

# **'The Garden' – Claire Harkess RSW at The Scottish Gallery**

**In March 2022 The Scottish Gallery will present Claire Harkess' outstanding new watercolour exhibition 'The Garden'. Last seen at the gallery in their Modern Masters Women exhibition, she now explores the environment near her home and studio in Perthshire. Having travelled worldwide in the past to capture wildlife and the changing landscape in watercolour, her current focus is the immediacy and intimacy of her garden and local landscape.**

**Born in Ayr, Scotland, Harkess graduated from Glasgow School of Art in the early 1990s. In recent years her painting has caused her to study landscapes with fragile ecosystems, examining and interpreting life on the fringes. Painting in watercolour offers a unique directness; the essential qualities of light and energy present in the natural world are the very essence of the medium itself.**





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The delicacy of her palette and economy of her mark-making creates a subtle tension, representing a world that is 'holding still', giving a sense of freedom, spirit, time and

place.

Following a visit to China in 2007, Harkess has favoured fine Chinese and Japanese papers for her work. The absorbency of these permits little room for timidity, as evident in her bold lines. The papers are then backed using a traditional method of Chinese scroll mounting, dating back to the Song dynasties (960-1271).

This is not the only inspiration Harkess has taken from Asia, and, having seen Kintsugi, the Japanese art of gold joinery to restore damaged ceramics, she began to integrate gold leaf in her works, enjoying the freedom of the paint combined with the precision of the gold.



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For this collection, Harkess often explores the local landscape from a small hide, waiting for nature to surprise her with changes in wind direction, climactic changes or the smallest movements from animals scurrying by. Her recent studies of indigenous flora and bird life are a new and very welcome theme in her work, sure to entrance viewers.

Harkess feels the thrill in being absorbed by nature and, being short of studio space, a friend offered her a garden chalet in rural Perthshire as a place to work on the constantly changing border where woodland and farmland meet. There, the studio nestles in a small orchard offering the perfect space to watch wildlife.

The beauty of Harkess's work is characterised by her patience, waiting amongst nature for that inspirational moment. With her depictions of badgers in particular, one senses her feeling of elation as she spots them emerging at nightfall, scratching, foraging and tumbling around.



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Inspired by Georgia O'Keefe's comment "If you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for a

moment”, Harkess’s flower paintings are deft, joyful and uplifting, often directly observed and completed in one sitting.

Harkess commented, “It is because of these encounters that I return again and again to wildlife and the natural world. It surprises and inspires. No two encounters are the same. Being present in something greater gives perspective. There is always something new to learn. It is as an anchor that holds all of us and it must be protected”.

Title Claire Harkess: The Garden

Exhibition Dates Thursday 3rd – Saturday 26th March 2022

Location The Scottish Gallery, 16 Dundas Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6HZ