

Leaders in their field

Contributors Cheryl Livingstone, Milica Douglas, Andrew Youngson

Fiona Taylor, painter

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Photograph Jake Tilson





Ian Callum, Jaguar designer



Joyce Young OBE, fashion designer



Amanda Hyndman, hotel manager



Scotland has long been recognised as a proud nation with a firm track record of producing industry leaders and creative visionaries.

Elegance meets some inspirational Scottish figures who are at the top of their game





Classic but with a twist

When Joyce Young's name was included on the 2013 New Year Honours list, thousands of people across the world let out a collective cheer. Since launching her career as fashion designer and businesswoman, the Scottish entrepreneur has delighted discerning customers with her array of stunning designs. Ever passionate about her Scottish roots, Joyce has succeeded in bringing her homeland's textiles right up to date, while also letting their classic beauty speak for themselves



How did you get started in the industry?

I studied at Glasgow School of Art and firstly went to work as a designer for Marks & Spencer.

Within a year, by 1975, I had set up my own business called Sequin which ran until 1982, creating top-end special occasion outfits.

Was it your entrepreneurial spirit which motivated you to start your own business so soon?

Yes. I wanted to design what I wanted, rather than being dictated to by what was on catwalks or by the leading high street designers. My love is for colour, fabric and texture and that's what I wanted to concentrate on.

You established By Storm in 1993. What was the motivation there?

I had been designing blouses for Marks & Spencer for a long time, and I wanted to go back to working with beautiful fabrics and not being dictated to by price. We very quickly went back to weddings which is what we had done in the 1970s. People are willing to pay a bit more for something different, so you're not competing with the middle market.

You launched your other line, Tartan Spirit, in 2005. Why did you launch it?

Well, I love tartan and Scotland, and I felt that, at that time, there really wasn't much that was modern for women in these fabrics. What I wanted to do was bring the fashion element into tartan. At that time, people such as Vivienne Westwood were using tartan but it was very quirky, and what I like to do is create classic garments with a twist, but not outrageous.

Is there a theme in what you set out to achieve with your designs?

Yes, there's a 'handwriting' that I seem to have which people recognise. It's simple and elegant, but with a use of colour and detail. All my 'handwriting' is quite feminine. Such as when I use Harris Tweed, it's quite different to what other people do.

What's your design process like?

Fabrics are my source of inspiration. I don't sit down and sketch; I see a fabric and start thinking what I'm going to do with it. And although it's an ongoing process in my mind, we bring out the collections to coincide with the wedding fairs and exhibitions, which is normally February and September-October.

Congratulations on getting the OBE. What has that been like?

When the letter came through, I just thought it was a wind up. I read it and re-read it. It certainly wasn't anything I expected or knew about. It was an absolute

honour and I'm so delighted. It's nice to get recognition for hard work.

Prince Charles presented the award to you at Buckingham Palace in February this year. What did he say?

He just asked about the business and tartan. We chatted about Dumfries House where we have done exhibitions, and the house is his baby. I did suggest he might bring his wife for a fitting.

And finally, what do you think the state of play is for the Scottish design and textiles industries?

I think there is a lot of creativity in Scotland, and it's nice that it's beginning to get all joined up through Scottish textiles and working collaborations, rather than people working on their own. So I think there are a lot of opportunities for Scottish designers.

What barriers remain?

Finding the skills to manufacture is the biggest one. From the 1990s, all the bigger companies who used to have sewing machinists and pattern cutters, began producing overseas. And therefore the skills in this country were lost when the factories closed down. Nowadays you don't get many school leavers wanting to become sewing machinists, because there aren't the jobs for them, plus it's not the most highly paid profession.

