



NEIL MARTIN (39), originally from Annan in Dumfriesshire, worked as a graphic designer in London before re-training in handmade furniture-making at Parris Wood College, Manchester. He now has his own workshop in Prestonpans.

"I have nine pieces in the exhibition – a new body of work in Scottish hardwoods including ash and burr elm. In addition to the table (above) and the mirror, there are some forms and vessels which are perhaps more sculptural – I'd say the vessels certainly have a contemporary edge to them.

"But every single piece I make is completely individual. When I buy wood, it's just blocks from the sawmill or timber place. And they sort of become their own shapes. I'll have a basic idea,



of course, but depending on the texture of the wood and the shape of it, it kind of evolves. Once I start working on them I'll find a certain mark here, some markings in the grain or a knot there – and that will become part of the design.

"I don't want to be someone who mass-produces. Everything is handmade. And every piece is different. That's my unique selling point. No one's ever going to be able to buy something exactly the same ever again.

"Scotland's got quite a good profile for crafts and craftspeople, and I think the Scots do tend to have an eye for what's good or bad. There's a rich vein of craftspeople here in Scotland and there is quite a lot of support from the Scottish Arts Council."



MAI THERESE ØRSTED (33), from Copenhagen, came to Britain to study glass-making, and returned home to a production job. Early last year, she relocated to Edinburgh.

"I did my formal course at Dudley, which was the industrial cradle of Britain, and the place where the British glass industry started. Edinburgh Crystal took me on as a master's scholarship student, which meant my fees were paid and I worked as an in-house designer while a student.

"All of my own glass work is hand-blown. All the pieces are made solely by me, and all are unique. Most explore the virtues and qualities of the material. Everything is in fluid, organic shapes, so you can almost see how the crystal would be flowing if it was still hot. The colours suggest glass that is still hot and malleable.

"Some of the pieces have kinetic qualities; when you use them, they move. Take something out of one of my bowls (above), for example, and it reacts, you kind of communicate with it.

"Then there's a vase that lies down as opposed to standing up. This again aims to challenge the conventions of tableware. But there are pieces which present glass in a more conventional way that people relate to easily.

"It's been much easier to set up in business here than it would have been in Denmark. The Small Business Gateway offers training programmes for free, covering whatever small businesses need to know – all those skills you probably haven't got if you're a craftworker. I have been supported tremendously both by the Scottish Arts Council and Trade Partners UK."



KARIN MUHLERT admits to being 40-something. Although originally from Gothenburg in Sweden, she has lived in Scotland since 1995 when she first enrolled for a degree course at Duncan of Jordanstone.

"I work in paper – a lot of Swedish people like to do that. It's such a beautiful medium. I like weaving it, and dyeing it too. And I love to work with rolls of paper to make three-dimensional paper sculpture.

"For the exhibition at the Botanic Garden, I've used some very nice machine-made paper which I've formed into fans or cones which can be used as vases for dried flowers (right). One is white – pure, brilliant white. The others are brown or blue – colours that I particularly like."

"I enrolled at Duncan of Jordanstone in Dundee as a mature student in 1995, and did a post-grad there in 2000. And I was very lucky: when my graduate collection (which was all made from paper) was exhibited at Islington in London, Donna Karan bought the whole collection – absolutely everything."

