

Art exhibition – Frances Macdonald and Ross Ryan at The Scottish Gallery

This year has given us all time and cause to look more closely at our natural surroundings.

Three artists who have done that will be showing the results of their work at concurrent exhibitions this December at The Scottish Gallery.

We spoke with artist Frances Macdonald about both her own art and her son's. She tells us in this podcast that he is a graduate of Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, whereas her parents would not let her go to art school – mainly due to a cousin who was already at art school but behaving badly there. So her own art is self-taught but Ross's training included formal tuition and printmaking too. Macdonald's works are magnificent depictions of the wildness found on the west coast where she and her husband own the Crinan Hotel. They are reminiscent of works by Peploe showing the fabulous aquamarine palette along with the pinks of the rocks.

Ross is the skipper of a fishing boat which sails from Tarbert and he uses that as a workplace, sometimes roping himself on in rough weather. Macdonald admitted that Ross's art is much stormier than her own.



Frances Macdonald PHOTO Craig Easton





Listen to the conversation with Frances Macdonald here:





The joint exhibition, *A Family Affair*, explores their shared artistic tropes as they both represent the landscape of Scotland's islands and west coast, working in nature, directly in front of the subject.

Both use oil paint and other media, drawing with the brush or palette knife to make urgent, swift marks that capture the fleeting effects and drama of changing weather.

Earlier this year, Ryan held his second solo exhibition with The Scottish Gallery but, due to lockdown nobody was able to attend. Macdonald has been a regular exhibitor with The Scottish Gallery for years with her distinctive Hebridean seascapes and landscapes showing the repeated motifs of Iona, The Mull of Kintyre, the bays around Crinan, and the view across to Jura and the Corryvreckan.

Like a good modernist Macdonald is reluctant to comment on her own work, but Ryan, on the other hand, makes extensive notes on his journeys allowing us to understand how hard-won the paintings are, particularly in winter when the harsh conditions create huge physical problems. Each painting becomes a manifestation and record of time and place. His affinity with the natural world is reflected in his long-term project of setting messages in bottles on the ocean which brings him encounters as he journeys to meet the people who find them, and make new works at the location of the find.

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Ross working on his boat during lockdown
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Ross painting Mhari's bottle location Tiree
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Painting out at Skerryvore lighthouse
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Frances Macdonald PHOTO Craig Easton

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Frances in the studio
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Frances in her Crinan studio
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Frances and Ross
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Frances and Ross

Running at the same time there is an exhibition of new works by Mark Hearld who also takes inspiration from the natural world, particularly the British flora and fauna, the fox and chicken, hedgerow, and songbird. His prints, woodcut and linocuts, patterns and motifs are drawn from a lifetime of looking at pattern books, samplers, primitive art, and the poetry of Blake. His works take us to an animal-filled world.

For *Mark Hearld's Menagerie*, the animal kingdom parades across his artworks; the sly fox, strutting cockerel, the blackbird singing his heart out, the geese on the green at Carnyorth, and fields of Jersey cows in rich pastures. His whippet, Blue, whom he shares with his parents, has shared lockdown, the artist walking "by myself, but not alone," sharing the joy of the dog's live world and elegant shapes. Travelling to Cornwall provided much new material for the show, living in the county which nurtured and shaped some many of the most original of British painters: Wallis, Heron, Nicholson and Christopher Wood give Hearld the energy to create.

Accompanying the exhibition will be a publication which contains a special menagerie treasure hunt. There is an original Mark Hearld work of to be won, with several runner up prizes for those who work out the letter puzzle.

***A Family Affair and Mark Hearld's Menagerie* The Scottish Gallery, 16 Dundas Street, EH3 6HZ**

Saturday 28 November – Wednesday 23rd December 2020