

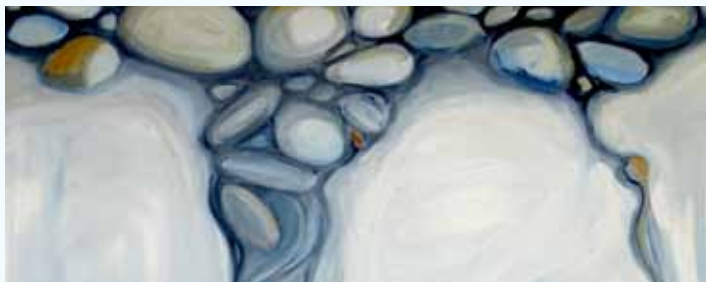
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Fergus Granville



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Marnie Keltie



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Sheenagh Patience

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Fiona Pearson



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Catherine Yeatman



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contemporary art from north uist





edge

Edge: When you say it aloud, it's a hard word in your mouth, there's an implication of something inflexible and finite. To be on edge is to be anxious, to be taut or tense. Something that is edgy is controversial, testing, risqué; but in reality the edge is often a soft and dynamic place, where it is tricky to pin point exactly where the boundary is; a place of compromise, and negotiation; a place of meeting, mingling and coming together but also a place of transformation and change. This is no more so than at the shore, where tide and weather create the littoral zone, a blurred region of water, land and air.



This exhibition brings together the work of five contemporary artists, all based and practising in North Uist.

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introduction

Place and time are intertwined in North Uist in ways that are utterly unique. For the ever-growing number of artists in the island, inspired by its people, its heritage, landscape and seascape, there is a sense of being privy to something that exists only here. The sense of place is a sense of time, told by a geology so extraordinary as to defy the imagination. The Grey Gneiss that forms the island is 3 billion years old. Most of the rocks that form the UK mainland are younger than 450 million years old. This is the bedrock of a different dimension, of our planet in its youth. Exquisite mineralogy, twisting bands of quartz, feldspar and hornblende, tell stories of forces beyond our ken. On the edge of time, on the edge of a continent, on the edge of the ocean, North Uist is at a crossroads of planetary elements, an epicentre for all that is sublime.



Little surprise then that a key component of the recent reversal in the island's long-term population decline has been thanks to the growth of the creative sector. Painters, sculptors, musicians, makers and bards of all kinds are building livelihoods harvesting the elements creatively, just as crofters and fishermen harvest the land and sea. The vitality and depth of their work is a reflection of how the artists themselves are in symbiosis with the forces of geology, of tide and storm, season and moment. Change is a constant and expressing that demands that artists reach the peak of their practice. The development of an arts infrastructure on the island has bolstered this licence to experiment. From the lively Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum and Arts Centre at Lochmaddy, to the availability of an arts degree through the centre supported by the University of the Highlands and Islands (this exhibition's Fiona Pearson was instrumental in founding both these institutions), there is a palpable sense that, to quote North Uist's renowned violinist Anna-Wendy Stevenson, "Uist is leading from the edge".

Ewan Allinson BA(Oxon), MSc, Sculptor
August 2021





fergus granville



I'm largely inspired by the environment and archeology of the Outer Hebrides. The sea brings strange flotsam and jetsam from a vast catchment, and transforms and slowly owns man-made objects. Storm surges reveal ancient burials, artefacts and structures and rain and gneiss of the islands interior combine to form a thick blanket of peat.

I rarely return from a walk empty handed. As an obsessive collector, I often try to prolong and savour the moment of discovery by making the things that I find into something new. Much of what I make is related to aging, metamorphosis and death. this is not intended as morbid or negative, but as a neutral and inevitable process.

Living on North Uist one is constantly aware of the tidal ebb and flow, as well as weather and seasonal changes. Surrounded by a myriad of other creatures: birds insects mammals and fish, all breeding dying and decaying, makes the latter seem natural and commonplace.



