

Tartan is big in Japan and tourism here may benefit

A new touring exhibition in Japan celebrating tartan brings together the work of various Scottish designers, including Joyce Young, who talks to Tessa Williams about the project and her hopes that it will attract visitors to Scotland

Japan has always had a fascination with Scotland, mainly around golf and whisky.

But now they have taken their love affair with tartan to a whole new level.

A new exhibition simply entitled "Tartan" is being hosted at the Kobe Fashion Museum in Hyogo, the country's only exclusively fashion-orientated museum.

It opened last month and will last for two years, travelling around other major cities.

Leading the charge of designers from Scotland is Glasgow-based, Joyce Young OBE.

Joyce has worked for over four decades as a fashion designer and graduated from the Glasgow School of Art in 1975.

Her tartan inspired wedding gowns, couture dresses and special Scottish themed outfits grace the finest weddings, and are worn by those in the know; Alannah Hamilton, Kimberley Stewart, Ashley Jensen, and Judy Murray to name a few.

Her tartan designs have taken her many miles from Fashion Week in Los Angeles and Dressed to Kilt in New York.

Though it's a first for her to be shown in Japan.

For the past four years she has had two stores, one in Glasgow's Maryhill and the other in Haverstock Hill, London, and she continues to travel between the two places to have fittings and appointments for her dress making business.

She strongly supports the Scottish textile industry and has had everything produced from her own 20 strong factory in Maryhill for over 25 years.

She also uses Harris tweed in her designs and Scottish cashmere whenever possible.

"It is an easy option to go for having things made in the Far East and it does have its benefits but one of the reasons I love what I do is the investment in quality. I know that the brides and other clients I have are getting the best fabrics and the best possible dress," Joyce explains.

Joyce's first job in the fashion world was as a designer for Marks & Spencer but she was keen to set out on her own after



↑ The Tartan exhibition at Kobe Fashion Museum

just a year of working for the high street.

"I only worked for them for a short time, before I decided to start up my own company. The problem of working for a high street company is that you are so limited in the way you can design; you have a piece of fabric and you have to just compromise and compromise," she adds.

Her business has gone from strength to strength and in February 2014 she received an OBE from Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace for services to the textile industry.

Other talented Scots who will help tell the story of tartan in the Japan show include: Kinloch Anderson, Samantha McCoach (Le Kilt), Alison Harm, Judy R Clark, Siobhan McKenzie and Howie Nicholby.

Kobe Fashion Museum, a three storey exhibition hall that is the first museum of its kind in Japan, expects more than 50,000 people to see the show.

The Tartan tour – which will also stop at Tokyo, Iwate, and Fukuoka – will display more than 150 different types of tartan – everything from tartan shoes to tartan telephones, and even biscuits and tells the story of tartan from the Jacobite times to the present day.

Joyce was first approached by Miki Inamura, a Japanese delegate, from the Kobe Newspaper foundation over a year ago.

They picked Joyce out of a handful of Scottish designers and asked if she would design a wedding dress specifically for the exhibition.

Delighted to have the opportunity, Joyce agreed to meet with the Japanese team at her Glasgow studios.

"It was actually in November that they came to visit – but we put our Christmas decorations up a whole month early, just to give the place more of a warm Scottish welcome," she says.

"I am so excited to be a part of this show and think it is a great opportunity for Scotland to attract more visitors, especially people who may be thinking of getting married here," says Joyce. "I've even decided to add another website to cater for those looking to come and get married in Scotland, and offer links to Scottish five star hotels and locations.

"People from abroad tend to look on Scotland as this wonderful mystical place, full of heather, lochs and whiskies. This exhibition will really help preserve the image of Scotland and help attract more tourists too," she adds. "It's a bit like the way we look upon somewhere like Bali, or Sri Lanka I guess." Within a few months Joyce had designed a specially made tartan insert wedding dress as well as an evening gown in her signature Bystorm purple tartan.

The dresses were sent off in May to Japan and as the exhibition had bought them, Joyce would not have them returned, so she wanted to have some photographs taken before they left the country.

"I put up a call on Facebook to see if I could find any Japanese ladies who would model for the dresses, and



↑ The tartan themed dresses designed by Joyce Young for the Tartan exhibition in Japan

miraculously within about half an hour a lady who is also a concert pianist from Edinburgh University replied. She was very pleased to be photographed, and it turned out her father also came from the city of Kobe, which was quite a coincidence," Joyce adds.

As yet Joyce is unsure yet whether she will be able to visit the tartan show in Japan, but is very hopeful that she may be able to see her work on full display in the two-year exhibition period.

