

## Meet the Makers: Christine Murphy, Urban Aran

**Christine Murphy is the founder of [Urban Aran](#), a business participating in the [Showcase Ireland 2021](#) Virtual Showrooms event this week.**

Happening this week (25 to 29 January) Showcase is one of the industry's largest international trade fairs where designers and craft makers provide a choice of contemporary and heritage collections, offering innovation, quality, sustainability and a distinctive point of difference to retail buyers from across the globe.

Showcase Ireland is an initiative of the Design & Crafts Council Ireland and is supported by Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices. View the [Digital Catalogue here](#)

Christine Murphy worked in the luxury hotel industry for over 20 years before starting her own venture. Christine was involved in many interior design projects during her time in hospitality - which ignited her love for fabrics, yarns and various textiles.

This passion was further fueled when Christine decided to study in Limerick College of Art and Design. Urban Aran was born soon after and is a collection of home accessories and clothing inspired by past traditions, combined with present design.

**Tell us about yourself and your business story?**

Our aim is to redefine every day classics with original designs, unique twists and cool detailing through top quality natural yarns. Every piece is completed with an outstanding quality of workmanship.

We believe in slow fashion, designed and made for longevity. Our customers are not bound to seasonal trends. Sustainability, craftsmanship and provenance guide everything we make, and ensure the long-lasting appeal of our garments.

## **How has Covid-19 affected your business?**

Covid-19 had a direct impact on my business as I work closely with the hospitality industry making bespoke natural fibres fabrics, including blankets, throws and linen ranges for luxury hotels who support sustainable methods. I used my linen to make barrier masks last February while supporting a local clarity during the first lockdown and the interest and take up was huge. I struggled to keep up and recruited a seamstress team to help me. This advanced to coordinating Irish linen mask and oversized scarf sets which I gift boxed for Christmas and this really went down well in the Irish market.

## **How have the Local Enterprise Offices supported your business?**

I found the Local Enterprise Office Business Continuity Voucher invaluable during Covid-19, my mentor assisted me in developing my design theme and prepared me to pitch my samples to the manufacturer. I was then assigned a LEO marketing coach before Christmas who challenged me to set realistic goals and also greatly helped me write and complete a marketing strategy, a pricing strategy and realistic targets.

I would not have done this on my own. I also have a weekly call with a goal setting mentor. While I don't look forward to this call every Monday and have to repave five goals to achieve in the week for the week I always feel better when I hang up and benefit from their knowledge.

Working by yourself can be isolating without my knitwear mentor and the business services provided in a very caring manner by LEO Waterford I don't know if I would feel so positive about the business.

## **What are the latest developments for your business?**

I worked closely with Failte Ireland head office before Christmas on their corporate gifting, this was a wonderful opportunity to send locally made products overseas in a difficult time. I have received complimentary emails from the US.

I have been studying knitwear for the past year and have brought out a new knitwear collection inspired by urban landscapes and street art, in particular the Waterford Walls project. I have employed a local machine knitter as well as a larger Irish knitwear manufacturing plant to knit my

garments. I source my luxury yarn in Italy and my certified cotton in India and Italy. All my linen comes from Wexford.

I have switched my entire packaging range to an eco alliance company, all my packaging is recyclable and compostable, I feel very proud of this and I also received the guaranteed Irish badge for my commitment to developing my business using Irish producers and crafts people. This does not mean that everything I make and do is from Ireland as this is not always possible but over 80pc of my business is Irish made.

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