

The main thing I would like to say is, Thank you.

Firstly to the many people who put time and consideration into carrying out the generous vision of Lillias Mitchell beginning with her nieces, the trustees of the award, the Artistic advisory committee, and also to thank Catherine Martin who administers the award with ease and flair.

And I would like to thank Lillias Mitchell herself. This may seem strange as she is not here but it feels that this award links us to her and her life and interests in a very real way. Through her work; establishing the weaving department in The National College of Art, her research and publications and this award she continues to be part of the world of those engaged in Irish wool and weaving. Rather than a stone monument that becomes part of the physical landscape - through this award the memory of Lillias Mitchell is woven into the cultural fabric of the crafts in Ireland with an award that maintains a living and nurturing link between a weaver and teacher and the traditions and materials she valued.

I never met Lillias Mitchell but still she has been part of my life through her great book, *Irish Spinning, Dyeing and Weaving* (1978), which has been on my shelf since I started researching my MA. It is a book to which I regularly return and come away grateful for the answers it supplies.

In her book Lillias Mitchell expresses gratitude to the late General Richard Mulcahy for the trust he placed in her when he asked her to set up the department of Spinning, Dyeing and Weaving in the National College of Art. That was in 1951 and now 60 years later, in 2011, I would like to express the honour it is to be among those trusted to carry on her legacy by receiving this Golden Fleece Award.

Cleo is the research for which I received the award last year. It is a shop at number 18 Kildare Street where three generations of women have sold Irish cloth and clothing since 1936. Rather than attempt to summarize the history of the shop I thought I might briefly talk about how I became interested in the subject.

I had always been vaguely aware of the shop as a colourful basement window in Dublin. But it was at a fashion show celebrating Irish fashion since 1950 that Cleo really came into focus for me. The show was attended mainly by women - most of whom were dressed up, wearing make-up and high heeled shoes but among them was one woman, without make-up or heels wearing a linen shirt, linen trousers and carrying no hand bag. I asked her who designed her clothes and she said she did - at Cleo! I was surprised because I had always thought of Cleo as old-fashioned but here were clothes that appeared to me highly modern. About a week later I met a young artist, wearing a smart tailored tweed jacket I admired and she told me she got it in Cleo - and at that point I decided it was time to find out about this place.

And so I have spent considerable time talking to Kitty Joyce, the owner of the shop set up by her mother in 1936, and looking through the surviving archive recording what was being sold to whom and where and when. Now with this research I plan to publish a book celebrating the work of Cleo and this has been made possible by the generosity of the Golden Fleece Award.

Finally today, on International women's day, and at this particular time in Ireland – may I pay tribute to Kitty Joyce in Cleo, and her mother Kathleen Ryan, and to Lillias Mitchell and the Golden Fleece for their generosity and spirit in choosing to contribute to Ireland and build on Irish heritage. I hope the country can look forward to a similar and renewed spirit of generosity and creativity in the near future.

Thank you.