"I felt it was important to show a good representation of the weddings, so along with the dresses on display there will be a slide show of our brides who have been married

in Scotland wearing tartan. It's good for the visitors to the exhibition see the wedding dresses in context of a true Scottish wedding and the best way is to show real life weddings. The Japanese visitors not only see the grooms in kilts and the pipers and the Scottish venues but also get a glimpse of our landscapes," Joyce explains.

"I am very much hoping that as well as learning all about tartan at the exhibition Japanese engaged couples will be inspired to consider Scotland – a romantic far off land – as the location for their weddings," she adds.

Although Joyce has travelled to many parts of the world with her business she doesn't seem



tempted to transfer to Japan herself.

Scotland is and always has been her home.

"Though I've lived here in Scotland all my life and travelled to a lot of different countries, there's nowhere else I could ever live. I love the scenery here and how it changes in such a short distance. My favourite part has to be around the Kyles of Bute on the West Coast, but there are so many stunning areas to visit. Also Scottish people are so warm and friendly I would miss that too much if I lived abroad," she says.

● www.fashionmuseum.or.jp/english; www.joyceyoungcollections.co.uk



↑ Joyce Young's dresses are made in her factory in Maryhill

Tiffany: Losing people taught me that life was fragile

The Eighties pop star talks to Andrew Arthur about realising her dream of making a rock album

As far as musical experiments go, former teen pop icon Tiffany doing a rock album seems an unlikely development.

"I'm in New York – I apologise if there are sirens and it gets a little loud," the singer says down the phone, excited to discuss her surprise creative direction.

"I've been up doing interviews and working the record. I'm just like a kid in a candy store!"

The 1980s star, full name Tiffany Darwish, has ditched the sugary synths of her early career for distorted guitars.

She is currently on a lengthy tour of gritty, smaller venues across the UK and the US.

"I've always been a big fan of rock music. I wanted to record rock music when I was 14-15 but I was too young, it would have been ridiculous.

"Stevie Nicks has always been the person who's inspired me, Ann Wilson from Heart, Led Zeppelin. So the pop girl has always had a little edge to her.

"It's just taken me a while. I just celebrated 30 years in the music industry which I'm very proud of."

Tiffany admits her previous life as a bubblegum pop pin-up meant producers she previously worked with were reluctant to help develop the new sound she craved.

That changed after she teamed up with British record producer and musician Mark Alberici from punk band The Killing Floor.

The pair have written a collection of songs that have won the endorsement of Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl.

"I got to meet Dave Grohl this year. He so inspired me with his work ethic and music, it was the highlight of my year really.

"Just to be able to sit and talk to him about my new album. I'm going to send it to him and I'm very thrilled by that. He was just wonderful to me and so encouraging. Artists like me really need that."

It's clear this new creative pursuit holds personal importance for Tiffany, who has put her family first during a difficult period in her private life.



↑ Tiffany was just 15 when she had her first hit

"It was like a five-year span where the bottom fell out. A lot of people in my world got sick unexpectedly. My dad passed away from cancer, my tour manager passed away from cancer.

"My cousin passed away from addiction, my mom passed away. I had another good friend have cancer and pass away, and she was in her 30s.

"It taught me life was fragile. All of these people had plans for later on. Always 'later on' or 'one day'.

"That really did encourage me to go and tour full time again and do an album that really reflects what's in my head and heart."

Tiffany admits her busy new schedule has come at a price. She is currently estranged

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from her husband, British businessman Ben George.

"I'm going through a separation right now, I don't know what's going to happen. For the sake of me being able to do this full time it does cost you a lot, it is a business.

"I just really wanted this for myself. My husband and I talked about it and he was like, 'You need to do this.'"

"It's more out of respect that we have kind of paused our relationship for a minute to see where we're at."

Tiffany likes to challenge perceptions people have of her. She has previously

released a country record and lent her vocals to dance tracks.

Yet most people still associate her with 1987 international hit I Think We're Alone now. Aged 15, she became the youngest female artist to top the US Billboard albums chart with a debut release.

Yet Tiffany is quick to dismiss any notion that she is sick of her signature number.

"That's my beginning. It's a big part of me, I'm very grateful. You will never come to a Tiffany show where I don't play that song. I don't deny the hits, even with the edgier rock sound.

"But I have to say that song is resilient. Over the years, I have done it acoustically, country-style, punk, ska. That's when you know you have a great song, when it can live in all of these different forms."

Tiffany regularly plays 1980s retro shows in the UK and relishes performing alongside her peers from that era. She has been based in Britain while working on her record.

"I look at the UK as my home right now. It's a little more open-minded here, especially for me as a retro artist.

"I love how people here still celebrate your success. It's great to be standing next to Big Country, Kim Wilde and Rick Astley.

"I'm a big fan of Rick and he's always been a wonderful guy. I'm so thrilled for his success. I grew up watching these people, but now I'm friends with them.

● Tiffany's new album *Pieces Of Me* is out now.