**PRESS RELEASE**

17 January 2025 | For immediate release

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# Fife Contemporary announce further details of Hag. Knowledge, Power & Alchemy Through Craft, including launch events on International Women's Day.

***Hag. Knowledge, Power & Alchemy through Craft*** will open at Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries on International Women's Day, Saturday 8th March 2025, bringing together the work of 13 of Scotland's most inventive, creative and impactful women craft artists. The exhibition will also feature 13 newly commissioned portraits of the artists in their studios by Scottish photographer, Lydia Smith. Celebrating the knowledge, power & alchemy mediated by their work, the exhibition and photography will celebrate craft skills and approaches to practice developed by these significant women over decades of work and personal endeavour. The featured artists are **Lise Bech**, **Judith Davies**, **Caroline Dear**, **Claire Heminsley**, **Fiona Hutchison**, **Ruth Elizabeth Jones**, **Gilly Langton**, **Jo McDonald**, **Susie Redman**, **Patricia Shone**, **Carol Sinclair**, **Amanda Simmons** and **Emma Louise Wilson**.

In the latter half of 2024, Dundee-based Lydia Smith travelled across Scotland to meet the artists in their studios. Through her thoughtful and personal photographic style, she brings us closer to an understanding of them and their practice; making the processes, and the women behind them, visible and better known.

Pots being fired by Patricia Shone at her studio on Skye, 2024. Photo by Lydia Smith.

Throughout this journey Lydia experienced first-hand the working processes behind these artists' craft and brings them vividly to life for gallery audiences. Whether witnessing the dramatic combustion of earth and air in the raku firing of **Patirica Shone**'s ceramics at her waterside studio on Skye, or the quiet seasonal growth of willow and flax that are built into **Lise Bech** and **Susie Redman**'s woven forms in more nearby Fife, Smith's camera makes our knowledge of these artists and their commitment to practice quietly but determinedly provocative.

A full range of visceral and tactile forms, materials and sensations await the visitor.

Lise Bech working in her weaving shed in Fife, 2024. Photo by Lydia Smith.

The mastery of their own craft skills is what unites these 13 women. Visitors to this exhibition will see pieces brought together from around Scotland. They can expect to see contemporary approaches to constructing forms through tapestry, basket weaving, and work in paper and textile, as well as work formed through transformative material processes such as kiln-firing glass, hand forming clay, or enamelling and silversmithing. The relationship between artist and their close surroundings is also a theme, either as a source of inspiration, or more directly as a source for the materials themselves.

Susie Redman in her studio, 2024. Photo by Lydia Smith.

Curated by Dunfermline-born educator, curator and producer, **Kate Pickering**, and taking linguistic cues from historical, derogatory language about women, ***Hag.*** connects contemporary prejudices about age, sex and gender to their historical precedents.

Witch hunts, especially during the 16th and 17th centuries, were fuelled by a toxic mix of misogyny, superstition, and fear - 64% of those accused and ultimately killed were women aged over 40. Older women, widows, those who were outspoken, rebellious, or did not conform to societal norms were especially at risk of being accused. The term "hag" became a weapon, representing a woman whose knowledge and wisdom were twisted into malevolence, leading to her exclusion, persecution and, in many cases, execution. Long-held associations between accused witches and craft can also be dated back to this time. During the witch trials of the 17th century domestic craft skills, such as spinning or weaving, could provide single women with property and financial independence, but the transformational capacity of craft skills could also provoke suspicion and resentment.

Judith Davies, hands at work, 2024. Photo by Lydia Smith

The exhibition will launch on International Women's Day, Saturday 8th March 2025, with a packed day of events, including conversations between curator **Kate Pickering** and some of the exhibiting artists, and conversations with invited guest **Zoe Venditozzi** from the social justice campaign Witches of Scotland. A workshop making a clay Venus led by exhibiting artist **Ruth Elizabeth Jones** completes the line-up of events.

