

Cordis Prize for Tapestry – winner revealed

The world's biggest prize for tapestry, The Cordis Prize, has announced the winner from a shortlist of 19 artists considered for the award.

The shortlist of 20 artworks by 19 artists who were all in the running for the £8,000 prize are to be exhibited to the public at Inverleith House Gallery in Edinburgh from 23 October to 12 December 2021.

The Cordis Prizes began with the 2015 Prize and were set up by Miranda Harvey and Ian Rankin, founders of the Cordis Trust as a way to celebrate Edinburgh as a centre of excellence for tapestry weaving.



Ian Rankin and Miranda Harvey are the co-founders of the Cordis Prize for tapestry and the shortlisted works are on show at Inverleith House at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Here they are photographed with Angela Maddock's Cloth Body. PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Miranda Harvey explained to The Edinburgh Reporter how it all began. She said: "Well, it began with a love of tapestry. I started with tapestry as an amateur artist just going to evening classes and learning, to weave and I liked doing that as a hobby. And then I gradually grew to understand that Edinburgh is an absolutely remarkable centre for the art of tapestry weaving, because we've got the heritage that comes from Edinburgh College of Art and all of the people that

studied and taught there. And also because the Dovecot Studios, so we've got a great big commercial production of tapestries there. So we've got two different strands.

"And then an appreciation of how incredibly well served we were in Edinburgh in terms of being able to see large pieces of tapestry in public places like the Festival Theatre, Victoria Quay, all sorts of places, you can see wonderful woven works in Edinburgh, and there are a lot of practising artists in Edinburgh.

"But it is a difficult art form to make a living at because it is inherently very labour intensive. The pieces therefore have to be expensive, which means there's not that many people who can afford them as individuals. And so most tapestry artists also teach or have another string to their bow.

"The idea of a prize is an incredibly effective way of motivating people to make work. It gives people an opportunity to get together. tapestry weaving is a very solitary art. Unless you work in a studio, you're working largely on your own for long periods of time. But tapestry artists are very sociable people. So it's great for them to have a chance to come together to exchange gossip and see each other's work, and so on. So having a prize, having a show of the shortlisted works, as always been a great treat for me, and a great treat for the people of Edinburgh and visitors to Edinburgh. But it's also been a great opportunity for the artists and for the art form. Because globally this is the biggest prize for woven tapestry in the world. So it attracts a massive amount of interest from all around the globe."

Ian Rankin told us he is no weaver himself but he does appreciate the skill. He said: "I do enjoy art. I do enjoy going exhibitions, though I'm terrible at doing it. I'm always very impressed by people who can do things that I can't do. And that's most people in most art forms. And when Miranda got involved in tapestry weaving, of course I got interested in it

as well. And she was able to show me the skill that went into it, the artistry involved, the hard work involved. So I came to a greater appreciation of the form. And when she said well, why don't we set up a prize in Edinburgh, it just seemed to make sense."

The 2021 Cordis Prize Shortlist has been selected by a judging panel consisting of esteemed weavers Fiona Mathison and Jo Barker, and Emma Nicolson and Amy Porteous representing Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's Creative Programme team.

This year there was a high number of submissions from all over the world as far afield as Australia, Canada and Russia. Those chosen to be exhibited include renowned weavers from Japan, Iceland, Norway, Denmark and the United Kingdom. Miranda explained that the judging begins with a photo of the work, and only some are then shortlisted to send the tapestry to Edinburgh for final judging.



Ian Rankin and Miranda Harvey are the co-founders of the Cordis Prize for tapestry and the shortlisted works are on show at Inverleith House at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Here they are photographed with the winning tapestry Lifetime by Louise Martin. PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

The winner was announced on Friday and it is the work Lifetime by Louise Martin.

Louise studied on the Isle of Man, and at Middlesex University, followed by the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. In 2002 she began working on the Unicorn project at Stirling Castle where she stayed for ten years. Since she has travelled widely as a teacher and speaker and has enjoyed residencies in Mongolia, Iceland, Turkey and Finland. She now lives in Westray, Orkney.

