



## Gallery Newsletter

May 2017

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### Summer Season Exhibition - "Wild for Colour" opens 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Submissions welcome - please go the Centre's [website exhibitions page](#) for details.

#### Sam Banister, mixed-media artist

*"Poetic abstraction rendered with innovative and masterful technique"*

Hal Walter, collector, Australia.

I was thrilled to be asked to feature in this edition of the newsletter, so let me introduce myself. I'm a mixed-media artist living and working from my studio on the banks of Loch Maree. Although stunningly beautiful, I have a love hate relationship with the Highlands; its bleakness and isolation is both compelling and forceful. It embraces you with a gentleness, yet has no compunction in spitting you out dropping you into the deepest ravine once it has a hold of your soul. It is precisely this which informs and shapes the way I work. Whilst I sometimes struggle with my feelings I shall be forever grateful to the Highlands.



*Highland meandering*

Each season has its own personality up here in this remote corner of North West Scotland and I love it most when it is overcast, for it is then that the big grey skies contrast sharply with colours and contours of the landscape, pulling out each individual tone and hue.



*Highland birch*

Soft greens and pinks in the spring, the purple haze of the heather in summer; brilliant oranges, deep reds, golden ochres and plummy accents in autumn and stark deep silhouettes in winter - I love how the shadows dance and the light bounces of the trees, the element of surprise once the mist lifts and landscape reveals itself, layer by tantalising layer; nature's subtle rhythms observed from the many hours spent behind the wheel ferrying my equine-loving daughter up and down the A9. A snapshot in time, a moment glimpsed before it disappears for eternity.

I admire the work of Casper David Friedrich and other great landscape painters, but I could never hope to emulate their skill. Instead my passion lies in the minutiae rather than the whole, finding a landscape within the landscape. I'm captivated by the nuance of line and pattern if we stop and allow ourselves the luxury of really seeing. These tiny details often overlooked, are to me anyway, the most alluring - the rough bark of a tree, the layers of lichen on rock, the texture of the sand and seaweed at low tide. An attempt to convey the essence of a place or object is of paramount importance rather than a straight representation. My objective is to find a way of mark-making to build a language and encourage a dialogue between the viewer, my work and nature.



*Highland jigsaw*

My work is abstract, based on the landscape. I like to work with acrylic, and mixed media. Acrylic dries in an instant so it forces you to work fast and think out of the box. It can be restrictive but therein lies the challenge as you can layer, subtract and be as brutal as you like. Latterly I have been experimenting with beeswax and encaustic which means I can push the boundaries to manipulate and sculpt the paper so that it ripples and dances off the wall, interacting with light and shade.



*Nature's Bar Code*

I love working with encaustic and I'm very much looking forward to exploring this ancient technique more with an American artist later this year. I have also recently taken part in the global #twitterartexhibit, #TAE17 a charity based project set up by a Norwegian Artist David Sandum, to encourage artists worldwide to come together to support local charities through the sale of postcard sized original works. This year it took place in Stratford, next year it takes place in Canberra Australia. In addition, I am currently working on a series of mini blocks that can be displayed as single piece or in a series, somewhat like a random jigsaw and a private commission in Spain. If only I could take a break from the A9!

My work can also be seen at the Doubtfire Gallery, Edinburgh, Gallery Loch an Eilein, Rothimurcas, the Loch Torridon Gallery and at [www.sambanister.com](http://www.sambanister.com)

## 'Spotlight On' - Alison West, Textile artist



I grew up in Surrey and followed a career as a scientist in Histopathology, a discipline which is highly technical and visually creative. The technical aspect involves the preparation of the tissue, the art, in staining particular aspects of the tissue and getting the balance correct. Much as I loved my job, work life become very stressful, so nearly 12 years ago we (myself, my husband Graham, 6 guinea pigs and a puppy) decided to up sticks and move to Lochcarron, a place we had often stayed in for holidays. We now run a small B&B and 2 self catering cottages, enough to keep us busy.

I've always been creative: I made my own clothes, knitted and loved embroidery, and I love colour and patterns, so I started making Tartan Bears for Lochcarron Weavers, and knitting for the Hand spinner on Skye as I needed a creative outlet. This got me back into textiles and exploring the wonderful yarns now available and fabrics, such as Tartan, Harris Tweed and batik cotton. I eventually had enough stock and started selling at Producers Day in Lochcarron and found I enjoyed interacting with the visitors.



I've always loved Scotland, the landscape, colours and textures. I carry my camera with me to capture photos of colour or patterns in nature and use them to develop ideas for shawls or scarves and occasionally needle felted pictures. There is always so much to inspire me, cloud patterns, sunsets, rain, trees in winter, the list is endless.



There are so many luxury yarns available now, space dyed in glorious colours and which I can use to represent the colours and seasons of the landscape. I love combining colours and textures, I think that is my strength. The modern colours of the

Harris Tweeds I particularly like and I mix them with beautiful batik cottons to make accessories. I tend to play a bit safe with the items I make, but the exhibitions at the Torridon Gallery have made me try out some more experimental ideas, which I find very rewarding, especially if the item sells!



My mind is always full of ideas that I would like to try out, but sadly time does not always allow me that luxury at present. One day though it will.

My work can be found at the Torridon Gallery, the Carron Pottery and at local craft fairs in Dornie, Plockton and Lochcarron.



**This, and previous issues of the newsletter, are available to download from the Centre website via the [Exhibitions page](#).**

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**Summer Opening Hours**

April - October  
Monday to Saturday  
10am - 4pm  
Closed Sunday

**Winter Opening Hours**

November - March  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday  
11am - 3pm  
Closed Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday

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