***Hag. Knowledge, Power & Alchemy through Craft*** seeks to claim and redefine the term "hag" for the current age by celebrating the strength, wisdom, activism, rebelliousness and creativity of craftswomen. The exhibition has ambitious aims to challenge societal prejudices and foster a deeper understanding of the rich tapestry of experiences that women who engage intensively with their craft bring to contemporary culture.

Fiona Hutchison in her Edinburgh studio, 2024. Photo by Lydia Smith.

Curator, **Kate Pickering**, says *“I'm so excited to be able to bring this exhibition to Dunfermline. The show connects the historical power of craft with the narratives of these remarkable women and claims the term "hag" by turning it into a symbol of empowerment. My aim for this exhibition is to show how skill and creativity can transform materials and perceptions alike.”*

Fife Contemporary Director, **Kate Grenyer**, says *“This exhibition is going to be empowering and invigorating for women across Fife, and artists across Scotland. It is going to be such a privilege for Fife Contemporary to bring the work of these 13 Scottish craft artists to the Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries - this great cultural asset in the heart of the city of Dunfermline.”*

**Christine McLean,** Head of Cultural Heritage & Wellbeing for ONFife, says *"OnFife is Fife's leading cultural, arts and heritage trust and we are delighted to continue our long-standing partnership with Fife Contemporary, bringing this latest exhibition to Dunfermline. We welcome the opportunity to both challenge historic and contemporary misconceptions and to celebrate the rich talent of artists practising in Scotland today.”*

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**Listing Information**

*Hag. Knowledge, Power & Alchemy through Craft*
08 March - 08 June 2025
Dunfermline Carnegie Library & Galleries, 1-7 Abbot Street, Dunfermline, KY12 7NL

Open Daily
Monday – Friday 10am to 5pm (until 6pm Thursdays)
Saturday 10am – 4pm
Sunday 12am – 4pm

https://www.fcac.co.uk/programmes/hag/

Connect on social media at: facebook.com/fifecontemp, instagram.com/fifecontemp, youtube.com/fifecontemporary and linkedin.com/company/11584739

**For further information** images and interview requests please contact Fife Contemporary through mail@fcac.co.uk

**Press View** The exhibition will be available for press preview and photography on **Friday 7 March** 2025. Please contact mail@fcac.co.uk for timings and details.

**Photography**

Photography associated with this exhibition is copyright to Lydia Smith and available for publication, for press and magazine articles courtesy of Fife Contemporary. Further examples can be shared on request.

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/wdcg5ww6n53u3m2a5mvef/APF74UVlEyWTpBeMMtZXMC0?rlkey=zbxxdmfgsqy1vuf9a51f9qp9f&st=l10yyden&dl=0

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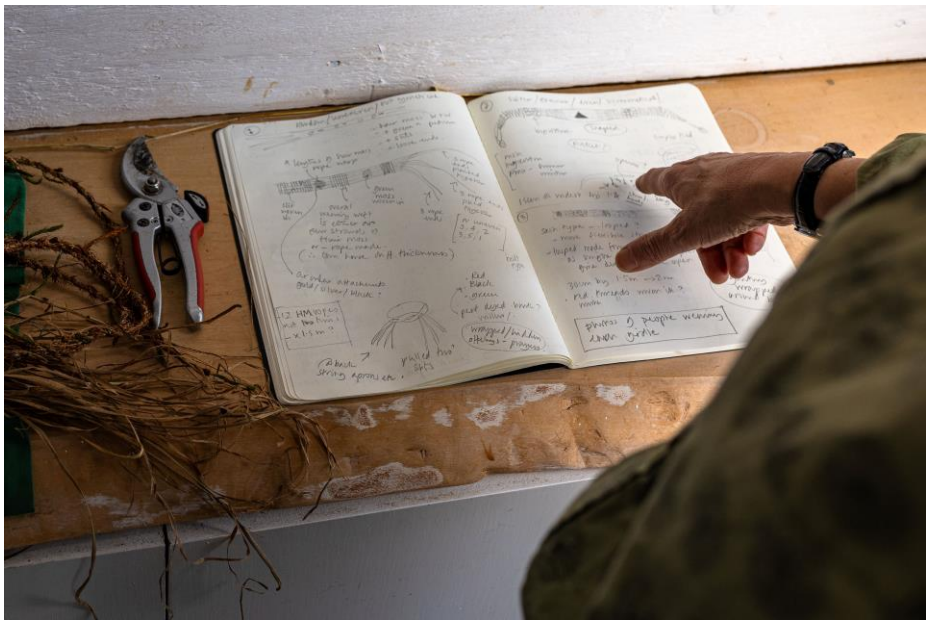
Carol Sinclair, clay hands, 2024. Photo by Lydia Smith.

