



GATHER | CONNECT | INSPIRE

// TALENT
DEVELOPMENT





AN INTRODUCTION

In late 2013, ATLAS Arts was approached by Creative Scotland with the premise of managing a project that would help develop talent in the Skye and Lochalsh area. Five arts organisations within the area, namely; Aros, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Seall, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and ATLAS Arts came together to share their resources and help cultivate the potential of the successful applicants .

The aim of the awards was to offer artistic and professional development opportunities that respond to, and support, the needs of artists as they change throughout their career.

At the beginning of 2014, the first round of funding was open to the

public, with seven applicants, ranging from a composer to a filmmaker chosen as the first group of awardees.

In 2015, during the second year of the initiative, nine successful applicants, across a wide variety of disciplines such as a stonemason and a poet, were awarded funding.

The two-year project culminated in a celebration of the work and research undertaken by the awardees, through presentations and talks, while a review of the process will seek to assess the benefits to the artists concerned and the greater impact it has had on the creative landscape in the local area.



Skye-based journalist Adam Gordon and photographer Cailean MacLean were invited to document the project's end at Gather Connect Inspire // Talent Development on the 29th and 30th July 2016.



The great success of both the Talent Development Initiative and the Gather Connect Inspire event was that they brought people together and provided an equal playing field, where ideas could be discussed in an open and frank way, and skills and expertise were seen as commodities that could be shared rather than tools used to dictate.



From bread makers to sculptors, choreographers to filmmakers - the dynamic between the delegates and the speakers was energising, with the line between the two groups blurred. Over the course of the two days, people came together to make connections, sharing their thoughts and fears about their own ambitions, stories and experiences, allowing challenges to give way to solutions.





“There is a wealth of talent, there is a wealth of knowledge, both through the organisations and the partners involved, the Talent Development Initiatives awardees and the audience of people who are coming. By making these general connections, we are highlighting that there is potential here you don’t always have to be in the central belt to be successful and achieve.” - Shona Cameron, Producer, ATLAS Arts

“Gather Connect Inspire has provided the perfect platform for celebrating the achievements of the 16 artists that have participated in the Talent Development Initiative over the last two years, developing their practice, extending their skills and producing new bodies of work. A selection of the artists had the opportunity to participate in lightning talks and present their own work. One of the common threads amongst the awardees was that this celebratory event made them feel valued as artists here in their own community.” - Rosie Sommerville, Project Coordinator, ATLAS Arts

GATHER CONNECT INSPIRE

The inaugural Gather Connect Inspire (GCI) event was held in Portree in 2015, with the aim of inspiring creativity, creating connections and facilitating an exchange of skills within the creative community.

The programme comprised a variety of speakers and offered presentations, one-to-one creative discussions and networking opportunities.

Now in its second year, the event has sought to create a relaxed forum where people can come together, meet and talk.

This year's event brought together an equally eclectic group of speakers with a wide variety of expertise ranging from the sustainability of rural artistic communities to the everyday use of cutting-edge 3D technologies.





Prior to the public event getting underway in the afternoon, the awardees were afforded the opportunity to take part in a facilitated session. Led in Gaelic and English by Anne Martin, they were able to discuss, evaluate and present their work, reflecting on their own personal development, as well as finding common ground with their fellow awardees.

Although the session was private, the general consensus afterwards appeared to be positive, with one awardee speaking of the variety of work undertaken, and welcoming the chance to meet other awardees: "It's been a whole breadth of creative fields and it has been really nice to meet other people that have been involved".

While another awardee highlighted the simplicity of the application process as a beneficial aspect of the initiative: "It was much more inclusive, because it was people from different art forms. In the atmosphere and political climate of this time, you are likely to fail with such applications, but there was a simplicity with this application and I was encouraged and supported in this process."



“It is really important for artists and other makers living and working in the area to have that support. In bigger cities in the central belt there are a lot more opportunities for funding but this has been a great fund for us to have here, for all ages and a great variety of artists, crafts people, writers, poets and musicians.”- Emma Noble

“I was wanting at the time to broaden my skills, so I did a conducting course in Romania, and that led to funding for my EP. The process was natural and there wasn't too much red tape involved. It's nice to work in the local area with the community and to apply to the fund. It was streamlined when applying to Talent Development, and all the better for it”. - Leighton Jones



AND SO IT BEGINS!



