

AG25: Agallamh le Cailean MacGhilleathain: Dealbhadaireachd

Interview with Cailean Maclean: Photography

Presenter: Angela NicAoidh (Angela Mackay)



ANGELA:

Còmhla rium a-nise tha Cailean MacGhilleathain a tha na dhealbhadair san Eilean Sgitheanach. Fàilte ort, a Chailein.

CAILEAN:

Tapadh leat.

ANGELA:

An innis thu dhomh an toiseach cuin agus ciamar a fhuair thu eòlas air obair dhealbhadaireachd anns a' chiad dol a-mach?

CAILEAN:

Thogadh mi ann an Uibhist a Deas. Bha mo phàrantan ... 'S ann às an Eilean Sgitheanach agus Ratharsair a bha iad, ach bha iad a' fuireach ann an Uibhist a Deas airson deich bliadhna fichead agus bha m' athair na dhotair thall an sin. Agus rè na h-ùine sin, bha dotair eile ag obair cuide ris, fear Coinneach MacDhonnchaidh. Bha e math air dealbhan a tharraing le camara agus le peant, agus bha mi tric a' faicinn na dealbhan a bha e air a thogail, agus ghabh mi car de nòisean dhan a h-uile sian an uair sin.

Ach, mo bhràthair, Ùisdean, bha barrachd ùidh aigesan anns an rud agus cheannaich esan seann chamara Ghearmailteach, Voigtländer - tha e agam fhathast - agus chuir e air dòigh seòmar dhorcha anns an taigh agus bhiodh esan ag obair air dealbhan a thoirt air adhart bho film gu rud air a chlà-bhualadh agus bhithinn a' cur seachad feasgar no dhà cuide ris-san anns an t-seòmar dorcha, dìreach a' faicinn na bha e a' dèanamh agus a h-uile sion. Ach an rud eile a bha a' dol ann an Uibhist aig an àm - Uibhist a Deas - bha an leabhar aig Paul Strand dìreach air ùr-nochdadh. Bha leabhar againn a-staigh a chuir Paul Strand thugainne, agus bha buaidh mhòr aige sin orm.

ANGELA:

With me now is Cailean Maclean who is a photographer on the Isle of Skye. Welcome, Cailean.

CAILEAN:

Thank you.

ANGELA:

Could you tell me to begin with when and how you learnt about photography in the first place?

CAILEAN:

I was raised on South Uist. My parents were ... They came from the Isle of Skye and Raasay, but they lived on South Uist for 30 years and my father was a doctor over there. And throughout that time, another doctor was working with him, a Kenneth Robertson. He was very talented at creating images with either a camera or paint, and I frequently saw the pictures he had taken, and I became interested in all of that at that time.

But my brother, Hugh, he was even more interested in it and he bought an old German camera, a Voigtländer - I still have it - and he set up his own darkroom in the house and he worked on developing pictures from film to a finished print and I used to spend a few afternoons with him in the darkroom, just watching what he was doing and so on. But there was another thing happening in Uist at the time - on South Uist - Paul Strand's book had just been published. We had a copy of the book which Paul Strand had sent us, and that had quite an effect on me.

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CAILEAN:

Agus nuair a chaidh mi dhan oilthigh ann an Obar Dheathain, 's ann an uair sin a thòisich mi-fhìn air obair a dhèanamh anns an t-seòmar dhorcha, anns an "darkroom", agus bha buidheann chamara anns an oilthigh agus ghabh mi pàirt ann a sin. Tha cuimhn' 'am a' chiad chamara a cheannaich mi. 'S e camara Ruiseanach, brùid mhòr de chamara. Chosg e còig nota fichead dhomh. 'S e airgead mòr a bha sin aig an àm agus 's e, mar a chanas iad anns a' Bheurla, "single lens reflex" a bh' innte, 's thòisich mi leatha sin.

ANGELA:

Dè an seòrsa deilbh a bha thu a' togail leis a' chiad chamara a bh' agad?

