

## **Transforming Scottish Silversmithing Summary of Presentation**

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The Incorporation of Goldsmiths was established in the Fifteenth Century. Our purpose is to support silversmiths in Scotland and today we work with the art colleges, industry and individual designer-silversmiths to identify times when support is most needed and to promote the exquisite design and craftsmanship of Scottish silversmiths in the UK and throughout the world. Our trading arm, the Edinburgh Assay Office, is responsible for hallmarking this work.

In 500 years, so much remains unchanged – many of the tools, techniques and materials are the same, and we strive to protect this skills heritage. The world around us is of course constantly changing, and no more rapidly than over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. We now live in an increasingly complex globalised economy. Whereas once a metal or stone dealer could answer with certainty where their materials had come from, now the picture is a complex and dynamic web in which it is often impossible to tell the original provenance of a material, or the convoluted journey it has gone on to reach us here in Scotland. Added to which, we are seeing an increasing demand for transparency and knowledge about the ethical impact of jewellery and silverware. Both consumers and silversmiths want to know more about the environmental and social impact of a finished piece. There is, therefore, an urgent need for renewal and to rethink the way we do things.

The Incorporation has therefore set itself a new aim – to transform the silversmithing sector in Scotland so that a positive ethical impact is the norm. We encourage all makers to consider where their metals and stones come from and what environmental impact their workshop practices have. We encourage them to consider these things and then to act on them – to make positive choices when choosing suppliers. We want this positive ethical impact to be a further facet of fine craftsmanship so that when someone buys a piece of Scottish silver they can revel in the imaginative design and exquisite making skills, secure in the knowledge that this object has not had a negative environmental or social impact during mining or making.

So in 2016 the Incorporation launched its Ethical Making Programme. This includes a freely accessible website ([www.ethicalmaking.org](http://www.ethicalmaking.org)), designed to cut through the green-wash and give makers unbiased information about where they can source their materials ethically. It also includes the transformative Ethical Making Pledge, signed by all the Scottish Art Colleges with Jewellery and Silversmithing courses. This involves using only ethically sourced metals, nominating student ambassadors and incorporating the subject into the curriculum. So from now on, all graduating silversmiths will have a firm theoretical and practical knowledge of the impact of their practice. The choice for them will no longer be, “should I buy fairly traded metals I’ve never used before at a higher price when I am struggling to set up my business”, but rather, “I’ve only ever worked with fairly mined metals. I know I could get my metals more cheaply but I know what the true cost of that is to others”. The Incorporation and the Scottish Art Colleges aim for ethical making to become the new norm so that the silversmithing sector in Scotland is transformed and fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond.