

Floating Stones – Lotte Glob

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Connecting Invisible Lines

GEORGINA COBURN previews a new book and exhibition marking fifty years working in ceramics for Durness-based artist Lotte Glob

2008 is a significant milestone in a life which Lotte Glob enthusiastically describes as “one big experiment”, her practice constantly evolving in direct response to her chosen environment. The tactile nature of the earth and its geological forces are a primary source of inspiration and since 1968 the artist has made the far North of Scotland her home. Her work is “of the land in inspiration and origin”, often incorporating raw materials and sediments collected on journeys into the landscape.

Lotte was experimenting on her first pottery wheel at 13 and became an apprentice at 15, studying in Denmark, Ireland, Scotland and France before establishing her own workshop in 1965. Stone has held a lifelong fascination for her, something which she describes as a “natural human instinct. As children we select and pick up stones all the time”, our need for contact with the earth and its cycles is innate and immediate. Lotte has consistently explored the ancient primal forces of nature in her ceramic work both in form, use of local materials and a natural spirit of enquiry that is particularly evident in her outdoor installations of the early 1990's.

Her remarkable work will be celebrated in a series of exhibitions and events this year, including an installation and launch of a new book, *Floating Stones*, this month, followed by an exhibition of new work and pieces from the artist's collection from 2 August to 10 September, both at the Watermill, Aberfeldy. Her work will also be honoured in her native Denmark with a major retrospective at the National Keramikmuseum in 2009.

A collaborative project between the artist, her son Nickolai (a graphic designer based on the Isle of Harris) and Watermill publishers Jayne and Kevin Ramage, the new hardcover cloth-bound book is an important record of the artist's creative process. Inspired by the Lotte's walking journeys to 111 lochans throughout the Scottish Highlands over a six year period, the publication features photographs, journal entries and sketches drawn from 33 of the 111 sites.

As a visual diary, *Floating Stones* documents a personal journey, developing organically from the artist's creative practice and the unique beauty of the Northern landscape. It invokes the artist's memory of direct engagement with natural elements and cycles that are an essential part of her work.

At each of the 111 sites, beginning 2,772 ft high in the hills near Resipole in August 1994, three floating stones were launched into each lochan. These “gifts” were released back into the landscape, connected to a network of sites by “invisible lines”. The lines of these journeys have continued to expand and in 1997 the first of the stones made its journey into international territory.

“One leaving the North coast in a rucksack heading for a distant loch in Mexico – 332 more are to leave with a collaboration of kindred spirits”. Both in form and distribution the “globerlites”, as they were first described by the artist in her installation *Floating Stone Circle* at Balnakiel Beach in May 1992, have local and universal origins. Over the winter in 1992 the artist experimented with these forms learning about the actions of the tides and connecting with these natural forces through her work.

As an evolving form, the floating stones were initially an accidental discovery within the domestic scale of a fish tank. They have since developed a life of their own in a series of experimental land based works that enabled the artist to explore circles within circles, expanding into the infinite realm of nature like a pebble cast into water.

Floating Stone Circle, which consisted of 333 individual stones, formed new patterns on the incoming tide while ‘Sea Line’ (Balnakiel Beach, August 1992), incorporated the same number of unique hand-crafted stones following the curve of the shore 416 feet long. On this occasion a particularly strong tide gave birth to the phenomenon of “flying stones” cast up by the sheer force of the ocean.

The artist’s sculpture croft near Durness has been steadily evolving since 1999 and in 2007 had its first public open days. Within the grounds groups of flying stones are displayed beautifully against the sky in an elevated random cast pattern, in vertical formation and floating in the central fountain near the artist’s studio, orbiting gently round the central axis in the shifting wind.

These groups of stones are subject to the elements and weather and can be viewed directly in the context of an ever-changing environment. They have been formed from earth, fire and water and seen against the sky, loch and surrounding mountains from a visible link with ancient geological forces.

The Loch Eriboll site where the artist’s studio and sculpture croft are located is part of the Northwest Highland Geopark, over 3,000 million years old. Within a 5,000 sq km areas of wilderness over 50 sculptures have been placed in the landscape, commemorated in a publication of photographs, sketches and journal entries, *The Ultimate Rock Garden*, in 1996. The concept of a garden is expanded to a monumental scale becoming linked to the whole earth and our essential relationship to it.

Lotte Glob’s work in ceramics have become synonymous with the Northern landscape, her “floating stones” one of a myriad of forms still continuing to evolve over a lifetime of creative exploration.

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