



CAITHNESS ARTS NEWSLETTER

'Promoting the Arts in Caithness'

January - February 2008

NEW DIRECTORS FOR CAITHNESS ARTS

We are delighted to welcome Patricia Niemann, David Morrison and Murray Watts to the Board of Caithness Arts. Here are their profiles:

Patricia Niemann

Originally trained in the trade in Germany, Patty worked as a goldsmith from her studio and showroom shared with the North Shore Pottery in Latheron.

She achieved a degree in Gemstone and Jewellery Design in Germany, and ten years ago started working with blown and kilnformed glass at Edinburgh College of Art. Fairly recently, additional to precious metals, studio glass and life drawing, she added textiles to her disciplines. In 2003, when she moved to Caithness, Patty started to work as a freelance instructor for North Lands Creative Glass in Lybster.



Her artistic work - as opposed to the goldsmithing trade work - is based on the human body. She is interested in human fears - of death, disease, demons, and also spikes, claws or flames - and turns them into body adornment.

Patty said, "I do believe it is extremely important to foster networking between artists and encourage a dialogue with the public - and carry this cultural voice even beyond Caithness. I am excited about joining the Board of Directors of Caithness Arts!"



Murray Watts

Murray Watts has written and directed many plays for theatre over the last 30 years. He has also worked as a writer and producer in television and, since moving to Caithness in 1996, he has worked mainly in the film industry as a screenwriter. He is perhaps best known as the writer of the film 'The Miracle Maker' which at one time was the world's largest animation project. He lives at Freswick Castle, where his media company Wayfarer Productions is based. He recently wrote and directed a short film on location at Freswick, 'The Walk', which was premiered at the All Star Factory in Thurso in January 2007. He continues to write animation

and live action scripts, alongside occasional plays and children's books, whilst developing a continuing project at Freswick Castle to host visual artists, musicians, writers and creative artists of all kinds from Caithness and around the world.

David Morrison

David Morrison, born and educated in Glasgow, came to Caithness in 1965 as a librarian. He has been an activist all of his life for Scottish literature and visual arts and believes in the community. He is widely published and has exhibited paintings all over Scotland and London. He believes in decentralisation. Currently a Wick Community councillor he wishes justice for the arts and sport in Caithness but is totally against the bureaucratic concept that Thurso should be for the furtherance of the arts and Wick for sport. Wick and Thurso urgently require provision for both. At the age of 66 he is still a fechter.

SHELAGH SWANSON - WEST MIDLANDS RESIDENCY

Shelagh Swanson, Director of Caithness Arts departed early January to take up a 3 month Artist Residency at Broadfield House Glass Museum and the Red House Glass Cone in Kingswinford, near Dudley in the West Midlands.

The residency, which follows on from her 6 month residency at North Lands Creative Glass in Lybster, includes 50% community outreach time and 50% studio time to develop new work.

Shelagh says "I'm really excited to develop new work in glass. During my time at North Lands, a fascination for the medium was born and this residency will serve to strengthen my technical knowledge whilst allowing me to develop new ways of using it as a creative medium. It will be an interesting challenge to create in this industrial, urban environment, which is so different from rural Caithness where my studio is based, but it is a challenge which I'm sure will be inspiring". Updates on the progress of Shelagh's residency, alongside information about her previous work and experience, will be posted on her website at

www.shelaghswanson.co.uk

Newsletter

Our **Newsletter** is published every two months throughout the County to outlets including galleries, local shops, pubs, information centres and libraries.

We need your news to make it happen so keep sending your articles and photos and we'll do the rest.

What's On Guide

Planning an event? Then send the details to us and we'll include it in our bi-monthly **What's On Guide**.

If you would like a copy sent to you by email, our contact details are below.

Membership

Caithness Arts is a registered charity and we rely on your support to help us produce our Newsletter and What's On Guide.

If you would like to become a member we will keep you up to date with what's going on in the arts.