The work Lifetime is created from silk, linen, cotton and paper warp and weft. It references a daily life lived and is “informed by landscape and travel combined with a strong influence in technique, structure and form”.

Miranda explained why the piece won the Prize. She said: “It is an extraordinary piece by a very gifted artist. When we came around doing the judging, the two judges who are both incredibly experienced and talented, tapestry artists themselves, were looking at this and they were fascinated by the technique of how was it made.

“And I think that is possibly the least important thing about it. But it is extraordinary that people who usually can look at a piece and say, Oh, that’s this or that, were completely bamboozled by what Louise has done here. It’s a fairly subtle piece, it has a lot of paradoxical qualities. So it’s very soft, it’s very fragile, but it’s very rigid, it’s very hard, and it’s very subtle. There are very tiny little incremental changes in it, and yet, it goes through a whole spectrum of shades and textures. It was an extraordinary piece to have been made – I could look at it all day and see more. It’s very, very beautiful.”

Ian Rankin agrees that the piece becomes more complex the more he looks at it. He said: “You can tell it’s very, very well done. And the more time you spend looking at it the more you see. It’s a very contemplative piece as well which I like. It might not be telling you a story, but it’s getting you to think or even just switch off thinking and just lose yourself in it. And I quite like that as well. I’m always wondering what is in the middle here? What is left unsaid.”

The winner of the [@cordisprize](#) has just been announced. We spoke to founder Miranda Harvey and [@Beathhigh](#) about the work which wowed the judges. See them all at Inverleith House at the Botanicals from tomorrow pic.twitter.com/2ilVRbEr7t

– *Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter)* [October 22, 2021](#)

Louise Martin said: “I am delighted to see my work in Inverleith House. The natural daylight of the Gallery breathes and showcases the subtleties of the woven structure beautifully. My work often begins with a reaction to landscapes around the world. This piece is more than usually biographical, it is a landscape of the heart, a piece I was compelled to make with a technique I have been developing for the last decade. My thanks to the Cordis for it’s commitment to this wonderfully diverse medium, tapestry and for choosing Lifetime.

“Woven without shed and on a loom warped to the shape of the piece, freed from the usual grid of perpendicular warp and weft. Edges take on a freedom of line. Warp no longer flows top to bottom but instead at myriad changing, ever crossing angles. Warp becomes a cluster of yarns of varied weight, colour, lustre, interlocked to change mid loom. Broad areas of bold colour are woven in a dance of warp and weft, pass by pass. The direction of weave on an already tilting warp, aligns and realigns constantly.

“Warps are picked up or rejected freely, with regular rhythm of under and over broken out of. Weft passes may be packed close or left open to reveal flashes from a huge vocabulary of yarn. Colour, tone, lustre. Hard linen, fine silks and cottons, are all to be found in any warp and weft mix. Far from resulting in un-weaveable chaos this many sound, this technique extends the qualities of traditional tapestry. The language of compound colour, textural and structural qualities of yarn are given full rein, choices become almost unlimited.

“Here woven in large areas with subtle shifts of colour and tone there is new hum and complexity to the surface which on closer view reveals a multi-faceted light, a dialogue of warp and weft at times closely entwined, at others running in

counter wise layers.”

The 2021 Cordis Prize shortlist is:

Angela Maddock (UK) [Cloth Body](#)

“Cloth Body is a woven sculptural response to absence and hope. It brings together – through cutting, knotting and weaving – a collection of longed for bodies made absent by physical distancing. Four pairs of jeans, three dresses, two sets of pyjamas, six sweatshirts, three skirts, five pairs of leggings, eight pairs of pants and ninety-six t-shirts shared by friends and family – and others unknown to me – otherwise destined for the rag pile. Closely knitted garments cut adrift by a rotary blade and reassembled here through knotting and weaving.”

Anne Bjørn (Denmark) [Combine II](#)

“I use light as a tool to transform the textile from definite handmade craft into ambiguous space. By letting the tapestries cast a shadow, by doubling, reflecting, distorting and repeating the work, it becomes more a question of an actual evocation of the textile and the many different views contained in an image than a traditional artistic practise. I am preoccupied with the simple expression as a poetic force.”

