



Gallery Newsletter *August 2018*

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Interview with Sue Schnabel, sea-glass art

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Originally from Cornwall, I spent a large part of my life in the Oxford area with my husband Steve, before moving abroad for some years. Whilst based in Crete, I returned to my Creative Arts training of mixed media and weaving, starting a new exploration of textiles.

Although we enjoyed our time in Crete, we spent more and more time travelling back to Scotland, a place we'd always loved and hoped to move to, and, when we finally visited Torridon, we realised we'd found our home.



Where are you based? Do you have a studio?



Now, having settled in Inveralligin for 8 years, we share our home with two cats who love to get into the studio and play with the sea glass and crystals. At the moment my studio, Ebb 'n' Flow, is only open by appointment – I work in there most days but I'm currently exploring a new direction in my work which means there's more chaos than usual!

What inspires your work?

The sea has always been a huge source of inspiration; our home overlooks the sea loch, and the constant change of moods, from storm force to magical stillness, remind me of nature's strength and unpredictability. It's that elusive element that, I think, is the constant 'carrot' to try and translate into a work of art - not 'holding on' too tightly to the result but being open to the 'unexpected'.

Years ago, when we holidayed in the area, I picked up some sea glass and driftwood – taking it home as a memory of some wonderful 'time out'.

Now I'm lucky enough to live here and work with sea glass; I find the whole process of finding it an inspiration – the walk, landscape, and weather all give ideas. You're never sure what you'll find washed up on the shore, often a horrifying amount of plastic and discarded waste, but also things that can be re-cycled – supporting a process already started by the elemental forces of nature.

'Transformation' as a theme is a basis for much of my work – nature's ability to re-balance and the message she has for us, if we can slow down enough to listen. Using all our senses to explore that - trying to translate even a small part of it into a piece of art is always a challenge.



What are you working on at the moment?



I have recently started to combine crystals with sea glass. In the same way that particular crystals 'call to us', I believe special pieces of sea-glass 'find us'. They are both tools of transformation – sea glass has been transformed by nature, and crystals are nature's gift - their energy combines in a play of light that lifts the vibration of a space.

As a base for some of the sea glass and crystals I'm working on, I'm using recycled metals and, primarily, copper and silver – seeing where this will take me – sometimes the biggest 'break-through' occurs from being open to un-planned creative directions!

Apart from the Loch Torridon Gallery where can people find your work?

Currently my work is only available at the Torridon Gallery; next year my studio will be open on a regular basis.



Sue Schnabel has a number of pieces on display at the Loch Torridon Gallery.

'Technique whore' by Jill Holmes

I think as an artist I'm easily described as a 'Techniques Whore'! Discovering new ways of working with different mediums is my inspiration. A couple of years ago my sister in law had become fascinated by working in pewter. She knew I was feeling a bit down so sent me a small piece to cheer me up - little did she know what she had started. Heading to the Internet to glean as much knowledge as I could about working in pewter, the journey began.



Books delivered, bits of equipment ordered, pewter sheets started to arrive by the week as I immersed myself in discovering what I could create from such an alien piece of metal. How on earth could I 'paint' pictures with this new and exciting medium? There are loads of ways in which to work with pewter. It is such a pliable metal which has been used as a traditional form of decorating for centuries. However, I wanted to work outside the box creating unique artworks which would be intriguing to the viewer. Having purchased ball ended styluses generally used to 'draw' on pewter I slowly discovered that my weapons of choice were the good old HB pencil and a trusty old-fashioned school pencil sharpener.... not the most exotic bits of equipment but, for me, perfect.



Quite simply the technique of working on pewter is as if you were embossing - both sides are worked to create raised areas. A simple circle can take 3 or 4 turns of the sheet to create a 3D effect. The other difficulty of working such a pliable material is, as you work on fine detail, the metal stretches making it quite challenging and frustrating. Depending on what I'm designing my initial starting point is always a sketch, or multiple sketches, fine tuned using a light box and then finalised onto tracing paper for larger detailed works. From experience I now know to transfer the design in its simplest form with detail being added directly onto the metal to allow for the movement within the metal.

Smaller pieces give me the total freedom of free styling the design directly onto the pewter and letting the metal tell its own story. Traditionally a black patina is applied to give the pewter an aged look.... but given that 'colour' is my middle name, that technique was great and gives a lovely finish but, I wanted more. I visualised colour...lots of it, but how was I going to achieve that with a dull grey sheet of metal!



Several phone calls later, and armed with some brilliant advice, I was delivered the whole caboodle for gold leaf work. Now if you want fun just try applying gold leaf to the area you have sized without managing to cover everything else in the vicinity including the cat.... breathing is not an option with such flighty, flimsy bits of leaf! But wow what an effect! Well worth the effort, plus a sparkly cat into the bargain. Constant experimentation with gilding waxes & blow torches have taken my work with pewter to different levels. This fascinating journey continues as I discover more ways to colour and shape this wonderful metal.



Jill Holmes has a number of pieces on display at the Loch Torridon Gallery. Our thanks to Jill for sharing these techniques.

SCHOOLS EXHIBITION

We are delighted to announce an open exhibition of creative pieces from students of local primary schools (Kinlochewe, Shieldaig and Applecross). Exhibits include paintings, multi-media art and an abstract sculpture representing the Torgarve Forest created by the pupils of Applecross primary.

The exhibition will be open at the gallery for the duration of the school summer holiday.

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

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

Winter Opening Hours

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