**About Fife Contemporary** Fife Contemporary produces high quality public exhibitions, programmes and activities with partners across Fife, as well as supporting artists to develop and extend their practice, and to create and exhibit new visual art and craft projects. Our work with communities facilitates engagement between artists and audiences, enriching the experiences of all.

**About the Curator** Kate Pickering is a jeweller, educator, and curator whose work centres on the power of craft to foster creativity, community, and empowerment. With a BA in Jewellery and Silversmithing and a Masters of Design from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design (DJCAD), Pickering has dedicated over a decade to building creative platforms that inspire makers and bring together diverse voices. Kate has curated exhibitions, worked with cultural institutions like The Scottish Goldsmiths Trust, and developed innovative projects that bridge traditional craft and contemporary dialogue.



Caroline Dear, planning book, 2024. Photo by Lydia Smith

**About Lydia Smith Photography** Lydia is a professional photographer based in Scotland. She specialises in portrait, product, fashion and editorial photography both on location and at her studio in Dundee. She can be found on social media using the handle @misslydiaphoto and https://www.misslydiaphoto.com/

**About ONFife** Dunfermline Carnegie Library & Galleries are run by OnFife. Further details here: https://www.onfife.com/

**Support** This exhibition is supported by the **William Grant Foundation**.

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**Artist Biographies**

**Lise Bech**

Having been a willow grower and basket-maker for 40 years, Lise Bech thrives on the different tasks that the change of seasons brings. She cares deeply for the wellbeing of the planet, seeing her basketmaking as a co-operative process with collaboration and community as constant touchstones. Bech approaches her weaving sessions as a conversation on a playdate, where the give-and-take between maker and material transforms a bundle of sticks into a tactile image of mutuality. Working exclusively with Scottish willow, she creates lively, appealing sculptural forms which echo both an inner and outer landscape.

Bech is self-taught but has had many British and international teachers over the years. In 2004 she received a grant from the Scottish Arts Council to enable her to develop a contemporary range of sensual asymmetric organic forms - marrying technical skill and a higher level of emotional expression - which have become iconic of her work nationally and internationally. Recent exhibitions include *Response*, The Gallery at The Stables, Falkland (2023); *Folk at Heart*, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh (2023); *The Walled Garden*, Amisfield Walled Garden, Haddington (2022); *Two Hemispheres*, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh (2022).

**Judith Davies**

Trained in Fine Art and Illustration, Judith Davies returned to education gaining a Post Graduate Diploma in Ceramics from Goldsmiths College (1992), followed by a Master of Arts in Ceramics from University of Central Lancashire (2012). Her work is inspired by the coastline, its geology and natural history, reflecting her fascination with the sea and how watercourses and channels are formed. She hand-builds sculptural forms with surfaces that are intensely tactile, giving the impression of ripples in water. Her work employs processes developed from experimentation, consequently holding a unique presence. She works from her studio in North Fife.

