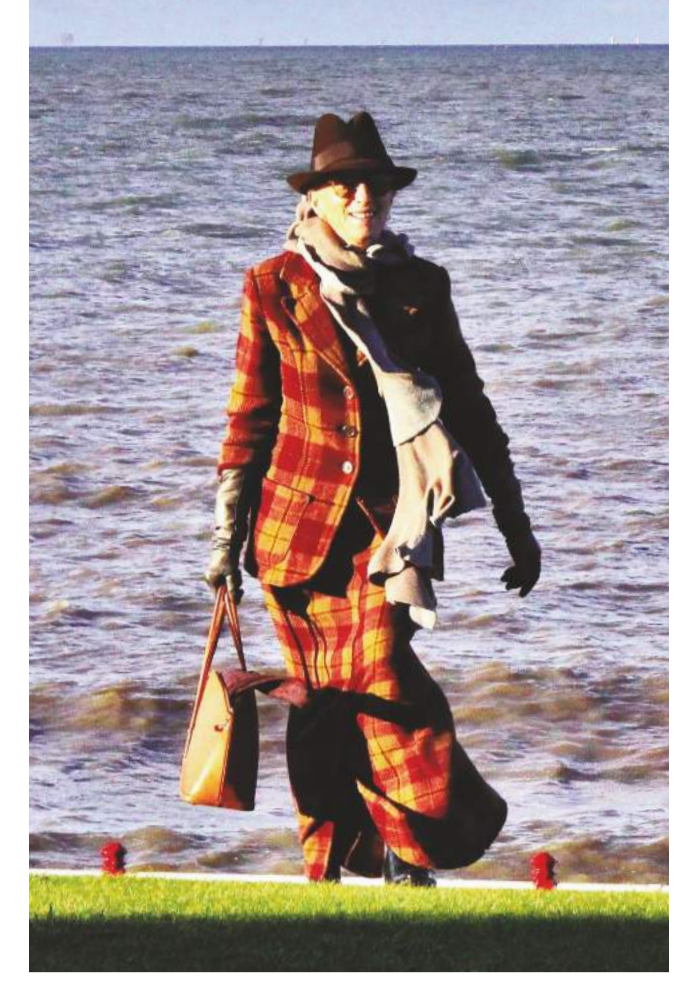


# JOAN MURRAY

## With great pleasure



Here at Woodend, Joan presents a selection of work from her 30-year career in textiles. It is a fitting venue, since she feels an affinity with Dame Edith Sitwell, whose uncompromising approach to her own work was matched by a flamboyant personal style – aware of, but not overwhelmed by, passing trends.

Graduating in textiles from Belfast College of Art, Joan went on to specialise in weaving at Winchester School of Art, then moved sideways into knitting for her MA at the Royal College of Art, London. Computerised knitting machines were rapidly expanding the scope for designers and she later adapted the new ideas to the domestic knitting machine.

Garments are now often completed using knitting machine techniques alone, with no additional cutting or sewing. In these, the apparent simplicity of the silhouettes has an affinity with Japanese designers: indeed, early machine-knit lengths or samples of fabric were bought by Issey Miyake and other designers in Japan, before she began to cut and shape it into her own garments and accessories. These have been sold to the collections of the V&A, the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, Brighton and Hove Museum and other institutions, as well as to a growing list of private clients.

Long experience with a wide range of patterns, textures, colours, silhouettes and yarns means that many decisions are made by instinct as the work takes shape, usually around the idea of a living, moving body. Joan continues to knit, but is also now weaving again. This is slower and more contemplative, but equally experimental and just as painterly: the artist draws and paints constantly as her indispensable source of fresh ideas and inspiration. She continues with her drawing, collaging, monoprints, painting and taking photographs – at home in Skipton, in the surrounding landscape and in museums – and encourages all students to gather and store the visual information all around them.

For example, the intriguing geometry of ordinary things led to the black and white collection, while collage drawings of birds in the RCA conservatory were the basis for the industrially-felted, abstract work. For the double-cloth coat fabric and painted cushions, fluid repeats of the bird images were recreated onscreen and linked to an industrial knitting machine. Travelling, in the British Isles and in Europe, South America and South-east Asia, has been inspirational. Recently she was looking at Picasso's and Karl Hofer's Harlequin paintings, visiting the Louis Vuitton gallery in Paris and reading the poems of Dame Edith Sitwell: these mingled impressions resulted in the Harlequin collection made in pieced silk and jacquard knits.

Joan loves to watch and draw ballet and modern dance. She sees costumes as a key element in any performance, concealing or accentuating the movement of the body and the space it describes. Devising her own collaborative performances – involving photographers, film makers, models and animators – broadens the creative scope of all who take part. The short films shown here are two of Joan's many and varied collaborations.

As a part-time tutor with many years' experience in further and higher education, Joan believes that every individual has something special to be drawn out. Imaginative and encouraging, she constantly develops new ideas and projects. For her enthusiasm in involving and motivating students at Craven College she was a finalist in the 2015 Tutor of the Year national award (NIACE). She keeps tabs on the many career options open to students in the Art, Design and Fashion industries. Teaching refreshes her own work and balances out the hours of discipline and solitude she devotes to knitting and weaving.

Joan Murray's approach to life in general may be summed up in the words of Edith Sitwell: *'It's better with all banners flying – isn't it?'*