CAILEAN:

Seach gu robh mi ann an Obar Dheathain, 's e dealbhan tron a' bhaile, anns a' bhaile, dealbhan dhaoine a bha mi a' togail. Dealbhan dubh is geal an-còmhnaidh, oir bha cothrom agam obair a dhèanamh orra anns an t-seòmar dhorcha. Sin an rud ... Bha barrachd ùidh agam anns na gnothaichean sin an uair sin.

ANGELA:

Tha diofar mòr eadar siud agus na camaras didseatach a th' againn a-nis.

CAILEAN:

And when I went to university in Aberdeen, that was when I started to work in the darkroom myself, and there was a photography society at the university which I became a member of. I remember the first camera I bought. It was a Russian camera, a giant of a camera. It cost me £25.00. That was a lot of money at the time and as they say in English, it was a "single lens reflex", and I started working with that.

ANGELA:

What sorts of pictures did you take with your first camera?

CAILEAN:

Because I was in Aberdeen, I took photos through the city, in the city and also people. They were always black and white, because I was able to work on them in the darkroom. That's the thing ... I was more interested in that aspect of it at the time.

ANGELA:

There's a huge difference between that and the digital cameras we have now.

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CAILEAN:

Tha na camaras fhèin ... Chan eil mòran eadar-dhealachadh eadar "single lens reflexes" anns a bheil film agus an fheadhainn didseatach anns a bheil "light-sensitive cell", no ge bith dè a chanas tu riutha, ach an diofar as motha, 's e gu bheil na dealbhan didseatach, tha e a' toirt dhut comas rudan eadar-dhealaichte a dhèanamh leotha, rudan nach dèanadh tu gu bràth ann an seòmar dorcha, agus tha seo ga dhèanamh air coimpiutar, mu choinneamh sgrion, le bathar bog a tha furasta a làimhseachadh.

Tha e cho goireasach agus cho furasta, ach tha sin a' ciallachadh a-nise gu bheil cha mhòr a h-uile duine na dhealbhadair. Chan eil duine aig nach eil camara anns an latha a th' ann, agus tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil an àireamh de dhealbhan a tha gan togail gach bliadhna air a dhol a mheud iomadach turas. Nuair a bha na h-uidheaman gann, bha an-còmhnaidh eadar-dhealachadh eadar thu fhèin agus daoine aig nach robh camaras. Bha sin follaiseach, agus chan eil e cho furasta anns an latha a th' ann.

ANGELA:

Dè na seòrsa dealbhan as fheàrr leat a bhith a' gabhail?

CAILEAN:

Seach gu bheil sinn a' fuireach ann an eilean a tha cho brèagha, agus air ar cuairteachadh le eileanan eile a tha cho brèagha, tha mi buailteach air dealbhan tìre, seallaidhean a ghabhail - mar a chanas iad anns a' Bheurla, "landscapes". Uaireannan eile, 's ann barrachd air daoine a tha mi ag obair, no air "minutiae" - rudan beaga a chì thu ann an nàdar no ann an toglaichean agus gnothaichean mar sin. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil e ag atharrachadh a rèir mar a tha thu fhèin a' faireachdainn, 's an suidheachadh anns a bheil thu fhèin aig an àm.

CAILEAN:

The cameras themselves ... There isn't much of a difference between single lens reflexes that use film and digital cameras which contain a light-sensitive cell, or whatever you call it, but the greatest difference is that with digital photographs, you are able to do different things with them, things you could never do in a darkroom, and that's done on a computer, in front of a screen, with software that's easy to use.

It's so handy and so easy, but that now means that almost everybody is a photographer. There's hardly anyone who doesn't have a camera nowadays, and I think that the number of photographs being taken every year has increased many times. When the equipment was scarce, there was always a difference between you and people who didn't have cameras. That was obvious, and it's not so easy nowadays.

ANGELA:

What sorts of photographs do you prefer to take?

CAILEAN:

Because we live on such a beautiful island, and are surrounded by equally beautiful islands, I like to take pictures of the land and the scenery - landscapes, as they say in English. At other times, I work more with people, or on minutiae - tiny things you see in nature or in buildings and things like that. I think it changes depending on how you feel and the situation you find yourself in.

