



Gallery  
Newsletter  
October 2016  
Hello!

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## AUTUMN Exhibition 2016

### “ Out There in Torridon ~ Catching the Tide”

3 – 31 October 2016

We hope you will have time to call in, to see all the new work on show, which includes work from one or two new artists, in a range of disciplines.

#### Interview with Sheila Bates ~ Textile Artist

*Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? I have always had a love of wide open spaces, hill, sea & sky, and count myself very fortunate that I have been able to work in some pretty wild & remote places across Scotland, on Mull & Iona, around Inverness-shire & rural Perthshire. I often try to capture this vastness in my work, alongside the rich tapestry of colour & texture, in lichen, grasses, rocks and water. I grew up surrounded by a wealth of textiles. First in the Middle East, surrounded by the richness of the textiles there, including Felt, later back home in Scotland surrounded by gifted knitters. So was introduced to wool & knitting from an early age. Never very good at knitting though. But I discovered Spinning, taught myself to spin on my Grandmother's wheel, something I am quite proud of, given it is old and a little worn!! It still works even now, decades on. Learning about plant dyes was & remains yet, another truly magical part of my artistic journey too.*

*Sometimes I used to hitch back from Iona with guitar & spinning wheel, how I ever got a lift, heaven knows! So while I trained & worked mostly in catering, it is this inherent appreciation of our textile heritage that has rubbed off on me & I could live quite happily on oatcakes, cheese & berries, so as to have more time to indulge in my passion for wool & Felt making!*

*The opportunity to concentrate a lot more on my artistic energies in recent years has been very liberating. I seem to be more addicted to fibre, fleece & curls than ever!*

*Where are you based and do you have a studio?*



*I moved to Torridon 8 years ago from near Beaulieu where Croft7, began. A micro arts & environmental business set up with my husband Les. Working with nature to help restore biodiversity & celebrate its' richness in local produce for both food & art. Now, I am fortunate to have a studio in our back garden, looking out onto Liathach. My shed is full of fibre & colour, & a rich aroma of sheep! I am fortunate to have a number of outlets for my work, predominantly in Wester Ross. It is such a vibrant & artistic community to be part of. I attend local craft fairs regularly too.*

**Where do you find your inspiration?**



*The wool itself is a massive inspiration! It has so many amazing qualities, breathable - cosy & cool, water resistant, fire retardant, anti-bacterial, very receptive to dyes & extremely malleable! There is a huge range to choose from, among different breeds of sheep. My artistic inspiration comes simply from the energy & tenacity of nature around me, & the ever changing LIGHT! I am also completely inspired by the many indigenous communities across the world whose*

*textile skills are still intact & celebrated. It is good to see the opening of a New Wool Mill on Grimsay, North Uist. I describe myself sometimes as a fibre holic!*

**What media do you like to use?** *As an artist, I paint with wool and because I begin with a raw material I can take it anywhere, to create funky & functional Felted articles as well. Sometimes I am using very traditional & ancient techniques. Increasingly I am sourcing the fleeces for my Florrie Rugs from local crofters. Customers really appreciate the story & the provenance. I am also using other fibres, including alpaca, silk, mohair & manmade fibres for finer work, like the 'cobweb' scarves. This increases the range of texture & sheen that I sometimes am looking for.*

**What are you working on at the moment?** *Images of the Fish Trap here in Fasaig are filtering through my mind. I have been wanting to do make a feltscape of this for some time, having done one of the Fish Trap at Annat. With the autumn Exhibition about to run at The Centre, with the subtitle~ 'Catching the Tide' it seemed like the time to actually do it! I am also a little busy restocking with everything!! Florries, pictures, scarves, jewellery & Cafetiere cosies in time for the run of Autumn Craft Fairs, including the Lochnessknitfest at the end of September ... I love deadlines!*

Examples of Sheila`a work are on display at the Loch Torridon Gallery and she can be contacted by email at [feltmaker5@btinternet.com](mailto:feltmaker5@btinternet.com)

**'Spotlight On' Janene Waudby ~ Ceramicist**

Janene ("J") discovered ceramics as a refuge from a desk job in London. A ceramics course was a way of carving out some sanity for herself. J's hobby quickly became an obsession, eventually leading her to take it up full time. Her favourite part of college was watching everyone in the class take a ball of clay and turn it into something like a jug. "You wouldn't believe how different jugs can be! The beauty of ceramics is taking something elemental from the earth,



shaping it, applying heat and the possibilities of expression are endless. If you visit potters locally, you see such a large range of styles, yet we all start with the same ball of clay".

J's does not tend to glaze her work. She draws much of her inspiration from the natural environment, and she feels a glazed surface seems to 'kill' the vessel, making it hard and lifeless. At the suggestion of her college tutor, J tried smoke firing. This process eliminates the second kiln firing during which the glaze is normally applied, when clay turns into stoneware.

Instead, vessels are simply put into a fire of sawdust which colours the surface. " I got home from work on a Friday having got my hands on some sawdust and put some bisque fired vases into a dustbin with the sawdust and lit it. I couldn't wait to see what happened. The next morning, I had butterflies opening the lid. The pots were covered in ash, but a quick wash under a tap revealed dramatic swirls of black and orange. It was so exciting."

The surface of a smoke fired pot is always burnished, so the colours sit on a soft sheen, much like a waxed egg. All surface flaws have to be removed and a shine applied by hand because no glaze is used. It makes the production of each piece laborious because every inch of a vessel has to be polished with a stone to get the flawless finish. Smoke fired pots also seem warmer to the touch than a glazed surface, making them lovely things to hold. J explains "I have pretty much dedicated the last few years to learning how to control the smoke fire. There is no comprehensive text book on the subject, so you just have to explore. It's hard, especially when you don't know why something has happened. But when you get a good pot, and each one is unique, it's the best feeling. It's a kind of alchemy."

J lives in Shieldaig & her studio is now set up to welcome visitors, who will have opportunities to have a go if they want to. " I'll carve out some times when people can come to learn the basics. Apart from that I will be carrying on experimenting with the black art of the smoke fire".

Contact Janene - [janenewaudby@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:janenewaudby@yahoo.co.uk) or 01520 755328

**This and previous issues of the newsletter are available to download from the Centre website via the Exhibitions page.**

#### **Summer**

Easter - October

Monday to Saturday

10am – 4pm

Closed Sunday

#### **Contact**

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#### **Winter Opening Hours**

November – Easter

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

11am – 3pm

Closed Sunday