

Bienvenue

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DREAM WEAVER

Modern technology inspired weaver
Stephanie Fradette to take up an ancient craft –
and now her beautiful creations are admired and
desired in equal measure.

By Dawn Geddes



LIVING

WHEN French Canadian weaver Stephanie Fradette relocated to Aberdeenshire eight years ago, she knew that the move was going to bring big changes to her life. But little did she know that her new northeast location would stimulate her creatively and inspire her to start up her own hand weaving business, Le Petit Moose.

After previously working in both photography and the adventure travel industry, the new mum found that the change of scenery and the new pace of life helped her to discover a new passion and a love of fibres.

"After moving to Scotland when my children were just babies, I found myself at home making lots of items for them. That's really how Le Petit Moose began, it was a creative outlet for me and a way of keeping my hands busy between nappy changes!

"I'd always wanted to start my own business, but I never really knew what I wanted to do. In 2013, I received my first ever iPhone. I went on Instagram and it just opened up this whole new world for me. I saw a tapestry which had been created by an artist and I thought it was completely amazing. It was so colourful and textured – I'd never seen anything like it before.

"I've always been a vintage magpie and always loved the '70s as well, and the tapestry was reminiscent of that era. It also had all of these beautiful fresh colours and this amazing new pattern. I began spending all my time trying to figure out how I could create one for myself."

This new-found fascination kick-started a love of weaving for Stephanie.

"I spent a year just making, making, making, giving away tapestries to friends and family. I got a really good response and I thought – wow, people like them!



"So I decided to put them out there and see what happened."

Stephanie launched Le Petit Moose in 2014, setting up her own shop on Etsy. The maker says that she thoroughly enjoys the process of making her handwoven wall hangings.

"There's a very tactile aspect to my work, which I really love. Colour is my main inspiration. My work is very much dictated by colours and textures. I try to use natural materials whenever I can, going back to the craft's roots and using rawer materials to create. The simplicity of that is something I really adore. Going back to basics and using that age old material is a real joy. There's just so much scope to it."

"I find the process of creating very therapeutic and meditative. Making has definitely made me more patient. It's quite a labour intensive art and craft form, so patience is so important.



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"There's nothing better than going into the studio and then putting some music on or a podcast and just simply being for an hour or two."

The fibre artist says that the surrounding landscape and the sea are things that particularly inspire her work.

"The landscape is a big inspiration for me – I'm a

huge lover of the sea and beautiful Deeside. As well as creating my own wall hangings, I also teach others to make their own. One of the classes I provide is a seaside weaving class. The sea really fascinates me and influences my work.

"The ocean is something that everybody sees differently. For someone who grew up on Skye, their representation of the sea is probably quite rugged and grey. But for someone who lives in Australia, it'll be white sand and blue water. I love being able to just lose myself in the colours. There's definitely a meditative aspect to weaving the sea."



Wool has a tactile, warm quality



Stephanie embraces bold colours

have become much more popular. It's been great to be able to teach others how to weave because it's such a meditative craft. It's easy to pick up and there are only a few simple techniques that you really need to learn.

"When I first started teaching, I needed some tools for my students to weave on, so I designed my own kit, which works fantastically. The simplicity of these frames and tools makes hand weaving so much more accessible, because people feel less intimidated by the process. It's just bridging that gap between an age old craft and the modern maker."

As well as making and offering classes to budding weavers, Stephanie also works at Banchory's multi arts centre, The Barn, three days a week as its creative learning co-ordinator. The artist says that she finds the Aberdeenshire community very supportive.

"Banchory has this fantastic close knit community and it's

brilliant to be a part of it. It's a great place to raise children, there are lots of wonderful makers here, and we've got The Barn right on our doorstep.

"We have so many incredible maker and designer communities in Aberdeenshire as a whole. There are always opportunities to network and speak with other creatives too, which is fantastic. It's been brilliant to meet so many like minded makers over the years."

Six years after launching Le Petit Moose, the maker says she's thrilled by how the business has developed and grown.

"It's been wonderful. Starting my own business has given me so many opportunities – not only to explore my creativity but to also teach some really lovely people in some wonderful locations too.

"Every time I finish a class my participants always say that the three hours have just flown by! And I say yes, you haven't looked at your phone, you haven't been distracted, you've just been really focussed on the material and the colour, and being creative.

"People are always surprised that they've been able to do that – to just completely lose themselves in the making process.

"It's just fantastic to be able to help people experience that joy and help spread that weaver fever!"

"Banchory has this fantastic close knit community and it's brilliant to be part of it."

Stephanie tells me that she's also influenced by the colours of Banchory.

"I'm especially inspired by the area during harvest time – all those oranges and dark mustards and yellows. The colours of the summer are also wonderful, when everything's so lush and green. It's great just being 30 minutes away from Stonehaven too, so I'm able to go down and be by the sea whenever I need to sit and contemplate."

Stephanie's work has proven very popular and the maker creates wall hangings for her Etsy shop as well as making commissioned pieces on request.

"My bigger pieces can take a few weeks to create. I tend to work on them for a couple of hours, leave them for a while, contemplate, then go back to them. I usually work on several different pieces at a time. I'm a bit of a scatterbrain – but that's my creative process."

As well as creating her own stunning handwoven tapestries, Stephanie enjoys working with crafters who want to have a go at creating their own masterpieces.

"I started teaching in 2016. The whole craft movement has gained such momentum over the last three or four years and classes