Maija Fox (Finland) [the socks of a companion that encourage me to notice](#)

“The Socks Of A Companion That Encourages Me To Notice is a sculptural tapestry; socks for the table to somehow provide a more expansive and more complacent experience of the world. To think about what can be learnt from the things that exist around us, what they can tell and what they can teach. To re-discover and playfully reconfigure the ways in which we think about the modern world.”

Anna Olsson (Sweden) [To Me You Are Valuable](#)

“I received these selfies from young people I know who have been denied asylum in Sweden. Some of them now live hidden in

Sweden, some have moved on to other countries and some have been granted a residence permit at a new trial.

It all started when I could not attend a demonstration and I asked someone to take pictures for me. I got, of course, a selfie sent to me. I decided to weave it as a documentation of the struggle, an ordinary selfie of an ordinary teenager in the middle of a fight for his right to asylum. When I start weaving the picture, an ordinary guy is still an ordinary guy, but now with a piece of paper that says he cannot be in Sweden. The Swedish Migration Agency says that he is not desirable here, not worth a life in safety. I say instead, you are so valuable that I portray you in a tapestry.”

Anna Olsson (Sweden) [Helping Hands](#)

“There is a closeness that we have not been able to give each other because of the pandemic. A closeness that is barely noticeable, but which is such an important bond between us; a pat on the shoulder, holding open a door, a quick selfie or a high five. Sometimes we talk to each other through the proximity of our hands and I understand the world through my loom where my hands work.”

Anne Stabell (Norway) – [Under the Surface](#)

“Under the Surface is part of a project named Slowly Through the Woods. With these tapestries my intention is to bring the experience of being in the woods among everything that grows, into the gallery in a woven form. The designs are made by leaving parts of the warp unwoven, so that one can see through and between the threads, almost like in a wood with leaves, branches and the air between. The visible warp and the coloured weft are dyed with growths I have collected or grown in my Garden.”

Chrissie Freeth (UK) – [Song of the Woods](#)

“I approach tapestry as a storyteller, reshaping family myths and my own experiences into tales which form the basis of my tapestries. This process was heightened during the lockdown of

2020 when I began walking daily in a local ancient woodland. It quickly became an essential part of my artistic practice; somewhere to think about my work and to confront myself and my memories.”

Ghislaine Bazir (France) – [Alice et Anita 5](#)

“I very often work from photographs, sometimes they are taken on the go of whatever catches my eye, and sometimes old ones. Most of my work is about memory and family. From these old black and white pictures, I’m aiming to keep a woven remnant of people passed away, forgotten, often without a name. My family comes from a place and a story where images of the past barely exist, where memories are so hard to keep, erased by slavery, poverty and hurricanes.”

Elaine Wilson (UK) – [Blue Splash](#)

“I started making this tapestry in April 2020 during the Covid lockdown, when I was furloughed for three months from my job as an apprentice weaver. The image that I chose to interpret for the design is one of my own paintings. In my painting practice there is a frantic energy and I like to throw and pour paint, creating drips and pools of colour. I thought it would be interesting to try and express these quite immediate marks in the much slower and considered medium of tapestry weaving by using texture and double weave.”

Fiona Hutchinson (UK) – [Wall of Water](#)

“Wall of Water evolved out of my interest in ocean plastic and my experiments with tapestry and re purposed plastic bail strapping. Developing techniques to pull and manipulate the warp and weft, leaving

warps exposed and unfinished the tapestry became a 3D woven drawing of the sea. On the surface it has colour, movement and flow which conceals what is hidden within, fragments of plastic.”

Fiona Rutherford (UK) – [Love is a Long Distance Dance](#)

“The title of this piece comes from the last line of the poem New Era, written in the early days of lockdown by Jackie Kay. The sense of separation from all you know and love immediately resonated with me. I wove the tapestries over the course of a year from 2020 to 2021, in direct response to the isolation imposed by the worldwide pandemic. They are a visual diary of chaos contained.”

