tree species. The Green Flag accreditation is a credit to all the students and staff of GMIT Letterfrack and our colleagues in Connemara West for their work and enthusiasm.

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## GREEN QUIZ

GMIT Letterfrack students were joined by staff in Letterfrack along with the visiting Aquinas students at the beginning of March to take part in the Green Campus Annual Quiz. As well as being a fun event, the quiz also helps educate all participants on global issues in relation to biodiversity, waste management, water, energy and transport.

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## SPRING CLEAN - ANNUAL LITTER PICK

A sunny super day for the Green Campus in April when the annual Litter Pick event took place. Students and Staff, we were joined by Youthreach, the Further Education Centre and members of the community! A staggering 25 bags of rubbish was collected. Great work!

## TREE PLANTING

In April, The GMIT Letterfrack Green Campus with GMIT Letterfrack students, Aquinas students, friends and neighbours planted 200 trees in the Community Native Woodlands in the Connemara National Park. These trees contributed to the already 3,000 planted since its establishment in 2013.

The Green Campus have also been successful in collaborations with UBUNTU, COFORD and Teagasc which will see an expansion of our work on sustainability in terms of research and applied projects in the coming years.



## SUMMER EXHIBITION

### - 'AURA, FURNITURE FOR TOMORROW'

The annual summer exhibition was officially opened by Cllr Eileen Mannion, Cathaoirleach Galway County Council on Wednesday 20th June. 'aura' is an exhibition showcasing innovation and creativity in The National Centre for Excellence in furniture Design and Technology. The exhibition shows carefully selected pieces of furniture made by the GMIT Letterfrack students.

#### LOUNGE CHAIR

**Gerry Murray**

*Stainless Steel, Leather, Macassar Ebony Veneer*



#### CLOCK

**Adam Bugaj**

*Stainless Walnut and Brass*



#### 'LINEACH' - SIDE TABLE

**Evelyn McDonagh**

*Walnut and Maple*



#### RIPPLE - TABLE

**Meghan Keyes**

*Maple, Walnut, Plywood and Glass*



#### MEMORY CHEST

**Adam Bugi**

*Walnut, Oak and Maple*



#### DINING CHAIR

**Connor White**

*Oak and Donegal Tweed*

## OTHER NEWS



### NEW STUDENT INTAKE & INDUCTION PROGRAMME

A GMIT #first5weeks welcome programme is introduced to help all new students settle into college life. The programme kicks off with a welcome evening for friends and family to meet staff and current students on the campus, this helps the student settle into their new environment. The first week is all about providing the students with what they need to know about the campus and the services available to them. A tour along with activities in the local area help introduce the students to their surroundings outside of the campus. The following weeks focus on areas such as:

- 'Know Your College' - Learn about academic & non-academic supports within GMIT.
- 'Know Your Community' - Discover the wide range of supports & services available to you within the local community.
- 'Mind Yourself' - Gain insight into building healthy habits from the start and tips on managing stress & useful mindfulness tools to boost your physical & mental health
- 'Mind Your Resources' - Learn about the many ways you can save your money & the environment & the small changes that can make a big difference.

### DESIGN WEST INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

GMIT Letterfrack hosted an action packed 2-week Design West Summer School in July. The summer school welcomed visitors from all over the world with 9 countries represented. Tutors included Isidro Ferrer (Spain), Artur Rebelo (Portugal) and Ken Deegan (USA). Taking inspiration from the beautiful Connemara landscape, the students held an exhibition of work to finish off a fantastic two weeks of creativity and sunshine!



## BOOK LAUNCH - SEE THE WOOD FROM THE TREES

The book launch of *See The Wood From The Trees* by Marion McGarry and Dermot O'Donovan (Artisan House, Letterfrack, 2018) took place in July.

Marion McGarry and Dermot O'Donovan, both employees at GMIT Letterfrack created this stunningly designed and highly visual book. '*See The Wood From The Trees*' documents the story of trees felled by storms in Áras an Uachtaráin and subsequently gifted by the President, Michael D. Higgins and his wife, Sabina, to GMIT Letterfrack. Around this simple but inspired gesture, the book tells of the chequered history of trees in Ireland as well as the story of Áras an Uachtaráin and the plantations in its grounds. It also tells the remarkable story of the transformation of a central building in the Quaker-founded village of Letterfrack, from its use as an industrial school to the home of a GMIT campus through partnership with Connemara West.

In a thoughtful foreword, President Higgins speaks of the connection between Áras an Uachtaráin and Letterfrack as 'one founded on innovation and artistic vision'. Architect and broadcaster Duncan Stewart provides the introduction to the book, and its expressive visuals are complemented by the poems *The Farmleigh Tree Alphabet* by Theo Dorgan. (Clifden Arts Festival, 2018)

## LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION PREPARATION COURSE

We were delighted to deliver our Leaving Cert Examination Preparation Course for DCG and Construction Studies for the second year running in March 2018.

The course covers:

- Advice on preparing yourself for the Leaving Certificate examinations;
- Examination strategies for DCG short and core questions;
- Expertise on CS portfolio preparation and presentation;
- Techniques and skills for preparing for the CS Bench Skills Test;
- GMIT resources to assist you with revision.

Full details and booking can be found on the Eventbrite website.

[www.eventbrite.ie](http://www.eventbrite.ie). Submit your search on '**Letterfrack**'.



## YEP! (YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAMME) SUMMER SCHOOL

GMIT Letterfrack hosted its first Young Entrepreneur Summer school in June. The programme introduced the young people to design thinking, leadership, entrepreneurship and digital fabrication skills. The students worked in teams to research and

create a small retail product utilising the fabrication laboratory facilities such as the 3D printer and Laser cutter. The week finished off with some very impressive presentations given by the students on their products to a Dragons style Panel. Well done to all participants involved.



## GRADUATION

The Conferring of Awards took place in Letterfrack on Friday 3rd November 2017, where we welcomed back 59 graduates along with their friends and families.

*"As a GMIT graduate, you have been given one of the best starts and have met excellent academic standards upon which our reputation is built – seize everything you have learnt and reach your goals."*

Dr Fergal J Barry, 2017.

*Congratulations to all our graduates, we wish you well for the future.*

## RESEARCH PROJECTS

GMIT Letterfrack continues to develop research capacity and pathways for graduates to continue to Masters level awards. Two research bursaries were launched this year, one working on the design and development of a wood ecolabel computer with MicroPro and a second, a Wals Fellowship in collaboration with Teagasc, which will involve research on adding value to Irish hardwoods.

### MIMWOOD

Staff are also involved in a European project called MIMWood – an Erasmus+ funded project with partners in Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Italy on building a database of new and innovative materials for the furniture sector. Part of the research for this project was carried out by students in their Materials and Sustainability module. GMIT Letterfrack welcomed the MIMWOOD project team on campus in July for a two-day meeting. To find out more about this project please visit the website: [www.mimwoodproject.eu](http://www.mimwoodproject.eu)

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

### OPEN DAYS

Friday 23rd November 2018, Friday 25th January 2019 & Saturday 13th April.  
All Open Days start at 11.00am.

### Why come to an Open Day?

You get to see the campus with demonstrations on the CNC, Laser Cutter, 3D Printer & Robotics. Meet Staff and students and find out in full about the programmes in GMIT Letterfrack.