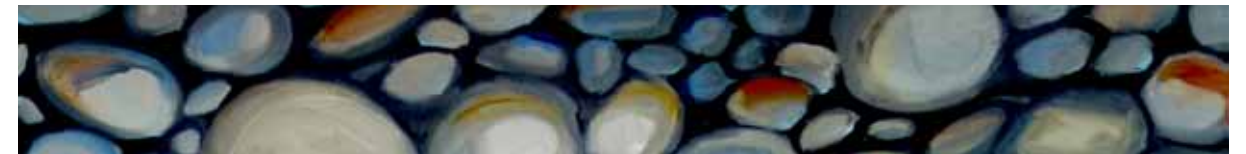
Fergus has lived on North Uist for most of his life. He is the proprietor of the Hebridean Smokehouse. He has participated in a number of exhibitions on the island.



marnie keltie



Walking the Atlantic shoreline on the island of Baleshare can seem like a tranquil pursuit- vast skies, deserted sand and the mesmerising sound of the surf- but the beach is a constant hive of activity. Flotsam, flora and fauna, come and go, creating ever-changing installations. Beautiful abstract patterns are drawn, wiped and redrawn by the rhythm of the tide. Dancing waves meet and retreat from sand and shingle in a never-ending quadrille. They set to their partners. At once challenging and in perfect harmony



Marnie lives and works in North Uist. She is primarily a painter, but also makes prints, casts and site specific works.



sheenagh patience



Photo by Helen Pugh

Across the flat space between the high and low tidal zone the sea deposits its gifts to be found and claimed, then takes back what is unwanted. With each new tide comes something new, something previously unseen. The surface of a painting is like an inter-tidal zone where repetition, rhythm and form can trigger fresh ideas and meaning; and, where improvisation and the smallest of variables in composition echo the complexity of nature

Each day I walk along Tràigh Bheasdaire, at home in Berneray. It is a place to observe and imagine. The continual shifting nature of the tide connects us to bigger global geomovement; the slow slip of the glacier over land; vast tectonic plates repositioning continents over millennia.

Fragments of ceramics washed up here seem so small and fragile. Their human function as a much loved vessel or container are now a memory. Shaped by these global forces they have acquired new value and importance.



Sheenagh Patience lives and works from her studio overlooking the Sound of Harris in the Isle of Berneray. She is a graduate of DJCA in Dundee.



fiona pearson



The edge of space.

My recent work has reflected the subtle edges of land and sky. Bird flights connect them.

“the intensified sky, hurled through with birds” Rilke



Fiona Pearson has lived on her croft in Uist for 40 years. She has been involved for many years in Arts Education, setting up the Fine Arts Degree offered at Taigh Chearsabhagh. She is a keen walker and exploring the island shores and moors is a part of her life and practice.



catherine yeatman



I love it when the days lengthen and the summer breeding seabirds arrive on their own river in the sky, no visas or tickets, just an instinct and knowledge of their own world. They live in the edge where the elements meet, at home in the air and water, and settling on land to breed.

I can often be found balanced on a rock somewhere with my sketch book, and although I have yet to work out how to sketch whilst swimming, and have had limited success from my kayak, the movement and point of view from the water is vital to my practice.

This past summer I have kayaked across the Minch and visited the great whirling bird worlds of St Kilda and the Shaints and pondered on the nature of passage, arrival, and how when you are in the middle, that's when you are most at the edge.



Artist gardener like an ocean wind over the water she goes. Catherine moved to Uist 6 years ago for a year to study fine art. She's still here.

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Fergus Granville www.fergusgranville.com  @fergusgranville

Marnie Keltie www.marniekeltie.co.uk

Sheenagh Patience  @sheenaghke

Fiona Pearson www.uistfiona.com

Catherine Yeatman www.happiestunderthesky.wordpress.com  @callyyeatman

The Dundas Street Gallery Edinburgh

26th September - 9th October 2021