Davies has exhibited her ceramic work for over 30 years, having two solo exhibitions at the Hart Gallery, London and exhibiting at Ceramic Art London, Handmade Chelsea and Art London. She has taught both ceramics and drawing, delivered participatory art projects and collaborated with many artists on projects and installations. Recent exhibitions include *Kiss of the Sea*, Graystone Gallery, Edinburgh (2024); *Summer Exhibition*, Sarah Adams Studio, Cornwall (2024); *Then and Now: 100 Years of Visual Arts Scotland*, Royal Scottish Academy and Dalkeith Palace, Edinburgh (2024); *Ulaidhean/Treasures: Society of Scottish Artists at Gairloch Museum,* Gairloch (2024).

## Caroline Dear

Caroline Dear worked as an architect and landscape architect in various countries before settling on the Isle of Skye in the 1980s. Working along the edge between producing artefacts and seeding ideas, her practice is informed by archaeology, Gaelic culture, botany and traditional skills. Through exploring the relationship between our inner selves and the outer physical landscape she engages with people to value the unnoticed and the undervalued. Recent qualifications include a Certificate in Field Botany from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh and a Masters in Art and Social Practice from the University of the Highlands and Islands, 2020.

Recent exhibitions include the *string/lines* project exhibited in venues across Scotland (2022-24); *Daughters of Penelope*, Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh (2018); *A Layered Land*, Timespan, Helmsdale (2017); *flora*, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth, (2017); *Naked Craft*, Burlington Art Gallery, Quebec (2016); *Vassen Susar*, Eckerö Post and Custom's House, Åland, Finland (2016); and undertook residencies in Norway, Denmark and Finland. Dear was recently awarded the Walmsley Bursary to work with The Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore, 2023 and contributed to the publication *The Material Culture of Basketry,* edited by S.Bunn and V.Mitchell, 2023.

## Claire Heminsley

Claire Heminsley studied textiles at the Glasgow School of Art, before setting up her own studio INCAHOOTS in 1986, expanding her work to include illustration. Heminsley works with a broad range of media and consequently has a diverse output, from detailed scraperboard prints to more experimental sculptural and mixed media pieces.

Since opening her studio, Heminsley has worked on a wide range of commissions, exhibitions and projects. Alongside this she has taught design, textiles and illustration in further and higher education and for workshops throughout Scotland. In 2021 she was awarded a Creative Scotland Open Fund award for a research project ‘Almost a map, Almost a word’, the results of which continue to inform her work.

Heminsley is the chair of Off the Rails Arthouse in Ladybank, an art space offering a wide range of arts activities.

## Fiona Hutchison

Born in Edinburgh and graduating from the Edinburgh College of Art 1984, Fiona Hutchison is an artist and teacher working in tapestry and mixed media whose work is based on a love of the sea. Inspired by all things maritime, her own experiences of the sea are enhanced by studying poetry and literature. Hutchison works primarily in tapestry but also in paper and recycled plastics, exploring a wide variety of media in two and three dimensions.

Receiving awards from Hope Scott Trust, Dawia & Sasakawa Foundations, Theo Moorman, Creative Scotland and Craft Council, she has worked with tapestry artists in Lithaunia, Japan and South Korea, participated in artist residencies in Norway and Scotland, and taught across the UK and USA. Hutchison is a professional member of the Society of Scottish Artists, and a founding member of both the European Tapestry Forum and STAR* group (Scottish Tapestry Artists Regrouped). Hutchison promotes Scottish tapestry though exhibition, symposiums and teaching.

Recent exhibitions include *Then and Now: 100 Years of Visual Arts Scotland*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh (2024); *The 197th RSA Annual Exhibition*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh (2023); *Tapestry: Changing Concepts*, City Art Centre, Edinburgh. (2021); *The Fourth Cordis Prize for Tapestry*, Inverleith House, Edinburgh, (2021); *Think Plastic: Materials and Making*, Royal Botanical Gardens (2021); *Artapestry5*, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, France, Latvia (2021); *Premier International Tapestry Exhibition*, Canadian Tapestry & Texture Centre, Oakville, Ontario (2019);

*Collect*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2018). Hutchison's work can be found in public and private collections in the UK, Japan, Norway and Lithuania.

