

NEW ART RESIDENCIES IN THE FAR NORTH OF SCOTLAND

Three very interesting artists have recently been appointed to Mackay Country residencies in the north of Scotland; Joanne Kaar, Ruth Macdougall and Deirdre Nelson, each with a distinctive profile and working in different forms and media.

Joanne is a fibre artist and has particular expertise in paper-making and its associated creative artifacts – including ‘log books’ and their history. Ruth’s site-specific practice is intriguingly wide-ranging, but she has recently returned to photography and performance-to-camera. Deirdre works in a variety of scales and explores social dimensions through textiles, with sewing and knitting retaining their hand-skilled character while being considerably more than technical processes. All have experience in teaching and community orientated projects, some of which has been overseas. Individual statements are given on the following page.

The residencies are newly underway and all three artists have shown considerable excitement about the early explorations of their new terrain – perhaps particularly Ruth and Deirdre who currently have their homes in Glasgow. Joanne lives in the north-east of the region but is already keenly involved in her less familiar environment. She now has studio space in Durness and is focusing on the archaeology between the town and Cape Wrath. Ruth is located in Skerry and is taking her lead from the local narratives of Strathnaver while Deirdre is resident on the west coast and looking with special interest at Handa Island and its famed bird populations.

Mackay Country comprises a large area of Sutherland, including part of what is known archaeologically as Atlantic Scotland. It has a rich history and superbly varied landscapes and it is this cultural and physical diversity that underpins the thinking associated with the residencies project. Each artist is free to select and study elements of local wildlife, literature, music, archaeology, and so forth, as distinctive lines-of-sight on the production of new works for end-of-residency exhibitions or presentations. Local people will be actively encouraged to be involved in the ongoing explorations.

Though already experienced in funded initiatives, this is the first arts-based project for the Durness Development Group under the overall management of Ronnie Lansley and the arts coordination of Norman Gibson. The three-month project – from July to September - is supported by a National Lottery grant of £35,806 through the Scottish Arts Council and with partnership funding from Highland Year of Culture 2007.

Norman Gibson
Arts Coordinator

Joanne B Kaar

I have worked as a self employed fibre artist for more than 10 years, since obtaining an MA at Manchester Metropolitan University. My studio on Dunnet Head overlooks the Pentland Firth and Dunnet Bay. I recently spent five exciting months in Taiwan as Artist in Residence at the Chaoyang University and as consultant to the Su-Ho Paper Museum Taipei, culminating in exhibitions at the Su-Ho and Tower 101 (the tallest building the world). This residency was part funded by the Scottish Arts Council. I am the author of the book 'Papermaking and Bookbinding Coastal Inspirations' which was published by GMC in 2003. From this year, I have sat on the board for CraftScotland.

Ruth Macdougall

Social Politics have always fed my work and this can partly be attributed to the time I spent living and studying in Beirut and Chile but equally to growing up in an area of the Scottish countryside which has strong ties with the socialist movement in the early 20th Century. In a desire to address the many conflicting influences that this combination of experiences has produced, I have learned to reconcile my political sensibilities with the personal perspective with which I approach my work, allowing the innately poetic aesthetic of my work to convey its own political message.

My residency in MacKay country is based on local history as told through the story telling and bardic tradition of the area. Before arriving here I knew little of Eilean Nan Ron (Island of the Seals) but have since found myself completely seduced by the stories that surround the island and its inhabitants. Ideas of territory, Utopia and its impossibility have emerged time and again in my work and there is certainly an element of the Utopian in the stories that I have heard of The Island. Over the next three months I intend to develop a site specific work that will both communicate the sentiment and culture of the area whilst opening up a new dialogue between island and mainland, past and present.

Deirdre Nelson

My arts practice has evolved through experimenting with materials and methods of making in which hand work and craftsmanship provide both direction and context. Hand skills are transposed though the work in a humorous commentary on social and textile history within the contemporary gallery. My textile work employs a variety of techniques and materials fusing traditional textile skills and contemporary reinterpretation through photography and digital manipulation.

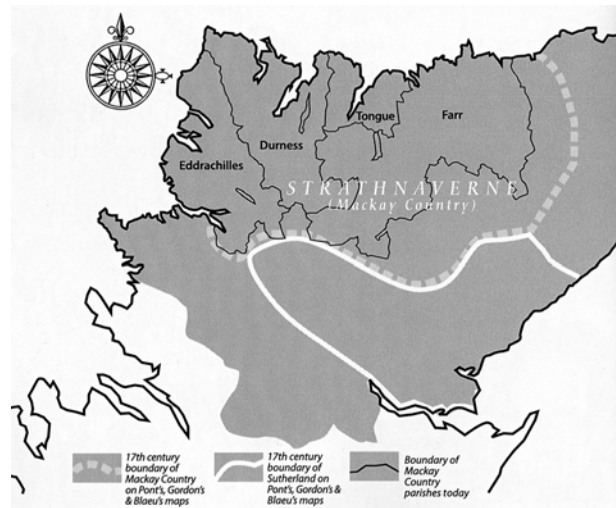
Recent work involves collaboration with the animators rm which continues to fuse traditional skills with computer manipulation. My current solo exhibition Ironers and shakers is a result of a period of time spent at London Printworks and a period of research into two local landmarks Walton lodge laundry and Brixton market . www.londonprintworks.com. I am also currently working with gbdm design management on a commission for the new Shetland museum and archives.*

ATTACHED IMAGES

Maps and landscapes



01. Map of Scotland



02. Mackay Country boundaries



03. Durness village and coastline



04. Kyle of Tongue landscape

Joanne B Kaar



05. *Multi-section books, stab books and origami book box*

06. *Taiwan Residency . Teaching western style papermaking at Chaoyang University of Technology*

Ruth Macdougall

07. *Ruta 1 . Slides of performance to camera . Universidad Catolica de Chile*



08. *Utopia Poolside . Projected slide . Carbeth Estate, Blanefield, Glasgow*

Deirdre Nelson

09. *Embroidered Bugs (animated) . Brodsworth Hall . Yorkshire*



10. *Atropaeic Cache . Gibside Estate Commission . Newcastle*

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