Located in the unlikely, yet, as it proved perfect setting of the executive suites of Jans Hardware store, the event began with a brief introduction, from Shona Cameron and Rosie Somerville of ATLAS Arts. Both Shona and Rosie paid homage to the awardees, reflecting on the scope of the initiative, and the opportunities it had presented for the realisation and development of projects by local artists and creatives. They also provided an overview of what lay ahead during the course of the event. Their informal yet informative approach would set the tone for a weekend.

The opening day brought together a wide-ranging assortment of talks in a fusion of the old and new, from medieval language to cutting-edge 3D technology. Lucy Conway and Delphine Dallison treated the audience to insightful presentations detailing the work of their respective organisations, EiggBox and MAKLab, while poet and writer, and TDI awardee, Rody Gorman exhibited the fruits of his labour through a series of readings.

Delegates were treated to a performance as Glasgow-based artist, Ruth Baker recited her work 'Place of Pillars'. A beautiful and immersive poetic monologue influenced by the crofters' uprising in Staffin in the 1870s in the face of landlord oppression. It was performed in the intimate setting of the Carmina Gadelica bookshop.

An evening of performance, food, and thanks drew the opening day to a close, with Donald MacDonald of Aros, acknowledging the role played by ATLAS Arts in helping to facilitate the TDI initiative. He also highlighted the importance of local culture and identity, speaking in both Gaelic and English.

Leighton Jones, who had utilised his award to undertake a conducting course in Romania performed a selection of his own music, with Rody Gorman also providing a playful example of his poetic endeavours.



The importance of place, empowerment and identity were prevailing aspects which underpinned a lot of what was said during the presentations and discussions over the course of the weekend.

When it came to the speakers, the awardees, and the delegates, the stories, experiences, fears and goals that were shared, were as diverse as they were interesting, yet despite those differences some common themes did emerge from the two day event.



PLACE

Several questions arose, and while answers were not offered, simply being aware of the importance and relevance of place seemed key.

When marketing and branding were discussed it sparked debate over whether you can promote a business, a product, or an idea without exploiting where you live.

Can a place's perceived limitations in relation to your career, actually turn out to be its advantages?

EMPOWERMENT

All of the speakers spoke very honestly and eloquently from their own experience about the importance of having faith when it came to making the difficult decisions, realising that you possess many of the tools needed to succeed.

IDENTITY

The link between personal and artistic identity was explored through issues such as the personality, integrity, and the purpose of the work undertaken by the awardees, the speakers and the delegates.

Whether it be an introduction of a profession, a synopsis of project, a name of brand or company, or a medieval language, the theme of identity unified everyone regardless of how it was packaged or presented.



LUCY CONWAY - Eigg Box

The first in an eclectic line-up of speakers was Lucy Conway, founder of Eigg Box; "An eco work-space on the Isle of Eigg, which brings together local island creative businesses with artists from around the world".

She drew upon her own experience of how she works as an individual in Eigg, and why her location has shaped her approach to work. She asked the audience to consider why they had come to the event which was met with responses such as; to meet other creative people, the feeling of isolation, and to see what other people are doing.

The theme of location was evident throughout, but refreshingly the notion of living and working in a rural location was subverted and presented as a strength.

Rather than viewing the travel and the costs associated with attending events on the mainland as prohibitive factors, she believed that such considerations had,

in fact, helped her reassess what was beneficial to her on a personal level. With 18% of Eigg's population working in the creative industries, place, in this instance, is certainly not a barrier to the development of a fertile artistic community.

She spoke about Eigg Box Breakfasts, an idea inspired by a student study group. The premise of which was adapted for Eigg, as a dedicated place, at a specific time, where creative people could meet with the simple yet powerful aim of setting and reviewing monthly goals as a group. A collective idea helping to foster individual needs.

On the final slide of her presentation, the text read: "Eigg Box makes the remote central." A fitting sentiment to take away from an insightful talk.

Perhaps one of the most anticipated talks was presented by the Glasgow-based charity and social enterprise MAKLab.

In a wide ranging and enthusiastic presentation, Delphine Dallison detailed the variety of work being carried out by MAKLab, both on an everyday scale - people experimenting with 3D printing for the first time - to collaborations with universities and institutes on the development of cutting edge prosthetics.

Rather than such state-of-the-art tools being used exclusively, she was keen to emphasis the importance of sharing, encouraging and teaching people with the resources and technology at MAKLab's disposal.

