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A Distilled Palette of Scotland

Making Futures 2017 - Craft In an Expanded Field

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Textiles have long been a defining characteristic of Scotland's social history. Hand woven tweeds and tartans have remained timeless reminders of the land from which they came. Natural dyes have been synonymous with our Scottish landscape; the subtle palette of naturally occurring pigments has inspired the colour of cloth from the early crofting villages, to today's modern woollen trade.

As a major and influential part of Scotland's economy, the textile industry continues to be an integral component in Scottish craft and trade. An increasing number of practitioners are seeking out more traditional, sustainably viable methods of creating, be it textiles, product manufacture or food and drink.

The food and drink industry is populated with artisanal producers keen to underline the heritage and provenance of their wares. Our research into these sustainable practices within the Scottish food economy has led to both systematic and holistic links with the textile industry. The significant growth of micro industries in Scotland is gaining momentum; a 'from the land' ethos has translated itself across industries as diverse as skincare, food and drink production, interior design and fashion. The resurgence of traditional crafts and the increasing awareness of a product's life cycle is paving the way for a change in attitude and production. With growing interest in producing more wholly natural products and the groundswell of a desire to live well, the potential production of natural pigments from indigenous flora can play a beneficial role in Scotland's circular economy. Inspired by this growth in independent micro industry we have identified a number of Scottish grown botanical ingredients that harbour the potential for natural dye. Juniper is recognised dye stuff and one of the main components in gin distilling. Whisky distilleries across Scotland are developing their own in house sustainable business practices, by producing Gin as an all year round spirit increasing their product output during Whisky maturation time. The scale of this production results in large quantities of natural waste product after essential oils are extracted, leaving behind colour rich matter.

In this paper we will present research demonstrating the potential of dye as a by-product of the food and drink industry. In particular we will be focussing on the collaboration between craft practitioners, brewing and distilling. By working with local independent business, local farm and land associations, we hope to identify a natural palette of colour from sustainably renewable sources.

"[There is a] potential to not only serve our material needs with reduced resource consumption, [but also a means to a] more varied and locally sensitive agriculture, more regional fibres, more local jobs and more healthy and socially robust environments." (Fletcher, 2008) p5 Sustainable Fashion and Textiles – Design Journeys