

Our Linen Stories opens at Custom Lane on Saturday

A new exhibition opens in Leith tomorrow 5 May 2018 telling the story of flax and linen. From finance to industry, artwork and design linen and flax has been a big part of Scottish history. This exhibition will tell the story of the cloth which was a big part of the Industrial Revolution and also asks for contributions from those who have their own stories to tell.

There is a Sharing Centre on the website and there will be community events when the exhibition goes on nationwide tour.

As resources now become scarce *Our Linen Stories* asks if flax and linen could give impetus to renewed and sustainable creative industry.

What are you wearing right now – jeans and a linen shirt? In a world where water use and wastage is an immense issue, it takes 1,000 times more water to produce cotton denim than linen. The exhibition seeks to explore whether flax and linen could be the low waste products of the future.

Alongside the exhibition there will be talks explaining the story of how the raw materials got to Scotland and how the weavers then worked with it. With key examples of product design you will see everything from skis made in Perthshire to new compost materials made from flax.



Pictured is Sarah Calmus with a linen fabric design by Scottish Borders artist / designer Felicity Bristow.

Former Edinburgh GP John Ennis who is the curator of the exhibition first worked as a doctor and medical teacher for 30 years. He has a passion for art and design and their interplay with wellbeing. He told us that the exhibition will feature a series of historic, artistic and contemporary design firsts.

Dr Ennis said: "When people think of Scottish textiles it's often tartans, tweeds and Paisley shawls that spring to mind. But linen should be up there too. Its role in the story of Scotland was huge but it's slipping out of history and at risk of being forgotten.

"Just as importantly Scotland is lagging behind some other countries in recognising that flax and related innovative composite materials can play an invaluable part in achieving our ambitions to build an innovative, high tech, low waste future.

"Our Linen Stories brings together new artworks and the latest in product design with stories, songs, poetry and historical research to highlight what a powerful part they played in making the Scotland of today and how much they could

contribute to the Scotland of tomorrow.”



Pictured is Dr John Ennis with a selection of exhibits in the exhibition.



Pictured is Sarah Calmus with a linen fabric design by Scottish Borders artist / designer Felicity Bristow.



Pictured is Sarah Calmus with a linen fabric design by Scottish Borders artist / designer Felicity Bristow.



Pictured is Sarah Calmus with a flax sitting room lamp.



Pictured is Sarah Calmus with a set of skis with a flax / polymer compound designed by Jamie Kunka



Pictured is Scottish Borders artist / designer Felicity Bristow with some of her linen based designs.

The exhibition features the work of a dozen designers and includes artworks by Linda Green who won a Creative Scotland bursary, the first showing of Pilgrimage linen interiors range by Duncan Neil inspired by 19th century sketchbooks from a tour of the Holy Land, the first exhibition of the Flax Chair created by Christien Meindertsma, recently chosen as part of the permanent collections of the Vitra Museum and Design Museum London.

You will be able to listen to folk songs as sung by Scottish linen weavers, read folklore and learn about their history, see the work created by Borders artist Felicity Bristow who won the inaugural £10,000 Gayfield Design Commission.

And you will have the first opportunity to see the work of Dutch weaver Helena Loermans who has recreated the linens that great artists such as El Greco used as the canvas for their masterpieces.

Linen is in our banking history too – the wealth of linen merchants and weaving mills who made fine cloth, sacking and sailcloth was the basis for the British Linen Bank. The rope

factories in Edinburgh were among the world's biggest, and used the part of flax plants not used to make linen.

Dr Ennis concluded: "This is a chance to see everything from art to innovative designs and products by 12 designers from Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Netherlands. Linen and flax are truly amazing – you can use them to sit on, read by, sleep under and even to ski. In this exhibition you can see, feel, read and hear about them all.

"Incredible work is being done to develop new materials, designs and applications in the Netherlands – a brilliant design nation that's stealing a march on everyone.

"While some things are being done in Scotland we are missing a trick and, as such an innovative country with such a long relationship with flax and linen, be seizing so many superb new business opportunities.

"And what's so important is that materials from linen and flax can be so much more environmentally friendly than the alternatives."

Exhibition details

- Location: Custom Lane, 67 Commercial Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6LH
- Dates: 5-26 May
 - Days and times: Tue-Fri 10:00-18:00, Sat-Sun 11:00-16:00

Twilight Talk – Sponsored by Creative Composites: Place Making and Creative Industry; 17 May 2018, 18.30-20.30

Full programme details: www.ourlinenstories.com

Photography for Our Linen Stories (Gayfield Projects) from: Colin Hattersley Photography – www.colinhattersley.com –

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