The future was very present, as technologies such as virtual reality were stripped away from fantasy and discussed in real and practical terms, in reference to helping to grow industry. Sustainability and the environment were also highlighted as important facets of the work being done, with the goal of raising awareness within young people of the world around them.

A synergy of machines and ideas; MAKLab's ability to enable individuals and businesses to learn and exploit the potential of new technologies, while also aiding the development of schools, universities, government, is helping to challenge paradigms; empowerment for all as opposed to a chosen few.



DELPHINE DALLISON - MAKLab

"I sometimes find that working in Glasgow, and with Edinburgh as well, people get a little bit blasé about what you can offer, and then coming out to communities like this there is so much enthusiasm and creativity, and just seeing what people come up with is always really interesting."

Follow MAKLab: @theMAKlab



Based in the south of Skye, where he works as a creative writing tutor and lecturer at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig College, Rody Gorman had the distinction of attending the event both as a speaker and as an awardee.

Gorman received funding in 2015, to develop his creative practice based on the medieval Gaelic romance 'The Frenzy of Sweeny'.

In a performance that was intriguing, entertaining, at times baffling, and yet thoroughly compelling, he read excerpts of his work, which is described as a multiform, multilingual and polysemantic series of poems, songs and prose passages in Scottish Gaelic, Irish Gaelic and English.

In an enthralling talk, the audience were transported to a far-off place of playful and complex language, dense in etymology, myths and legends.

Although the nature of Gorman's writing is very niche and personal, those who listened were no less captivated by it, and if anything were actively engaged in finding out more about the curious and bewildering world he had created through his work.

A tour-de-force performer, Gorman's unique, intricate and idiosyncratic creations were certainly an endorsement to the wide breadth of work recognised by the Talent Development Initiative over its two-year life-span.

(SWEENEY IRISH)

Sa Trá

Chuaigh mé siar ar a lorg
Agus linn lán ann ar maidin
Go bhfuair mé scréach na bhfaoileán
Agus feadaíl na feadóige,
Tafann ag eilteog sa raineach rua,
Cuach go déanach i ndoire dorcha,
Daighear den ghaoth gharg
Is an ghrian chiúin úd nach bhfanann
Ach gan sliocht bharr a troighe
Sa trá sa ngaineamh glan.

(SWEENEY ENGLISH)

In the Strand

I went backwest on the track looking when there was a tidefull
fulltide in the morning and all I got was the gulls screeching and
the whistleploverwhistling, a flighty young hind incitebarking
in the brownred bracken, a last late cuckoocuckoo in a dark
oakgrove, a dart of sharp airwind and the quiet solumsun that
doesn't stay and not an ancestorsign of the creamcroptop of
her foot on the strand in the pure sand.



ALEC FARMER - Trakke

Alec Farmer studied Graphic Design in Glasgow en route to setting up his own business, Trakke; "A Scottish outdoor lifestyle brand specialising in the luxury products for the everyday adventurer".

In an immensely interesting and accessible presentation on marketing and branding, Farmer charted the genesis of his brand five years ago - recounting his time scouring through skips for materials and learning to sew through the tutelage of his mother - through to its present day standing as a brand with growing international acclaim.

Identity was one of the central threads throughout, with Farmer stating: "The brand isn't just your logo, it's your identity."

He spoke about how in the absence of a physical shop, Trakke sought to bridge the gap of human interaction through a strong narrative. Regular email updates, including photos detailing various stages of the

"The event brought together an amazing group of talented folk from right across the art and design spectrum. Having the opportunity to learn from other creative practices and chat about how island life influences creativity was an inspiring opportunity."

production process aim to provide customers with a strong sense of inclusivity and build anticipation ahead of their new product arriving. Suddenly a 4-week wait, becomes part of the excitement.

Self-reflection was also something he was keen to reinforce as a positive tool when it comes to making decisions: What works on me? He asked the audience to consider.

The lack of jargon, complicated business models, figures or statistics rendered the presentation as an enjoyable, easy to follow, and inspiring insight to how an idea can retain its integrity while achieving success.

"Every brand begins with a story, whatever the story is, tell it." He implored.

Armed with honesty, clarity and ambition, Farmer's story will have perhaps inspired those listening to believe their own tale is worth telling.