Membership costs £5 per year and can be sent to :

Linda Hutton
Membership Secretary
Caithness Arts
1-2 Traill House
7 Olrig St.,
Thurso, KW14 7BJ

Contact

01847 895545
07736 731379
adnil72@gmail.com
www.caithnessarts.org.uk

Cinema For Thurso Group is currently seeking locally made films of any subject to include in 'The Big Gig' Film & Music Festival.



The event takes place at the Royal British Legion, Thurso on Friday, 18th and Saturday, 19th July and is being extended to include more programme times. Four feature length programmes are already scheduled with room for more.

To enter, visit www.piczo.com/thursopicturehouse and look for 'The Big Gig' on the list on the right hand side of the main page. All the details including the rules and how to enter are there.

The closing date for 2008 entries is June 21st but we would like entries as soon as possible. **Plans are afoot to establish a film group in Thurso** - if anyone is interested contact Darren at: manson01_darren@hotmail.com

BOOK LAUNCH **'COLLAGES' by David Morrison** **Illustrated by Shelagh Swanson**



Shelagh Swanson & David Morrison

Collage is a brilliant technique. The texture and depth created by joining together and overlapping fragments also happens to be a satisfying metaphor for a life, and an illuminating mechanism for observing that life in all its beauty, complexity and contradiction.

'**The Cutting Edge**' - **Collected Poems 1966-2003** is already a testament to the richly textured creative writing life of David Morrison. In 'Collages', working with visual artist Shelagh Swanson, David continues his living patchwork. As ever, David the poet sits squarely within his community. The 'Wyster' and the 'Honeybank Bar' of his imagination are vividly sketched homes for the drinking buddies, heroes, family and other loves of his life. Shelagh proves here an empathic and generous (as well as a subtly mischievous) artistic companion, conjuring a visual dimension to this world that is at the same time representational and fantastic. Her illustrations and photos match the moods and weather of the writing, allowing the reader's eye to play and the mind to make new meanings from the text.

At a time when written word and image have never been more prevalent - anyone with the software can produce a book - it is not often that quantity is matched by quality. (Though who, after all, can truly be arbiter of that?) However, this volume, modest

'MADE IN CAITHNESS' UPDATE

By Julie Bolton

Our first six month contract period ended on 31st October and during that time we gathered 56 exhibitors. Sales have been good and the whole ethos of the place has been much appreciated by both exhibitors and customers. The most popular items are those with an even more local emphasis than merely being produced here, so artwork and photography of local scenes, and turned wood items that have a history of the wood used have been selling really well.

We are also selling a lot of tartan items, especially the Caithness tartan. This range has been popular with both local folk and the tourists over the summer. Personalised cards have also been much appreciated. Handknits are finally making a comeback for all age ranges including babies. After many years in the wilderness.

Jewellery is selling well and the range now includes not only semi-precious stones but the precious as well with ruby, emerald and sapphire making an appearance. Almost all the items using beads brought back from Morocco earlier this year have all gone, and new designs using beads recently acquired in India and Nepal will be there as soon as time to make them up can be found.

DVD's of local events have proved popular and we would really like to increase the range of local musicians and writer's work that we can offer for sale. As so many of our items are either one of a kind or made to order, the result is a product which provides that personal and individual touch that it so hard to find these days.

We are still looking for more exhibitors, especially pottery, slate products, sculpture (especially wood), quilting, glass (Caithness glass is constantly being asked for by tourists!) and artwork (local scenes).

If it's made in Caithness, Made In Caithness has become the place it is expected to be, so come on all you crafters and artists, the outlet has been provided for you, the opportunity is there, why not give it a try?

Contact: Julie Bolton on 01955 631741 or email julie@juliery.wanadoo.co.uk

as it is, sings with honest vitality, and its synthesis of pictures and poems offers up that most timeless and valuable of objects - human experience, passion and reflection recorded on leaves of paper you can hold in your hand and savour.

Pulteney Press has been still for some time. It is exciting to find it back at work on such material, uniting a mature and a young Caithness artist in their observation of the community in which they live and work, for which they both have such obvious affection. See local press for details of launch date.

Long live David Morrison! Long live Shelagh Swanson! And long live the power of the book!

(Article submitted by Christine Russell, Editor, Scotia Review)