



Designers join forces to open boutique

By Martha Kearns

A group of Irish designers have come together to open their own luxury boutique and workshops in the heart of Dublin city centre.

The New York-style boutique – which will be called Project 51 and be based on South William Street – will create a collaboration between 14 designers.

Customers will be able to buy directly from the designers, and there will also be studios on site for private consultations with the various fashion, shoe, hat, bag and jewellery makers.

The store has just opened to the public, and will have its official launch on September 8 as part of the 2011 **Dublin Fashion Festival**.

The two drivers behind Project 51 are fashion designer Jennifer Rothwell and jewellery designer Eoin McDonnell, who is the owner

of Precious.ie, a diamond and wedding ring specialists.

Rothwell said that Project 51 – which received funding from the Dublin City Enterprise Board and support from Dublin City Council – was bringing an international concept to Ireland, as it was establishing a creative hub to showcase Irish design.

The shop will contain six rails, one each for the fashion designers with the accessory and jewellery designers all having their own separate display cabinets.

Each of the designers will have a desk and a base at the building where they can work from, while two of the other designers involved – milliner Martha Lynn and knitwear designer Heather Finn – will have their own studios. “It’s going to be an ongoing project. We also hope to have a few more spaces in the future so that we can get other people on

board,” said Rothwell.

There will also be an exhibition space and an area with a jeweller’s bench and sewing machine, showing the tools of the trade. The store will also house a private room which can be used for meetings with stylists or as private fitting rooms.

“South William Street was always filled with the business end of the rag trade, and now it is being reclaimed. It’s time for the rebirth of the street as the fashion centre of Dublin,” said Rothwell.

“Also, by buying in an Irish-owned boutique, you are contributing significantly to the Irish economy. According to the Dublin City Business Association, for every €100 spent in a multi-national store, only €14 goes back into the local economy but that figure is €45 for an Irish-owned shop.”

Rothwell said the designers had been lucky, be-

cause the owner of the building had been supportive when they were negotiating the lease.

“If we had more landlords like that, we could breath new life into the city.”

The fashion collective also hope to make an international impact by exporting and increasing the profile of Irish design outside the country.

The other designers who are involved in Project 51 are leather bag designer Anne Faye, fashion designers Caoimhe Keane, Claire O’Connor, Sinead Doyle and Sinead Clarke, and jewellery designers Eily O’Connell, Emma Taylor, Geraldine Murphy, Vikki Shorten and Yvonne Ryan.



Jennifer Rothwell: 'It's time for the rebirth of South William Street as the fashion centre of Dublin' TONY O'NEIL