Follow Alec Farmer and Trakke: @TrakkeBasecamp

In a heartfelt, questioning and amusing presentation, Karl Jay-Lewin took the audience on a journey of his career, from a background in carpentry, to hitchhiking in France, the realisation he wanted to become a dancer at the age of 27, through to his most recent performance project of, 'Extremely Bad Dancing to Extremely French Music'.

He spoke honestly about the difficulties in making sense of the 'different hats' we wear, and being one person with a variety of responsibilities - referencing his own roles as Artistic Director of

Bodysurf Scotland, co-founder of Culture Cafe, a parent, a partner, a dancer and a choreographer.

Having co-founded Culture Cafe in the face of 100% arts cuts in Moray, he emphasised how something as simple as a place where like-minded people could meet and network could still have a positive effect and provide value to those involved.

"Realise you are the source of your own creativity," was an apt mantra amid a struggle of identity, that perhaps we all face.



"I really enjoyed it, I felt like I was there as a presenter but also in a way got to participate, it was a double benefit. It gave me an opportunity to try out a different way of talking about what I do, which was really prompted by the nature of the invitation, I was invited to come along as me. What I liked about it is it got me to think about what I was doing".

LIGHTNING TALKS: A BOLT FROM THE BLUE!

Day two provided a platform for some of the awardees to share their experiences of the Talent Development Initiative through the medium of lightning talks.

Lightning talks, according to ATLAS Arts Producer, Shona Cameron are:

“Quick-fire ways of articulating what they are doing to the audience. It makes the awardees think about how they present their work and brings to the fore creative practice in the area”.

"I liked the fact that Gaelic was clearly represented, I thought it was a really positive experience. This process was much more about enabling and listening. I was encouraged to work, enabled to work, valued as an artist".



First up was Liondsaidh Chaimpbeil, who talked about how her work was informed by stories, and why time was the most important aspect when it came to her practice.

Liondsaidh spoke of how she had been: "...greatly encouraged by the talk of narrative by other artists". Before going on to describe how the award had helped her adapt her practice and refocus her work as a sculptor.

LIONDSAIDH CHAIMPBEIL



JENNIFER CARTER PEARSON

Next up was Jennifer Carter Pearson who reflected on how the award had helped her progress her practice and why Skye as a place, and its people, played a big part in her work.

“I love drawing and painting, so to work on hand-wax carvings presented the perfect opportunity to develop the painterly like technique.”

“I was thrilled and elated to be given the opportunity to create new work through the support and funding of the Talent Development Initiative. I felt lucky to be able to pursue and push my work in a new direction, which I would otherwise never have been able to do.”

After attending a casting course at Central Saint Martins College, Jen returned to Skye to utilise the skills she had learnt, adapting them to her particular style of work.

From this she developed ‘Island Treasures’, a distinct collection based on conversations with people on Skye, engendering their own personal connection to the Island.

Having developed new ideas and techniques enabled by the award, Jen has recently opened her own design shop, and is no longer restricted to the confines of her bedroom, where her jewellery workshop had previously been based.



The final talk centred on the practice of Katharine Barrington, who describes her work as: "relying on the resistance of meaning or clarity."

After leaving London in haste shortly after graduating, it makes sense that her collection of paintings and stories appear to be inextricably drawn to the local area. That sense of place seems intrinsic to some of her drawings, which by her own admission, were inspired by local gossip. In her own words: "to return was so romantic".

A bus shelter in Ardvaser, she frequented as a teenager, now represents a multitude of possibilities as large display case for her work. An approach, which she describes as: "scattered and flawed, with moments of intrigue and beauty," was represented by the style in which she presented her work, tangible yet intangible.

KATHARINE BARRINGTON

"This award offered a route back in to making in this community with an encouraging voice behind you."

TALENT DEVELOPMENT AWARDEES 2014 - 2015



CAROLINE DEAR

Is fascinated with plants and the particular skills people needed to work with them. This award provided the opportunity to research a range of traditional plant uses for making textiles in particular.

LIONDSAIDH CHAIMBEUL

After graduation from Edinburgh College of Art she became involved with the Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, and was a founder member of the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop. Chaimbeul has been working in wood for the first time and is exploring metal work.



LORRAINE SCOTT NOLAN

Is a figurative artist influenced by her environment. "The Kilmuir Monster" embraced a community project to create a piece for a local music festival. The Monster, crafted in willow, with silken wings dyed with leaves and vegetables was born from a story created by local children.