**Ruth Elizabeth Jones**

Ruth Elizabeth Jones' practice centres on the vessel form, using coil-building techniques dating back to matriarchal Neolithic pottery cultures, and making ongoing reference to the female ceramic record. Jones focuses on the materiality of clay, developing large sculptural vessels which balance inner volume and outer form. The smoke-firing process imparts a distinctive finish to her pieces which aim to achieve the stillness of a quiet holding or containing space.

Jones' affinity with clay has been lifelong. After studying studio ceramics in the Midlands in the 1980s she established studios in Derby and then rural Southwest Scotland, where she continues to live and work.

Jones is currently represented by Ruup & Form, London, and Brown's Gallery, Inverness. Recent exhibitions include the Ruup & Form London Art Fair presentation (2024); Secret Ceramics, SoShiro, London, (2024); Collect, Somerset House, London (2023); Winter Exhibition, Ruup & Form, London, (2023).

**Gilly Langton**

Gilly Langton is a contemporary jewellery designer based in the remote Highland village of Plockton on the West Coast of Scotland. With a background in traditional silversmithing and jewellery, Langton manipulates metals through fabrication of form and hand tool mark-making to create surface and texture, combining the strength of metal with the softness of hand dyed elastics.

The use of elastic became a key part of her work in 2001, after a desire to incorporate colour into a predominately silver practice. Following a research and development residency at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design in 2010, Langton developed new dyeing processes which would propel her practice forward. Inspired by her nautical surroundings, engaging daily with the changing hues upon the seascapes and landscapes, each colour is a direct response to living and working in a small Highland fishing village.

Recent exhibitions include *Goldsmiths' Fair*, London (2024); *Uncommon Threads*, Pistacios Contemporary Art Jewelry, Chicago (2024); *Jewellery Exhibition Showcase*, Contemporary Applied Arts, London (2023); MAD About Jewelry, *Museum of Art and Design*, New York (2021).

**Jo McDonald**

Tapestry artist Jo McDonald lives, works and teaches in Edinburgh. Her artistic practice focuses on storytelling, history and shared experience. From an early age, she was fascinated by books; reading was a great comfort where she ventured into a world of escapism. As an adult, she has not lost this fascination with the written word. McDonald has experimented extensively with traditional tapestry weaving techniques using second-hand books and monofilament as an alternative medium to wools and threads. The possibilities of these materials continue to inspire her practice. Through a process of de-construction and re-construction, she creates new structures from aged materials which maintain their original history.

McDonald graduated from Edinburgh College of Art with a Master of Fine Arts in Tapestry. She recently exhibited at *Collect*, Somerset House, London (2024), was short-listed for The Cordis Trust Prize for Woven Tapestry (2021 and 2015), received two Hope Scott Trust Awards (2019 and 2013), was granted a Creative Scotland Professional Development Award (2013) and won the Milly and Benno Schotz Award for best work submitted by a young sculptor at the Royal Glasgow

Institute (2012). She has work held in Apex International Hotels in London, Amateras Foundation in Bulgaria, University of Aberdeen in Scotland and The Gallery of Szombathelyi in Hungary, as well as in private collections in UK, France, USA and South Africa.

**Susie Redman**

Susie Redman is a handloom weaver. She creates all of her textiles on a traditional floor loom from her Burntisland studio. As part of her creative practices Redman grows flax and willow on her plot and explores the boundaries and connections between loom woven linen and paper yarns mixed with willow rods, bark and flax. Sustainability is at the heart of her practice; she uses natural and organic fibres where possible.

Redman's collection of handwoven vessels are underpinned by the activity of gathering; a smooth round beach pebble, tree bark, seed heads, pieces of slate or fossils find their way onto her shelves and into these vessels. The vessel itself references the all-essential bag needed to carry precious gathered materials.

Recent exhibitions include *Framework*, Dundee Design Festival (2024) and *Collect*, Somerset House, London (2024). Redman's work can be seen in Bard Gallery, Edinburgh.