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ANGELA:

A bheil àite no àiteachan as fheàrr leat fhèin?

CAILEAN:

Tha iomadach àite ann, agus tha a' mhòr chuid dhiubh sin air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Tha Rubha Hùnais ann an ceann a tuath an Eilein Sgitheanaich - 's toigh leam gu mòr a bhith ann an sin - Tarsgabhaig ann an ceann a deas an Eilein Sgitheanaich, air mullach Sgùrr na Strì - 's e tè dhe na Cuiltheann a tha sineach - an Neist ann an ceann an iar thuath an Eilein Sgitheanaich, aig an taigh-sholais a sin, agus ann an eileanan eile a leithid Uibhist, gu seachd-àraid air na machraichean, tha an-còmhnaidh rudan annasach, àlainn agus eadar-dhealaichte ri fhaicinn ann an sin 's iomadach cothrom airson dealbh a ghabhail an sin. Leòdhas, taobh an iar Leòdhais ...

Thug dealbhadaireachd orm a dhol a choimhead air na diofar sgìrean sin, coiseachd - gu seachd-àraid coiseachd - a-null gu rubha air choreigin, no gu mullach beinne air choreigin agus tha mi taingeil gun tug dealbhadaireachd ... thug e orm sin a dhèanamh.

ANGELA:

Tha thu a-nise, na làithean-sa, a' teagasg dhaoine eile. Dè a' chomhairle a bheireadh tu do chuideigin a bha ag iarraidh obair dhealbhadairachd a dhèanamh mar chur-seachad?

ANGELA:

Do you have a favourite place or places?

CAILEAN:

There are many places, and most of them are in the Highlands. There's Rubha Hunish in the north end of Skye - I really love being there - Tarskavaig in the south end of Skye, on top of Sgùrr na Strì - that's one of the Cuillin Hills - Neist Point in the northwest of Skye, at the lighthouse there, and on other islands such as Uist, especially on the machair, there are always unusual, beautiful and different things to be seen there, and therefore lots of opportunities to take photographs. Lewis, the west side of Lewis ...

Photography has led me to visit these different places, walking - especially walking - over to a particular headland, or to the summit of a particular mountain and I am grateful that photography made me ... It made me do that.

ANGELA:

Nowadays, you teach other people. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to take up photography as a pastime?

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CAILEAN:

Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil e cudromach a' tuigsinn nach e an camara an rud as cudromaiche. Tha an dà rud as cudromaiche na do cheann fhèin, agus ma tha sùil mhath agad, bu chòir dhut tòiseachadh le camara nach eil cho daor ri cheannach agus a bhith ris cho tric 's as urrainn dhut agus cuideachd a bhith a' coimhead air dealbhan a thog dhaoine eile. Tha iomadach eisimpleir air an eadar-lìon, ann an taisbeanaidhean, ann an leabhraichean ... Dìreach a bhith a' coimhead orra, agus ma tha rudeigin a rinn iadsan a' còrdadh riut, agus tha e ag obrachadh, carson nach fheuch thu fhèin air sin atharrais?

Agus uaireannan, tha sin ag obrachadh, agus tha e tlachdmhor nuair a tha thu air dealbh a tha ag obrachadh a tharraing.

ANGELA:

Ceud taing, a Chailein.

CAILEAN:

'S e do bheatha, gu dearbha.

CAILEAN:

I think it's important to understand that the camera isn't what's most important. The two most important things are in your own head, and if you have a good eye, you should start out with a relatively inexpensive camera and use it as often as you can and also look at photographs taken by other people. There are many examples on the Internet, in exhibitions, in books ... Just look at them, and if you like something they have done, and it works, why don't you try to recreate it yourself?

And sometimes, that works, and it's very satisfying when you have taken a photograph that works.

ANGELA:

A hundred thanks, Cailean.

CAILEAN:

You're welcome indeed.