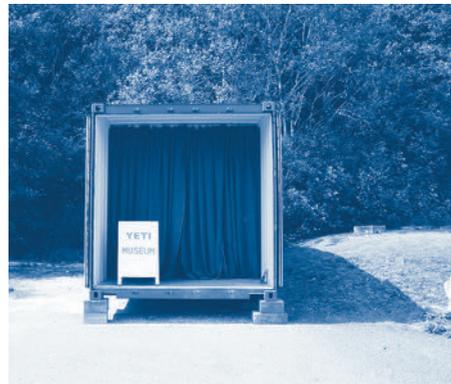




JENNIFER CARTER PEARSON
Studied jewellery and metalwork design at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee. Moving to Skye in 2012 has given her the creative space to design her own collections. Her award was used to learn hand wax carving skills.

HECTOR MACINNES and KATE MCMORRINE

The Replica Hearth is the Anaitis Foundation's inaugural project. The "Hearth" is a reconstruction of the living room of local man Eoghann "The Yeti" who went missing on Skye in the spring of 1984.



KATHARINE BARRINGTON
Studied at The Glasgow School of Art, The Royal College of Art and Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. Turning to the sea, mountains, personal objects, rocks and tales of adventure the work is a collection of paintings, trinkets, sculpture and story that acknowledge a persistent search for comfort, reassurance, direction and purpose.

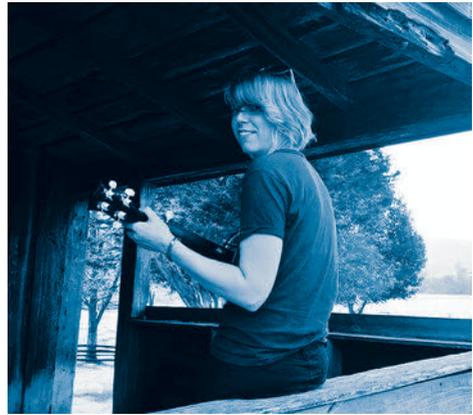
EMMA NOBLE

Studied print-making at Grays School of Art, Aberdeen. Noble undertook a specialist workshop in printing with textiles going on to develop a range of wearable art pieces. Each made from silk, they are hand-dyed and individually screen printed to create one-off pieces.



ISHBEL STRACHAN

Musician, tutor and film-maker attended the Swannanoa Gathering Old-time Music and Dance Week near Asheville, North Carolina honing her skills on 5-string banjo clawhammer style and learning various techniques that can be applied to new tunes, improvising and composing.



HEATHER MACDERMOTT

Studied at Edinburgh College of Art returning to Skye to pursue a career as a designer and maker of contemporary jewellery. This project explored print-making techniques and mark making looking at influences on her jewellery and new artwork.

SANDIE GALLAGHER

Is an artist working in glass. Gallagher attended an outdoor master class at Northlands to develop glass engraving, she has also used screen printing to create prints from her glass engravings.



JOHN SIKORSKI

Musician and dancer. Sikorski used his award to develop his skills on the sousaphone, as well as to further his percussive dance abilities in the rhythm tap style. These new, lighter and more intricate rhythmic patterns, have brought about versatility when improvising and performing.



FRANCIS YEATS

In 2015 Yeats, a stone mason applied for an Award to erect a sculpture on the Isle of Skye. He wanted to experiment with stone in a more expressive way and learn from the challenges of creating a piece of public art.

LEIGHTON JONES

Composer, pianist and songwriter. In 2014 his award took him to Romainia to study conducting, which led to a second award and his EP release *All the Way Home*. This material was performed at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh for SCOT:LANDS in 2015.



SUZY LEE

Artist and filmmaker. Lee completed her MA in Fine Art at Chelsea School of Art. She used her award to produce 'A Bheil Thu Gam Thuigsinn | Every Argument' her first film, which was nominated for best performance and best drama at FilmG 2015.

RODY GORMAN

He has worked as writing fellow at several universities and is editor of the Irish and Scottish Gaelic poetry anthology *An Guth*. Used his award to create *Sweeney: An Intertonguing...* is a multiform, multilingual and polysemantic series of poems, songs and prose passages in Gaelic, Irish and English.



We are grateful to Jans and Aros for the use of their venues. Special thanks go to everyone who attended and contributed to making the event a success.



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