**Patricia Shone**

Patricia Shone was born near Glasgow but grew up in South-West England and studied ceramics at Central School of Art, London. She returned to Scotland and settled on the Isle of Skye, where she has lived and worked for over 30 years. Referencing the land, climate and communities of the Highlands, her work seeks to express the contrast and balance between inner and outer, surface and contents, of a container or of a human being.

In 2024 Shone celebrated 25 years of making with a solo show at The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh. Other recent exhibitions include *Borrowed Land*, Kilmorack Gallery, Kilmorack (2023); *The Elemental Landscape*, Contemporary Ceramics, London (2021); *Collect*, Saatchi Galleries, London (2019) and participation in the annual Ceramic Art London showcase 2015-2024.

Shone was awarded the Emmanuel Cooper Prize for ceramics in 2019 and was selected for the Homo Faber: Best of Europe showcase at the inaugural Homo Faber event in Venice, 2018. She has been a Selected Member of the Craft Potters' Association since 2015. Shone's work is held in public collections at Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Pallant House, Chichester, Ceramini Contemporary Ceramics Museum, Turkey, and in private collections in UK, USA, Europe, Australia and People's Republic of China.

**Amanda Simmons**

Amanda Simmons began working with glass in 2002. She trained at Westminster College and Central St Martins in London before re-locating to Dumfries and Galloway in 2005. Simmons' main technique is working with powders and sheet glass, creating 3D vessel forms using gravity. Simmons has pursued this method for the past 19 years and still finds new ways to explore the properties of mass, heat, time and gravity to create works. She makes vessel forms and wall-work with intense colour and patterns, utilising opaque glass powders which react to light.

Recent exhibitions include the *British Glass Biennale*, Stourbridge (2024); *Planet Earth: An Ode to Our Wonderful World*, London Glassblowing, London (2024); *We are Crow*, solo show at The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh (2024); and *This is Becoming a Pattern*, Pittsburgh Glass Center, Pittsburgh (2023). Her work is held in public collections at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth and

Ernsting-Stiftung Glass Museum, Germany. Recently she has taught at The Corning Museum of Glass, New York, Pittsburgh Glass Center and online with Bullseye Glass and Glass School UK.

## Carol Sinclair

Carol Sinclair was born in Edinburgh and studied ceramics at Grays School of Art in Aberdeen. She hand-builds in porcelain slab to create one-off sculptural vessels, plates and bottles using her signature inlay technique to add imagery and pattern. Working from her home studio in Forfar, Angus, Sinclair is inspired by people and places, and makes work in response to the issues that she cares about, especially the environment. Sinclair has adopted a “closed loop” approach to her practice where she repurposes and recycles as much material as possible from her ceramic production.

Sinclair is a Selected Member of the Craft Potters Association and regularly exhibits at the Contemporary Ceramics Gallery in London. Carol’s gallery representation includes Byard Arts, Cambridge, White Chalk Gallery, Devizes, Alchemist, Dingwall, Graystone Gallery, Edinburgh and Birch Tree Gallery, Edinburgh.  Her work is held in the collections of Carlowrie Castle and the Meffan Institute.

## Emma Louise Wilson

Emma Louise Wilson is an Aberdeen-based maker and Gray’s School of Art graduate working in silver and enamel to create jewellery and bowls inspired by walks at Aberdeen beach. Wilson draws inspiration from the dynamic seascape, capturing the essence of stormy skies and the rich colours and textures found along the coastline. Wilson’s enamel work is informed by abstract watercolours, echoing the unpredictable but beautiful nature of water and paint in the opaque and transparent glass, creating fragments of the seascape.

Wilson has presented her silver and enamel work widely at various selected events and exhibition, including *Collect*, Somerset House, London (2024); *Goldsmiths’ Fair*, London (2024); *Future Icons Selects*, London Craft Week (2023); *SHINE: New Talent Showcase of Jewellery and Silversmithing*, The Goldsmiths’ Centre, London (2023); and *Elements: Festival of Jewellery, Silver and Gold*, Edinburgh (2022).