Jo McDonald UK – [Reconnections](#)

“I construct my work using found objects, largely second-hand books. Their built-in history is the attraction for me. The objects contain traces of the past – fingerprints, skin, dedications, scribbled notes – which offer us a glimpse into their earlier life. I work alone, because personal handling of the materials is important to me and relates to the themes, I explore concerning the embodiment of history within objects

Katja Beckman – [Little Black Dog](#)

“Little Black Dog is one of a series of abstract portraits of my dogs. The motifs allude to the difficulty of photographing a black dog – they usually become blurred shapes. I have worked with a black palette, a colour often linked to a void or lack of something. The tapestries are covered with a thin Rya, which has a unique quality to create a living surface. It has an inviting effect – you want to get close and touch it.”

Louise Martin – [Lifetime](#)

“Broad areas of bold colour are woven in a dance of warp and weft, pass by pass. The language of compound colour, textural and structural qualities of yarn are given full rein, choices become almost unlimited. Here woven in large areas with subtle shifts of colour and tone there is new hum and complexity to the surface which on closer view reveals a multi-faceted light, a dialogue of warp and weft at times closely entwined, at others running in counter wise layers.”

Martin Jørgensen – [Bright Red](#)

“Bright Red is a visual story without a beginning or an end.

It is an experiment with depths and diverse colour symphonies within one piece. It is built up by multiple rhythms of shapes and colour. My intention was to create a composition on the verge of tilting, challenging the balance of the image. The weaving technique creates a tactility that captures the light and creates an abundance of small shadows in the surface. The result is

an enhanced glow and a sense of depth. From a distance, the tapestry looks virtually three-dimensional.”

Misako Nakahiro – [Fusion](#)

“In the spring of 2020, when an unknown virus began to rage worldwide, I stayed at home and came across a book – The Devil’s Cloth. A History of Stripes, by Michel Pastoureau. As a result of reading it I created this striped tapestry.

Stripes are made up of parallel, non-intersecting lines.

Stripes of sin, stripes of celebration, stripes of cleanliness, stripes of chic, stripes of rest, people have found meaning in this simple pattern for centuries.”

Patrick Stratton – [Things I do Sometimes: Put Toothpaste on Toothbrush](#)

“My work combines weaving with mechanics to document micro social systems. Using systematized observation, I make pieces that try to highlight small human moments from a playful, existentialist viewpoint. Inspired by writers like Samuel Beckett, I try to do my best with what I have, reducing my experience in a time of overwhelming saturation. This piece, “Things I do Sometimes: Put Toothpaste on Toothbrush” is a continuation of this theme, each part has been hand woven, and then assembled using electronics and wood. The purpose of this is to heighten an uneventful moment in life, by blowing it up to a grand scale and by referencing pop art motifs.”

Rachel Johnston (Portsmouth, UK) – [Blackthorn](#)

“‘Blackthorn’, arises from the experience of being in a

specific place at a particular point in time. It combines visual and textural cues from two contrasting environments: a common by the sea in Portsmouth, an unapologetically urban space, and from the landscape around the River Eden in Cumbria. The blackthorn tree is a point of reference in the landscape, connecting the two.”

Tanya Nonthando Wilson (UK) – [Entering Eden Triptych](#)

“Entering Eden is a triptych depicting the temptations we face while journeying into the unknown. This is an autobiographical piece taken from my own lived experiences. It explores wonder, identity, other-worldly environments and the intense contrasting feelings of uneasiness vs tenacity and doom vs ecstasy. I use drawing as a visual diary so by converting my drawings into tangible woven chronicles that come directly from my own experiences, I can communicate my existence to the wider world.”

Zhanna Petrenko – Shroud of insecurity

In a world of digital everything, what value does the physical hold?

“The tapestry was created during a residency at the Startup Depot Incubator (Lviv, Ukraine) from October 2020 to January 2021. The work took close to 514 hours to complete, from a sketch developed using digital media. The weaving of computer graphics has been an ongoing experiment.”









2021 Cordis Prize for Tapestry Exhibition

Inverleith House Gallery, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh

23 October to 12 December, 2021

FREE Admission

www.thetapestryprize.org