

Getting out of Edinburgh – Stirling Castle



[Stirling Castle](#) has been the inspiration for many paintings and drawings over the centuries and now it has its own artist in residence.

Visitors will now be able to see [Iona Leishman](#), a rising star among Scottish painters, carry out a residency at the castle for the rest of 2011 and view a selection of her work on display and on sale.

During this time she will work with schools and community groups to develop the creative talents of children and adults – including supporting high school students who are putting together portfolios for art exams.

Iona said: “It’s tremendous to be offered the chance to become the artist in residence for Stirling Castle. As I get to know the castle I hope to produce work which will capture its essence as a place which is full of history, has wonderful architecture and which is set in the middle of such a fantastic landscape.

“Because I will be here for six months I will see it in different seasons and in all sorts of weather, so I hope to be able to produce work which shows it in fresh and sometimes unexpected ways. I’m very much looking forward to working with school and community groups and will really enjoy the chance to encourage people to find ways of expressing their creativity.

“It’s great to be able to add to what Historic Scotland is already doing to bring people in so they can use the castle as a source of inspiration and ideas for art.”

Iona will also create her own art, capturing and reflecting the character of one of the Scotland's most famous historic sites in a way that has never been done before. Visitors are likely to see her sketching or painting in the castle.

The initiative is part of [Historic Scotland's](#) far-reaching educational programme which aims to make the best and most imaginative use of our national heritage.

Perth-born Iona, 48, has been a professional artist for eight years and has a growing reputation as a landscape painter and especially enjoys working in oils.

She lives in Dunblane, and is the granddaughter of one of its most famous citizens, John Reith, first director general of the BBC. Her colourful and distinctive style is increasingly popular with galleries and collectors across the UK and overseas.

One of her aims during the residency is to capture the life of the castle as it is today – as both a workplace and a visitor attraction. Exhibitions are planned in the autumn and winter where visitors can enjoy art by Iona and by members of the groups she has supported.

Kirsten Wood, Stirling Castle learning development officer, said: "This is an exciting initiative and will really build on what we have done over the years to open up the castle to groups of all kinds to use for arts projects. It will be superb for people to have the chance to work with a professional artist of Iona's ability who can help them discover lots of interesting approaches to use in their art."

Iona not only has skills in drawing and painting but other techniques, including crafts. During the residency she will run sessions for many groups, and has already worked with the Chernobyl Children's Life Line which provides respite breaks for youngsters whose health has been damaged by the after-effects of the meltdown of the nuclear reactor.

The residency project is a collaboration between the Historic Scotland Learning Services with the kind support of Sterling Furniture Group, of Tillicoultry, match funded by a New Arts Sponsorship Grant from Arts & Business Scotland.

Gordon Mearns, Managing Director of Sterling Furniture, said: "Sponsoring an artist in residency programme is a first for Sterling Furniture and we are delighted to support Iona during her time at Stirling Castle in a project that clearly reflects the heritage of our headquarters in Tillicoultry and the link between furniture design and the arts.

"Initiatives such as this really do help narrow the gap between the business and creative sectors. We feel privileged to be able to add this much needed level of investment to enable an important project such as this to come to fruition."